

Deadwood – a Genre Analysis



"You cocksucker!" – Al Swearengen

Abstract

The following thesis takes into consideration the topic of genre, more specifically the western genre. My object of study is the HBO series *Deadwood* (2004-06) created by David Milch. The purpose of this thesis is to show how *Deadwood* relates to the western genre, and how it diverges from the traditional depiction of the western mythology.

For the purpose of the analysis, my theoretical framework will consist of relevant theories within the theoretical field of genre. My theory is derived from the anthology comprised by Barry Keith Grant called *Film Genre Reader IV*. My theory section deals with the problems concerning the definition of genre, more specifically how we categorise genres. For this part my theory starts with a discussion of the problems arising from genre analysis. Hereon follows a discussion of relevant theories and methods within the framework of genre. I include in this section Edward Buscombe's method on inner and outer form of genre; Rick Altman's method on Semantic and Syntactic relations; Ideology which is derived from the workings of Rick Altman, Robin Wood, and Barbara Klinger; a section concerning myth based on Barry Keith Grant's notions of myth in genres; furthermore I discuss the issue of characters within genre, as it is a subject important within the analysis of a TV series.

My analysis consists of two parts. The first part is a historical overlook of the western genre, in which I take into consideration the various conventions, narratives, semantic traits, the mythic connections, and the ideological perspective of the genre. This part focuses on filmic examples starting with *Stagecoach* (1939), and westerns from the 1940's, 50's, 60's, early 70's, and the 90's. This part of my analysis, sets out to establish how we arrive at what Andrew Tudor labels as a "common cultural consensus", and also pinpoints distinctive changes within the evolution of the genre.

The second part of my analysis takes into consideration *Deadwood's* use of iconography; the narratives of *Deadwood*; the characters; and the ideological aspect of the TV series. Throughout this analysis, I intend to show how *Deadwood* diverges from the classical portrayal, by deploying subversive strategies.

In my conclusion, I conclude that *Deadwood* diverges from the traditional western. It does so by subverting the iconographic conventions; its narrative resembles that of a classical western, however, it remains highly critical to the conventional portrayal of western mythology; on the issue of characters I conclude that *Deadwood*

diverges by turning the character roles somewhat upside down. The hero of the story is in fact the villain, and the conventional western hero is subverted to a degree, in which he forms an alliance with the aforementioned villain; on the subject of ideology I conclude that *Deadwood* can be read as a post 9/11 critical portrayal, and a reflective negotiation of the myth of the old west.

Furthermore, in my conclusion I bring forth two examples on how *Deadwood* has influenced the western genre. Within the film *No Country for Old Men* (2007), I reveal how *Deadwood* has influenced this particular film. In the TV series *Hell on Wheels* I further emphasise the significance of *Deadwood*.

Table of contents

Introduction	5
Genre Theory	7
The Genre Problematic	7
Inner and Outer form of Genre	11
The Semantic/Syntactic Model	14
Genre and Ideology	18
Genre and Myth	23
Ending discussion: Film VS Television, and the Issue of Characters	25
Film Narratives vs. TV Narratives	26
Characters	28
Analysis	32
The Western Genre: A Historical Perspective	32
The Classical Westerns of the 1940's and 50's	32
The Westerns of the 1960's and the Start of the 70's – The Foreign Influence, and the Death of the Western	40
The Westerns of the 1990's – The Leonean Inspiration	45
Analysis of <i>Deadwood</i>	47
The Setting and the Semantic components	47
The Narratives of <i>Deadwood</i>	52
The Characters of <i>Deadwood</i> – Al Swearengen and Seth Bullock	58
Ideology and <i>Deadwood</i>	64
Conclusion	68
Bibliography	75
Filmography	75

Introduction

Westerns - a genre, which has dominated the genre spectre for half a century. The western became increasingly popular in the 1940's and grew in stature during the 50's and 60's only to fade away in the latter part of the 20th century. The western genre film is easy to recognise, the question thus becomes how do we achieve this immediate recognition. The following thesis will concern itself with the concept of genre, more specifically the western genre. The object of my studies will be that of the HBO series *Deadwood* (2004-06) created by David Milch. The focus of the analysis will be on how *Deadwood* relates to the western genre, does it relate to it in the classical sense, or does it challenge the conventions and the romantic ideal of the western? Furthermore, how does *Deadwood* revive a rather 'dead' genre, such as the western?

For the purpose of my analysis I will apply theories concerning the concept genre. In the beginning of the following theory section I will introduce Andrew Tudor's term "common cultural consensus," as well as Edward Buscombe's term "accretion of meaning," as these are their central terms in distinguishing genres from one another. The question is then raised, how do we arrive at a common cultural consensus, or an accretion of meaning?

The following theory section will seek to reveal how we arrive at these central terms. In this process I will look at concepts within genre studies. First, I will focus on Edward Buscombe's method of "inner and outer form" of genre. This method emphasises the iconographic elements of genre films, the outer form, as well as the themes they create, the inner form. Then follows Rick Altman's method consisting of how semantic components (Buscombe's outer form) are structured, which he calls the syntax of genre. Furthermore, I will look at how ideology plays a part in the analysis of genre. Firstly, by looking at the two critical approaches to ideology: the ritual approach and the ideological approach. Secondly, I will focus on Robin Wood's theories on ideological contradictions, and thirdly, on Barbara Klinger's theories on the progressive genre text, which complements Wood's notions on ideology. From here I will turn my focus to the concept of myth, and see how this concept relates to genre. The last part of my theory section will focus on an issue, which has not been treated to a full extent, within genre measures. It is the issue of characters, which I believe will be of great

benefit when dealing with an analysis of a TV series, as the characters are central to the narrative process.

My analysis will consist of two parts. The first part will focus on the historical development of the western genre, in order to reveal how a common cultural consensus and an accretion of meaning are established. The second part of my analysis will be the analysis of David Milch's *Deadwood*, in which I will apply the theory established in the following section to the TV series.

In the following I will proceed with my theory section.

Genre Theory

Throughout this theory section my theoretical framework is largely based on the anthology comprised by Barry Keith Grant called *Film Genre Reader IV*. This anthology is a collection of important essays, by acclaimed critics, concerning the subject of genre.

The Genre Problematic

To speak of genre films immediately brings to mind different thoughts of films belonging to different categories e.g. western films, gangster films, horror films etc. They are films that are easy to recognise in the filmic landscape because of their familiarity. This familiarity is achieved through “repetition and variation and because they tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations” (Grant 2012, xvii). Also, the films encourage expectations and experiences to films that have similar characteristics, in other words, films that we already have seen. This seems to be a testament to the fact that genre is a culturally accepted term and that individual genres, such as westerns, romances, and comedies, are recognised by critics and audiences alike.

From a critic’s perspective, the task of defining the term genre can be a highly complex one. It is not just a case of stating that Film A looks the same as Film B. However, one can quickly agree that in order for a film to belong to a certain genre it must share some “indefinable ‘X’” (Grant 2012, 3) with other films belonging to that specific genre. Then the critics’ assignment will be to establish what criteria are at play when the definition of a genre is to be established. Then the films can be compared and that leaves us with a method to define films by using a priori criteria. This suggests that genre films e.g. the western genre “draws on a tradition – in particular, on a set of conventions” (Grant 2012, 4), so states the theorist Andrew Tudor. In the western genre we can quickly conclude that this is the case. The western is loaded with elements that can be used to identify the genre, a kind of recognisable mark or ‘X’ if you like. Some of these elements can be iconographic, for instance: horses, six shooters, Winchester rifles, hats (to distinguish good from evil, symbolised by the colours white and black respectively), desert plains, trains, villages, saloons, bandits, marshalls or sheriffs, and Indians (I apply the conventional term of that time ‘Indians’, as in *Cowboys vs. Indians*) just to give a few examples. They can also be thematic constructs, such as: revenge

themes, quest themes (or exploration themes), border issues (the small village can be invaded by marauding bandits or Indians) etc.

The theorist Jim Kitses isolates the inherent characteristics of genre films stating that genre can be considered:

a varied and flexible structure, a thematically fertile and ambiguous world of historical material shot through with archetypal elements which are themselves ever in flux (Grant 2012, 4).

Jim Kitses puts his focus on the thematic and iconographic elements of genre, but genres can also be defined by intentions. Genres such as the horror film or the thriller do not rely specifically on iconography, but relies instead on their intentions to horrify the viewer. However, one could argue that Monster films (belonging to the Horror genre) such as *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931), or the Slasher genre *Friday the 13th* (1980), *Halloween* (1978), or *Nightmare on Elmstreet* (1981), rely heavily on presence of the monster as an iconographic emblem. However, it can be difficult to isolate the intentions of a genre film, but in the case of the horror film the intent can be easily isolated because there is a clear intent to horrify the viewer.

Jim Kitses states a valid point here by arguing that genre is a flexible structure and that genre is ever in flux. However, Andrew Tudor argues that if we choose Kitses' method then we are left with a redundant method of categorising films. Tudor's argument is that if you simply analyse the iconographic and thematic traits of genre films, and if you go as far as to say that for instance the western genre film must be defined as a film set in the USA "between 1860 and 1900 and involving as its central theme the contrast between garden and desert. Any films fulfilling these requirements is a western, and a western is only a film fulfilling these requirements." (Grant 2012, 4) Then you are left with a redundant form of categorisation because of the multitude of categories it would spawn because every genre film tends to deal with the genre in different ways. I believe that Tudor in this case misreads Kitses' description of genre, as Tudor's description of Kitses' statement holds a rigid attitude towards genre. As I started this paragraph by saying, I believe that Kitses has a valid point that genre must be considered a highly flexible structure and that genre is an ever-changing cultural phenomenon, in contrast to Tudor's statement about the rigidity of genre boundaries and in his view a redundant form of analysis.

Andrew Tudor, however, makes a justified claim that the analysis of genre tends to put the cart before the horse, and this is why he states that the analysis of genre based on the principal characteristics alone eventually ends up by making the term genre redundant. What Tudor proposes is to consider the culture within which we are operating before proceeding with the analysis. It is through the culture that we can recognise the formal elements of genre. To this he adds that critics using the term genre are caught in a dilemma, because the critics are defining the genre film on the basis of a body of films, which cannot be considered as belonging to a specific genre before the entire body of films is analysed. Tudor again turns to Kitses' themes and conventions stating, "these themes and conventions are arrived at by analyzing films *already distinguished from other films by virtue of being "westerns"* (Grant 2012, 5 [author's italics]). This is what Tudor proclaims as the "empiricist dilemma" (Grant 2012, 5). This dilemma, according to Tudor, has two solutions

One is to classify films according to a priori criteria depending on the critical purpose. This leads back to the earlier position in which the special genre term is redundant. The second is to lean on a common cultural consensus as to what constitutes a western and then go on to analyze it in detail. (Grant 2012, 5)

Tudor's suggestion to lean on a common cultural consensus is a justified position. However, you cannot rely on the common cultural consensus without analysing the principal characteristics of the genre, simply because we are dealing with an audio-visual media, and therefore, the analysis must consider the iconography, themes, and the conventions inherent in the films. Therefore one can conclude that there is a circular movement throughout the analysis, in which one has to consider both the culture, in which we are operating, and the images and sounds coming from the screen.

The theorist Edward Buscombe makes a valid point which underlines the importance of both the iconography and the cultural perception of genre films, and therefore validates Tudor's position: "Constant exposure to a previous succession of films has led the audience to recognise certain formal elements as charged with an accretion of meaning." (Grant 2012, 22). This is a significant point, as it both validates the principal characteristics and the importance of the specific culture. It is through the previous exposure of films, or from a cultural perspective we can include literature, because literature existed before the advent of the cinema, and therefore the cultural reference point to genres extends even further back, this is the case for genres such as

the horror genre and the western among others. Therefore we can assume that this accretion of meaning is what generates the common cultural consensus brought up by Andrew Tudor. In addition to this, Andrew Tudor states: "Genre notions [...] are not critic's classifications made for special purposes; they are sets of cultural conventions. Genre is what we collectively believe it to be (Grant 2012, 7).

Established in the previous paragraph is the central idea that genre is tightly connected to the culture that surrounds it. To sum up what is written in the above, is a matter of legitimising the analysis of genre. As we can clearly see, there is a problem arising from the special term genre. The problem that is in the mind of Andrew Tudor, who has been the focus of this little discussion, is that genre analysts leap in with genre analysis before contemplating how the genre is defined before the analysis. He relocates this problem to a cultural definition. He suggests that we rely on a common cultural consensus, which seems to be the perfect answer, because genres are defined through repetition, and critics and reviewers discuss these repeated examples, in order to define and categorise them. Therefore they are defined by the culture in which they are exhibited. We can establish that a genre such as the western, which is my primary focus throughout this thesis, is rooted in the American culture, and there are some clearly established conventions that define the genre before proceeding with the analysis. Thus the common cultural consensus defines that a western must have some distinguishable signature marks or conventions such as; iconographic traits like heroes wearing white hats (although this convention is not always in use), horses, trains, forts, guns, face offs (in which the hero defeats the villain in a gunfight, preferably a duel) to name a few. What Tudor is stating as a problem is that genre analysts tend to simply focus on the primary characteristics (Kitses' definition) and therefore, Tudor concludes, that it will lead to redundant form of analysis, simply because any film that does not meet the criteria of any particular genre will fall out of the category, thus making the categorisation process redundant. Therefore, Tudor believes that

"[...] genre terms seem best employed in the analysis of the relation between groups of films, the cultures in which they are made, and the cultures in which they are exhibited. That is, it is a term that can be usefully employed in relation to a body of knowledge and theory about the social and psychological context of film (Tudor in Grant 2012, 10).

The method, which he offers, is the empiricist method on which you rely on the common cultural consensus, but we need to examine further what generates this consensus. This notion must be further investigated because if we are to analyse a genre, then we must have some form of criteria that can be analysed, and in the following chapter I will examine some of the methods that can be applied to the analysis of genre.

Inner and Outer form of Genre

In this section I will discuss one of the possible methods for the analysis of genre. As mentioned in the title of this section, my focus is on Edward Buscombe's theory on the inner and outer form of genre. The terms, inner and outer form, stem from literary criticism but can also be applied in the analysis of films. The terms were used by René Wellek and Austin Warren as they applied to literary analysis and their theory was that

Genre should be conceived, we think, as a grouping of literary works based, theoretically, upon both outer form (specific metre or structure) and also upon inner form (attitude, tone, purpose – more crudely, subject and audience). The ostensible basis may be one or the other (e.g. 'pastoral' and 'satire' for the inner form: dipodic verse and Pindaric ode for the outer); but the critical problem will then be to find the *other* dimension, to complete the diagram (Grant 2012, 14).

Wellek and Warren's theory contains two forms, an inner form and an outer form. Their theory was applied to literary criticism and therefore we must reapply them to film criticism. Firstly, we must find the two equivalents. The latter of the two forms, the outer form, we can establish as the visual objects on the screen, simply put because we are dealing with a visual media. In this form we can include the iconographic traits of various genre films, however, the focus of this thesis is on the western genre, and therefore it is highly relevant to look at the iconography of the western. The narrative form of the genre is also part of the outer form of genre, and therefore we must also consider these.

In the western we can establish several iconographic elements that exists in the outer form. An example of a traditional western could be John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939), which exemplifies the western genre as a traditional western because many of the conventions of the western are inherent in this particular film. In an iconographic

analysis of *Stagecoach* we can include the setting, which includes small settlements, in this instance the town Tonto, and the vast desert landscapes of Monument Valley. Other iconographic elements, which are introduced in the start of the film, are the Indians and the cavalry (the conflict is established in this sequence, as we hear that the infamous Geronimo, leader of the Apache tribe, is on the warpath). The clothing of the characters is also an important characteristic of the iconography. There is, for instance, a high degree of symbolism in the hats of the characters. Furthermore, we have other iconographic elements such as the stagecoach, horses, weapons, certain buildings; corrals, saloons, banks, jails, forts, and of course the vast deserted landscapes etc. that are characteristic of the western. It is possible to continue even further with a list of distinct iconographic elements, however, this is just to give an example of an iconographic analysis, or an example of the outer form of a western. All of these iconographic traits serve as formal elements, and they can determine what genre we are dealing with.

The nature of these formal elements is not to determine what kind of story is to be told, however, “the visual conventions provide a framework within which the story can be told” (Grant 2012, 16). So states Buscombe on the nature of the outer form, and he further adds that the formal elements affects “what kind of story it will be” (Grant 2012, 16). Furthermore, Buscombe leaves us a notion about the nature of the western iconography, saying “because of the physical setting, a western is likely to deal successfully with stories about the opposition between man and nature and about the establishment of civilization” (Grant 2012, 16-17). This statement presupposes a connection, or interplay, between the outer form and the inner form. Of course we haven’t established yet what the inner form of a genre film is, but we are getting there.

Established in the above is the central idea that the outer form of a genre can be analysed through the visual components of a film. The inner form, however, then can be said is dealing with the themes of the films. Through analysis of the western genre, in general, we are capable to pinpoint several characteristic themes that are repeated – and indeed this can be said about most genre films. The western deals with themes such as the opposition between man and nature, revenge themes, and the burgeoning civilization (a train or a railroad appears frequently in the western as a symbol of civilization). In *Stagecoach* we can clearly state that some of the themes mentioned in the above are present in this film. The revenge theme is present through the character

“The Ringo Kid” portrayed by John Wayne, as he seeks revenge for the death of his father and brother by the villain Luke Plummer portrayed by Tom Tyler. The presence of another theme is the opposition between man and nature, in this film the Apache tribe is on the warpath led by the infamous Geronimo. The Indians in this respect function as an opposition to the civilized world, and the opposition to the Indians is the cavalry. Furthermore, the Indians represent the untamed nature that man must conquer because they are a threat to civilization.

This example of an analysis composed of the outer and inner form of genre, leaves us with a good way of recognising the genre as a western. However, we can discuss how we can generalise us to this conclusion. Buscombe’s method does not mention how we can treat them as westerns before an extensive analysis of the entire body of films that we call westerns. This is where Tudor’s argument about the redundant form of categorisation springs to mind. However, if we assume that we are working on the basis of the common cultural consensus, then we can look to Buscombe’s method. His method leaves us with a good way to isolate the themes and the iconographic traits of genre films, thus making it possible to distinguish which genre films stand out from the rest of the categories.

Although, we can state that Buscombe’s method is a good method of analysing the characteristics of a genre by analysing the themes and the iconography (his inner and outer form), his method is not flawless. For instance, Buscombe leaves out the issue of the syntax (the plot structures) of a genre. Although he does not reject the notion that there are some basic plot structures, which are exhibited again and again in genre films, he does argue that “to use such structures as a basis for defining the genre would mean ending up with one genre called “the western,” but an almost infinite number of subgenres” (Grant 2012, 14). I believe that this notion cannot be justified, simply because you cannot leave out the analysis of the syntactical elements of genre films because they are necessary to recognise if we are to get around the full spectre of genre films. The syntactical elements I am referring to here, are part of the analysis method composed by Rick Altman, in which he proposes an analysis form that combines the semantic components of a genre, which are the iconography and themes of a genre, and the syntactical components, which are the way the semantic components are structured, in other words the narratives of a genre. Buscombe, in this context, does not concern himself with the issue of ideological analysis, an element, which has to be considered if

we are to appreciate the richness of the genre experience. If we again turn to Tudor and his argument that genre analysis will become redundant if we only look at the principal characteristics, which I believe you can call Buscombe's method of analysis as it basically lays its focus on the same notions that Jim Kitses' method does. Buscombe's notions of genre are of course a valid form of analysis, but we must incorporate much more to the genre analysis than the basic characteristics such as themes and iconography. In the following section I will turn to the theorist Rick Altman, and his method of analysis, which incorporates the syntactic elements of genre and the semantic as well.

The Semantic/Syntactic Model

In this section I will delve even further into the realms of genre analysis, which concerns the form of genre. The topic of this section is a model that combines the semantic and the syntactic building blocks of genres. Firstly, we can, for the purpose of the argument, state that the semantic elements of a genre are the equivalent to Buscombe's inner and outer form. However, it is important to stress that the semantic elements of a film genre are the visual components of the films, or the iconographic elements. The semantic elements can also be the various themes, which are located through the analysis of the iconography. In other words the semantic elements are the meaning bearing elements, which then produces the various themes. The syntactical elements of the model are the ways in which the semantic elements are structured, in other words the narrative structures of the genre texts.

As we have seen from the discussion of Buscombe's inner and outer form, there is much tension on the subject of the syntactic elements of a genre. Buscombe rejects the importance of these structures saying that if we choose this method of analysis then the consequences will be a spawning of multiple categories. However, Rick Altman has a different perspective to this critical problem.

In his essay on genre analysis, Rick Altman introduces a method in which one considers both the semantic elements of a genre and the syntactic elements. His approach also considers the issue of ideology, which I will not consider at this point, as it is a dish best served on its own. In his introduction of this particular method, he states the problematic concerns of this approach

While the semantic approach has little explanatory power, it is applicable to a larger number of films. Conversely, the syntactic approach surrenders broad applicability in return for the ability to isolate a genre's specific meaning-bearing structures (Grant 2012, 32-33)

Firstly, what we need here is an explanation of the applicability of the two forms. The semantic approach favours a listing of semantic components that are included in a generic corpus. It is applicable in a broader sense because it is possible to uncover the semantic elements through an analysis of iconography, which is inherent in most genre films. The syntactic components, however, are more difficult to locate. For us to consider the syntactical elements of genre, we need to have a durable genre. A durable genre, for instance the western or the horror genre, is a genre that has existed for a considerable amount of time, and it is therefore possible to isolate the syntax of the genre based on its longevity. At this point it is important to refer back to Buscombe's notion of an accretion of meaning, and also Tudor's solution revolving around a common cultural consensus. Buscombe's notion states that the audience recognises a genre film through certain formal elements located in the outer form of genre that are charged with meaning, thereby contributing to the generation of a common cultural consensus. This is closely connected to what Altman notes constitute a durable genre. So what is obvious here is that a genre is bound up with different syntactical structures, and these structures are arrived at by the accumulation of filmic examples.

The western genre has clear stable syntactical patterns. Through the repeated versions of westerns it is easy to recognise these formulaic structures of narratives. The western genre film, for instance, has established clear evident narrative patterns such as the border structure in which the narratives can be said to include the opposition between nature and civilization; there is also narratives that revolve around revenge themes, to name a few.

The critical point of Altman's method is that these two forms, the semantic and the syntactic, are complimentary and not two separate analysis methods. Thus, Altman suggests that genres arise in in one or two fundamental ways. He suggests that

either a relatively stable set of semantic givens is developed through syntactic experimentation into a coherent and durable syntax, or an already existing syntax adopts a new set of semantic elements (Grant 2012, 35).

Altman notes that in the first example the genre's semantic givens are identifiable before the genre has adopted a stable coherent syntax, which justifies his claim of a duality of a generic corpus. This also connects to the theory that a durable syntax is dependant on the history of the genre as it is the repeated generic examples that constitute a genre's syntax. In the second example, a genre with an already established and durable syntax adopts new semantic elements can create an entirely new genre (Grant 2012, 35). A generic example of this could be the science fiction genre. This particular genre has clear distinguishable semantic elements; outer space, spaceships, aliens, lasers, planets, stars, asteroids etc. The interesting point is that science fiction films have borrowed the frontier structure from the western as in the Star Trek mantra "Space - the final frontier." However, as more and more films are produced there are other genres that influence the science fiction genre. In films such as Stanley Kubrick's *A 2001 Space Odyssey* (1968) and Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) we can see that the science fiction genre here relies on both the semantic and syntactic elements of the horror genre. In the former example, Kubrick creates the intentions of the horror genre through the computer HAL, which is supposed to help the humans travelling to Mars, but ends up causing havoc inside the space vessel. In Cameron's *Alien* the presence of a monster, the alien, which again is a semantic element from the horror genre, is the catalyst of the horror genre elements within this sci-fi-horror film. In both the filmic examples there is an inherent claustrophobic mood, which also is an element of the horror genre (intentions to horrify). Altman's crucial point in relation to his method is that if we accept the dual nature of a genre, the semantic and syntactic notions of genre, "we avail ourselves of a possible way to deal critically with differing levels of "genericity" (Grant 2012, 34). What is meant here is that it is important to recognise that every genre film does not relate to the particular genre in the "same way or to the same extent" (Grant 2012, 34).

As described in the above, Altman's method leans on the previously discussed theories of Buscombe and Tudor. Tudor's empiricist method consists of the accumulated examples of any particular genre, and then he suggests that we lean on a common cultural consensus in order to examine what constitutes the genre. Buscombe's notion that the audience recognises formal elements as charged with an accretion of meaning correlates with both Altman's theory and Tudor's as well, in the sense that both Altman's and Tudor's theories are dependant on the historical dimension of genres. We cannot

ignore the fact, and this is what Altman's theory is built upon, that genres are established by the repeated filmic examples which in one way or another resemble each other to a certain degree both semantic and syntactic.

Altman's method leaves us with one significant question; where is the border between the semantic and the syntactic level of a given text? To this Altman states that we need to distinguish between the

[...] primary, linguistic meaning of a text's component parts and the secondary or textual meaning that those parts acquire through a structuring process internal to the text or the genre (Grant 2012, 38).

What we are dealing with here is the notion that a semantic signal can both signalise the primary linguistic meaning, but can also acquire another meaning through a syntactic process. For instance, within genre films interaction between male and female characters creates an expectation of the semantics implied by romance (Grant 2012, 39). Thus we can as spectators, when presented with this scenario, begin to anticipate a syntactic pattern of romance within the genre text. On the other hand interaction between two opposing male characters creates the semantics of confrontation and duelling (Grant 2012, 39). From this we can derive that these two terms, semantic and syntactic relations, in fact are complementary terms and not two opposing terms.

The method presented here by Rick Altman, I believe is not in contrast to what Andrew Tudor and Edward Buscombe presents in their studies of genre. Tudor's empiricist method leans on a common cultural consensus when relating to genre analysis, however, his method is somewhat vague, as he does not offer any explanation as to what generates a common cultural consensus. This is where both Buscombe and Altman have something to offer. Buscombe mentions that the spectators of a genre text have learnt to recognise certain formal elements that are charged with an accretion of meaning. These could be iconography for one, but Buscombe does not lay any particular significance to the narratives of genre texts. This is what Altman highlights in his method, and therefore one could argue that the three theorists compliment each other in the sense that they all contribute to a concrete analysis of genres.

In the following section I will examine how ideological studies of genre contribute to the theories revolving around the phenomenon of genre. As we already have seen from Altman's method of genre analysis displays a favouring of the ritual approach to genre in contrast to the ideological approach, which I will examine in the following section.

Genre and Ideology

Within genre criticism there are two primary directions of theories involving ideology and genre - call them critics' ideologies. On the one hand, we have critics who believe that genres should be treated from a ritualistic perspective, and that genre analysis should regard narratives "as a form of societal self-expression, directly addressing the society's constitutive contradictions" (Altman 2012, 26). The structuralist movement champions the ritual approach with theorists Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss at the front. The ritual approach states that

audiences are the ultimate creators of genres, which function to justify and organize a virtually timeless society. According to this approach, the narrative patterns of generic texts grow out of existing societal practises, imaginatively overcoming contradictions within those very practises. From this point of view, audiences have a very special investment in genres, because genres constitute the audience's own method of assuring its unity and envisioning its future (Altman 2012, 27).

What we can read from this quote is that the ritual approach puts readership at the forefront of the interpretive process. Another important point is that genres, from a ritual point of view, are reflections of society, and genres present society's problematic and offer possible solutions to these societal dilemmas.

In contrast, the ideological approach reaches other divergent conclusions. The ideological approach is based on an entirely different narrative model. This approach sees narrative texts as being the government's address to its citizens or subjects if you will, or an industry's address to its clients (Altman 2012, 27). The ideological approach stems from the studies of Louis Althusser and his system of analysis attributes greater importance to discursive concerns and is more sensitive to questions of narrative structure. This approach can be commented as a rather pessimistic approach, which serves to show that genres are the by-product of the dominant ideologies of society or

an industry's desire to make money. Ideological critics see the same situations as the ritual critics, however, they see the situations and structures of genre as "luring audiences into accepting *deceptive* [author's italics] non-solutions, while at the same time serving governmental or industry purposes" (Altman 2012, 27). The critics favouring this approach believe that genres have an important role, as it is through the generic conventions that "audiences are lured into false assumptions of societal unity and future happiness" (Altman 2012, 27).

The ideological approach reveals a general disliking for the texts of popular culture, as the critics favouring this approach believe that the audience does not participate in the interpretive process, but are lulled to sleep in the "overall ideological lullaby programme" (Altman 2012, 27).

For the purpose of my analysis, I will mostly apply the ritual approach to my study of the TV series *Deadwood*. The ritual approach stresses that genres are reflections of the surrounding society and that genres offer solutions to societal dilemmas. Furthermore, the ritual approach leaves the analyst in a fruitful situation as this approach applies readership as the power centre of the interpretive process. However, one cannot entirely disregard the ideological approach, because the ideological approach is more attentive to discursive concerns than the ritual approach is. Therefore, if we apply the ideological approach then we can be more attentive to subjects such as ideological themes. A quick look at *Deadwood*, and other examples of westerns, reveals that there are issues of ideology at hand, as they are often portraying the building of American capitalist society, and therefore also the system of governments.

In the following I will discuss the theories of Robin Wood, Rick Altman, and Barbara Klinger as they treat this topic.

In his essay on ideology, Robin Wood bases his theory on an ideological approach, which portrays that all genres are rooted in ideological contradictions. Wood begins with drawing up a list of concepts that spur these ideological contradictions. His list is not exhaustive, however, they reveal the general ideology of genre films. Wood comments on his list that the "striking fact about this list is that it presents an ideology that, far from being monolithic, is *inherently* [authors italics] riddled with hopeless contradictions and unresolvable tensions" (Grant 2012, 80). As I stated earlier in this paragraph, Robin Wood proclaims that the "development of the genres is rooted in the sort of ideological contradictions my list of concepts suggests" (Grant 2012, 80-81).

Robin Wood's theory then suggests that any given genre is bound up with thematic contradictions, which can be related to a ritual approach of genre. For instance the ideological contradiction between the landscapes of the western genre, which represent the untamed nature, Indians also represent this, against civilisation in the form of towns, railways and cowboys. The ritual approach stresses the genres are reflections of society, and genres treat different underlying problems within society, and eventually come up with solutions to these problems through the genre texts. It can then be acknowledged that the thematic constructs of genres can be the root of ideological tensions, but what about the genres themselves? To this question Robin Wood states that

All the genres can be profitably examined in terms of ideological oppositions, forming a complex interlocking pattern: small-town family comedy/sophisticated city comedy; city comedy/film noir; film noir/small-town comedy, and so on. (Grant 2012, 81)

The interesting point here is that genres themselves in fact can be analysed as being part of different ideologies. This means that an established genre, as I have already stated earlier in this theory section, is bound up with different attributes, which can define the genre. These attributes can for instance be iconographical, thematic, narrative structures etc. These attributes can be part of an ideological structure within the genre, and therefore genres are bound up with certain genre ideological characteristics. The ideological tensions that Robin Wood mentions, correlates with Rick Altman's theory, as he states that genres innovate by combining different syntactical structures, thereby causing the ideological tension within the genre's ideological framework.

Robin Wood describes that ideological tensions are dependant on an individual artist, what we know as an auteur, however, throughout my analysis I prefer to use the term director instead. The point that Wood wants to make clear is that ideological tensions can only be manifested through the individual artist, who wishes to break with the dominant generic ideology, and therefore causing the ideological tension.

Barbara Klinger shares a similar view on genre. Like Robin Wood, Klinger treats genres from an ideological point of view. Klinger's primary object of study is the progressive genre. She describes the progressive genre as a genre, which seeks to challenge the established generic conventions (or the generic ideology). This is again similar to Altman's theory that genres borrow semantic and syntactic elements from one

another, thus challenging the generic ideology. Like Wood, Klinger also stresses the importance of the director (the individual artist/auteur)

It is important to note, however, that ideological genre criticism is quite substantially inflected by questions of auteur; within each specific critical argument engaged with defining the progressive coordinates of certain generic periods, auteurist considerations are frequently instrumental (Grant 2012, 94).

This quote serves to function the thought that you cannot disregard the importance of the director within genres. However, my analysis will not go into depth with the theories involving the auteur, but you cannot ignore the fact that auteur theory is an important tool within generic ideological analysis, and therefore it is justified that it is present within this discussion.

As stated earlier, Klinger's object of study is the progressive genre. The issue of ideology is of particular interest in the respect. In her studies, Klinger distinguishes between the "classic text" (Grant 2012, 96) and the "progressive text." On the classic text Klinger notes, "the classic form subscribes to an ideology of representation – the achievement of the "impression of reality" – and, in so doing, unproblematically broadcasts dominant cultural ideas" (Grant 2012, 97-97). The progressive text in this respect is the opposition to the classical text. The classical text is the genre film, which seeks to invoke all of the established conventions and traditions of the already established genre. The progressive genre text, Klinger notes, is subjected to difference. Klinger further comments: "Difference from the environment of conventions within which these films exist, then, is a paramount feature of their progressive status" (Grant 2012, 99). From this we can derive that what concerns Klinger in this respect is the issue of form.

Klinger's view on the progressive genre is similar to Robin Wood's claims that genres are riddled with ideological tensions, in the sense that genres borrow characteristic traits from one another. Furthermore, Klinger describes how these tensions and contradictions come into play. On themes Klinger notes that the progressive genre demolishes the "dominant cinema's characterisation of the role and nature of social institutions" (Grant 2012, 100). This means that the progressive genre seeks to subvert social institutions such as the family or the law. For instance the film *American Beauty* (1999) by Sam Mendes, treats the dismemberment of the social

institution “the nuclear family.” Or a TV series such as *The Wire* (2002-2008) created by David Simon, seeks to expose the various flaws within the governmental systems.

Furthermore, Klinger comments on how the narrative form of the progressive genre separates from the classical form. She states that the narrative structure is refined toward an exposure of ideological contradictions, in contrast to the classical form, which seeks to suppress these tension and contradictions (Grant 2012, 101). In essence, the classical genre text is structured through causality. We have a distinct narrative pattern of cause and effect, and throughout the classical narrative the cause and effect patterns must be resolved in the end. The progressive genre text departs from this pattern, as it seeks to subvert the narrative patterns of the classical text and therefore we cannot assume that the cause and effect patterns of the progressive narrative will be resolved in the conclusion. In other words we cannot expect closure to the full extent as we can in the classical narrative.

This discussion of ideological tensions and contradictions leaves us with a question; does the progressive genre text then separate entirely from the classical genre text? This question brings us to a crucial point of the evolution of genres. It is quite possible that a progressive genre can establish a subgenre, but it is also possible that the progressive genre text contributes to the evolution of the genre. Klinger brings forth this argument via the semiotician Maria Corti as she deals with the question of innovation within genres. She states that

The process of transformation inside a literary [or cinematic] genre ... has regulative power. In every hypersign of strong individuality the program of the literary genre matures and is modified as it becomes a constitutive law of the work itself. ... From the moment in which such a process takes place, the transformation which was an individual event, becomes another link in the chain that is the path of literary genre (Grant 2012, 106).

This statement correlates with Jim Kitses’ statement that genres are to be considered a varied and flexible structure, it also corresponds to Altman’s theory that genre innovate by combining semantic and syntactic elements from one another, thus creating ideological tensions and contradictions. Furthermore, it shows that ideological tensions play a crucial part in the evolution of genres. Another critical point of ideological tension is that it challenges the established common cultural consensus and therefore it leads the audience to recognise other formal patterns, and thereby establishing other

accretions of meaning. In the following I will treat another important facet of genre – the concept of myth.

Genre and Myth

Throughout this theory section, I have uncovered several characteristic traits of genre. In the following, I will discuss the relevance of myth within the genre theoretical field. The term myth refers to a society's shared stories; often myths involve gods and mythic heroes, who function to explain the nature of the universe and the relation of the individual to it (Grant 2007, 29). In the past, myths were shared around the fire, nowadays we share our myths through the media as Thomas Sobchack states

The Greeks knew the stories of the gods and the Trojan war in the same way we know about hoodlums and gangsters and G-men and the taming of the frontier and the never-ceasing struggle of the light of reason and the cross with the powers of darkness, not through first-hand experience but through the media (Grant 2012, 122).

Myth is described here as cultural products that are shared through the media, be it films, newspapers, literature etc. Sobchack states that genre films are subject to mimesis, or imitation - not imitation of life but of other films. Barry Keith Grant is not in total agreement with this statement. He states that genre films can be understood as “secular stories that seek to address and sometimes seemingly resolve our problems and dilemmas” (Grant 2007, 29). Grant's point here is that genre films can, from a ritual perspective, be imitations of life, which address the problems and dilemmas of the surrounding society and offers solutions to these. However, Sobchack's point cannot be disregarded as it complements many theories of genre films, and indeed it complements Buscombe's notion of an accretion of meaning gathered through the repetitive patterns of genre films.

In continuance with Barry Keith Grant's theories, he states that whether a genre film fulfils, violates or subverts generic convention, they are mythic capacities, which provides a means for cultural dialogue. This can be compared to what I stated in the section before this that genre films through ideological tension challenge the audience, and Grant is in tune with this as he states that genre films engage “their audiences in a

shared discourse that reaffirms, challenges and tests cultural values and identity” (Grant 2007, 30).

That myth is an important part of genre analysis explicitly comes to show in the western genre. In the western genre, traditionally set in the old American west, myth has a special place. Because we are dealing with historical fiction, we easily recognise the myths of the old west. The frontier structure is a mythic capacity in itself, as is evident in the many films that portray the building of the railroad, the conflicts arising between Native Americans and the civilised world. Another mythic part is the various mythic heroes, Wyatt Earp, Billy the Kid, Geronimo, General Custer etc. These are historical persons who themselves serve as mythic personas.

A closer look at myth may be in order here. The example I would like to draw is Christopher Nolan’s *Batman – The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). In this film we have Batman as the mythic hero, a protector of the innocents of Gotham. A particular part of this movie is interesting. In this film Batman, portrayed by Christian Bale, is thrown into “the pit” a prison in a far of land. In this dungeon Batman must climb up from the deep. The mythic proportions of this particular example are enormous. Batman himself is a cultural mythic figure, and the pit represents Batman’s inner conflicts, which he must overcome if he is to save the city of Gotham.

Returning back to Barry Keith Grant, he states, “while genre films function as ritual and myth, they are also inevitably about the time they are made, not when they are set” (Grant 2007, 30). If we take the latest Batman film as the example here, we can look at this film from the ritual perspective that *Batman – The Dark Knight Rises* projects an image of the real world and the problems existing within. Batman is about the decline of the city of Gotham, this correlates with the decline of the US economy, and the latest example of this decline is the former industrial powerhouse the city of Detroit, now a bankrupt city. Then Batman serves as a god among the living, apart from mortal affairs, sent to the human world to restore equilibrium to the social order (Grant 2007, 30). From this we can clearly see the mythic dimension of genre films.

If we return to Tudor and Buscombe, we can now conclude that myth contributes to the generation of a common cultural consensus, and that it also contributes to what Buscombe states as an accretion of meaning. In the following section I will conclude this theory section and introduce another, and I believe an important dimension of genre analysis, which is the issue of characters.

Ending discussion: Film VS Television, and the Issue of Characters

In the following, I will sum up the important points of my theory section. Furthermore, I will discuss the differences between film genres and television genres, mainly focusing on the narratives of each, and introduce what I believe is a fundamental element of the television genre series, the characters.

Throughout this theory section, I have uncovered many of the important elements of genre theory. To begin with, I introduced at the start of this section, the problems involving genre analysis. My focus on Andrew Tudor's claims that genre is defined via a common cultural consensus, proved to be an on-going discussion throughout this section. Tudor did not state what generated this consensus, therefore, I needed to look at some of the more concrete aspects of genre. Edward Buscombe offered a method in which you look at the inner and outer form of genre. Buscombe notes that the inner form consists of the films' themes, and the outer form can be considered the visual parts: the iconography and the structure (the narrative) of the genre film. Buscombe furthermore added that audiences of genre films have obtained an accretion of meaning through the repetitive nature of genre films. Here I concluded that Buscombe's accretion of meaning correlated with Tudor's common cultural consensus. However, I still needed to look at what other aspects of genre contributed to both the accretion of meaning and the common cultural consensus.

Rick Altman offered some of the explanation to this. His analytic method focused on the semantic and syntactic definitions of genre. The semantic components are defined as the iconographical conventions of genre films, whereas the syntactic focus on the narratives. In contrast to the other theoreticians Altman offered a higher focus on the structures of genre films. The conclusion here is that genre films are bound up with certain formulaic narratives, which again contributes to the generation of Tudor's consensus and Buscombe's accretion of meaning.

The issue of ideology also needed closer examination. Within ideology it is possible to speak of two dominant ideologies within the world of critics. We have the ritual approach which stresses that readership is the ultimate creator of meaning, and that genre films can be considered as reflections of reality. To this it is important to add

that genre can be considered as offering solutions to the problems and dilemmas of the real world, through the fictional product.

In contrast to the ritual approach there is another dominant ideology within the critical scene. The ideological approach holds a far more pessimistic approach to genre. They (the critics) believe that genre films are products of a system of government, or a capitalistic production company, which condemns the audience to an ideological lullaby programme. This means that genres are considered more or less propaganda for the dominant culture within the society in question.

Furthermore, the ideological aspects of genre can also be generic. For instance we can speak of ideological tensions within the genre films themselves. This comes to show, Robin Wood, Barbara Klinger, and Rick Altman all support this, in the many films that innovate genres by borrowing semantic or syntactic patterns from other genres and incorporating them in the genre in question. To this point, Barry Keith Grant adds that genre films can both challenge and reaffirm cultural values and identity.

The last concept I treated was the concept of myth, and the importance it has to genre. Myth is essential to genre analysis, because it contributes to generating a common cultural consensus, in the sense that we can recognise myth as a cultural phenomenon. According to Thomas Sobchack myths are cultural products shared through the media. This statement shows that myths fill up our everyday lives, and that they serve a social function. Furthermore, Grant states genre films themselves are mythic capacities that provide a means for cultural dialogue. In addition to this we can look at the western genre, and see that myth is an important tool for genre analysis. The western is a rich source of mythology, starting with the myth of the frontier, the building of civilised America and to the mythic heroes, who tread these western landscapes. In the following, I will discuss the differences between genre films and genre TV series with focus on the narratives and the characters.

Film Narratives vs. TV Narratives

In the following, my intent is to reveal the differences between the narratives of film and the narratives of a television series. The reason for this of course is that this thesis concerns itself with genre analysis of the TV series *Deadwood* from the network HBO.

There are obvious reasons that these two medias divert in terms of the narratives. Firstly, the narratives of the cinema, and especially those of genre films, are subject to a narrative with a running time of approx. 90 - 120 minutes. This leaves the director of a film with considerably less space to convey the messages to the recipients. Furthermore, the narratives of the cinema have a highly linear structure, especially those of genre films.

In contrast to the cinematic film, the TV series has a more complex narrative structure. In comparison to the cinematic narrative, a TV series' narrative has a running time that spans from 30 - 60 minutes dependant on which kind of TV series we are dealing with. A sit-com show traditionally has a running time of 20 – 30 minutes per episode, whereas the modern television drama series runs from 40 – 60 minutes per episode. Furthermore, the structure of a TV series is based on a seasonal construct. This means that a TV series runs in seasons, and the consequence of this is a stretched out narrative. A TV series such as *Lost* (2004-2010), created by J.J. Abrams, Jeffrey Lieber and Damon Lindenhof, ran for six seasons with 20+ episodes the first three seasons and 14, 17, and 17 episodes for the remaining three seasons.

An important notion is that the narrative of a TV series is a complex case, because we have three types of narratives combined into one product. It is important to remember that each episode has a narrative of its own. This narrative is a part of the seasonal narrative, and again this is connected to the entire narrative of the series. So what we are dealing with here, in the case of *Lost*, is a narrative, which spans over 117 episodes, six seasons, and each episode has a running time of approx. 40 minutes. This leaves us with a highly complex and elaborated narrative. This raises a question of how the series can maintain its viewers attention throughout this prolonged narrative. This is where I believe that the TV series distances itself from the world of cinema. It is through the characters of a TV series that I believe audiences maintain the connection to the series. In the following I will treat the theoretical framework of characters within TV series, mostly based on the theories of Jason Mittell. My theory depends upon the manuscript *Complex TV – The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (2012). Although, this book has not been published yet, Jason Mittell is an established critic within the realm of TV criticism, and plenty of critics have commented on his manuscript, which provides further authority, and therefore I believe that his work in progress can be considered a valid source.

Characters

As I noted earlier, I believe that one of the fundamental differences between cinema and television narratives is the work on characters. A starting point could be that the characters of the cinema can be considered rather static characters, especially those of genre films. Within genre films we are dealing with archetypical characters, and based on the shortened narrative (compared to the TV series narrative) there are limitations as to the development of these characters.

From the outset, Douglas Pye in his work with the western genre mentions Northrop Frye's distinction between five tendencies of characters, of which I will only mention three:

1. Myth, in which the protagonist is superior in kind to other men and his environment. The hero is in fact a god.
2. Romance, in which the hero is superior in degree to other men and his environment. Here the hero is mortal, but his actions are marvellous and the laws of nature tend to be to some extent suspended.
3. The high mimetic mode, in which the protagonist is superior in degree to other men but not to his environment. The hero in this mode is a leader whose authority, passions, and power of expression are greater than ours but who is subject to social control and to the order of nature. This is the mode of tragedy and most epic.
4. The low mimetic mode, in which the protagonist is superior neither to other men nor to the natural world. He is one of us; we respond to his common humanity and demand the same canons of probability we find in our own lives. This is the mode of most realist fiction.
5. The ironic mode, in which the protagonist is inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves, so that we have a sense of looking down on a scene of frustration or absurdity. (Grant 2012, 240).

The character traits mentioned here fit with the various characters inherent in the western genre. However, these apply to genre films, and only to some extent to genre TV series, as the characters existing within TV series has more depth than the characters of the cinema and can therefore transcend the different modes of character. This is a distinction, which is pointed out by Douglas Pye as he states that "the modes are not mutually exclusive but form points on a sliding scale" (Grant 2012, 240). As my analysis will later show, these modes are useful when distinguishing between character modes, as we can see a progression of the portrayal of characters in the history of the western genre.

Characters within a television series are highly dependent upon the audience's engagement in these characters. Jason Mittell highlights film scholar Murray Smith's term "recognition" as a crucial chief component of character engagement (Mittell 2012,). For serial television recognition means that the audience differentiate roles within the series on-going cast. Within the cast of a TV series characters are positioned in a hierarchical structure in "fluid but meaningful tiers of primary lead characters, secondary supporting characters, tertiary recurring characters, nonrecurring guest characters, and background extras" (Mittell 2012). It is possible that the audience is aware of these different tiers on differing levels, however, the majority of viewers are aware that leading characters are "more likely to survive and serve as the narrative focus than guests or extras" (Mittell 2012). However, this statement works in general, but there are cases in which the audience are surprised by the death of a leading character. As an example, the network HBO has a tradition for subverting the normal conventions, and therefore surprises can be expected when watching a show from this particular network, and of course *Deadwood* is produced by HBO so it makes sense to bring forth an example from this network. The example I would like to draw is the HBO series *OZ* (1997-2003). In the pilot of this show we are introduced to the character Dino Ortolani portrayed by Jon Seda, he functions as the leading character in this pilot. He, however, is killed off in the pilot in a brutal fashion, surprising the audience. And this is a general tendency throughout the series as more and more of the regular cast is killed. As it is a show set in a prison, and the characters are some of the most violent perpetrators of the prison, we are from the very beginning of the show starting to sense that this is how the narrative is going to progress. Jason Mittel further states that a long-established expectation of any given show is that a core cast of characters is the stable foundation throughout the show (Mittell 2012). However, as in the case of *OZ* this can be manipulated as to raise the dramatic stakes.

Proceeding with the characters of TV series it is important to distinct between two types of TV shows. Long running series such as *CSI* (2000-), *Criminal Minds* (2005-), and *Law & Order* (1990-2010), distinct themselves from other forms of TV drama because they are episodic procedural dramas, in which the storylines depend on weekly cases. Therefore it is possible for the show's creators to make changes to the original cast, because "each character plays a functionary role" (Mittell 2012). This means that the focus of the storyline is less on the characters themselves, but rather on the case that

they are dealing with. The TV drama has a much higher dependency on the elaboration of the character's persona, and the storyline is a more complex and prolonged narrative. Therefore, the latter type depends on the audience's engagement in the characters themselves.

Along with the term recognition, character analysis also needs to consider the term "alignment." This term covers two key elements: the attachment to characters, in which we engage ourselves in the experiences of particular characters, and access to the interior states of emotions, thought-processes, and morality (Mittell 2012). The previous example *OZ* is a good example of how alignment functions. The show here centres on Dino Ortolani's character creating an alignment. Series with a prolonged narrative usually does this from time to time; they centre on a character, so that we (the audience) get a closer attachment to the character in question.

The third factor we need to consider here is "allegiance" (Mittell 2012). Allegiance is the process of moral evaluation of the character that the audience have aligned with. This term covers how the audience attach themselves to the beliefs and ethics of the character, and achieve an emotional investment in the story of the character (Mittell 2012).

These three elements: recognition, alignment, and allegiance are crucial elements when we discuss characters. These factors bring up the subject of character change or character transformation. An important notion about these factors is that we are seldom confronted with the interior state of character through inner monologues, but rather through external channels such as other characters' dialogue concerning the changing character, or through the facial expressions of other characters reacting to change in the character in question, as I will also show in my analysis of *Deadwood*. I therefore support the theories stated here, as they function as important features in how we perceive characters on the screen, and how we invest emotions in these characters.

These character theories, I believe, can complement the genre theories from the previous section, as they function as a mode to deal with the more 'round' characters of a TV series, rather than the 'flat' archetypal characters of a genre film.

The three elements I have dealt with in the above, signify "character elaboration" (Mittell 2012), which can be described as how a character can make changes to the persona of the character over the course of the series, as my analysis of *Deadwood* will show. The character in question can change in terms of morality, ethics and appearance

so that the character may seem gradually new to the audience. There are two other important terms that we deal with in terms of character change: “character growth” and “character education” (Mittell 2012). The first term covers how a character matures and becomes “more realized and fleshed out over time” (Mittell 2012); the latter term covers how a mature character learns “a key life lesson over the course of a series and ends up a changed person” (Mittell 2012).

This concludes this discussion of how characters are the crucial difference between the narratives of the cinema and the narratives of television. As I stated earlier, Jason Mittell’s critical work on characters is a fruitful part of the analysis of TV narratives, because characters are the focal point of connecting with the audience of a TV series, as this discussion has shown. The following part of this thesis will consist of an analysis of the historical perspective of the western genre. This part is of severe importance as it serves as a method for establishing Tudor’s common cultural consensus, and Buscombe’s accretion of meaning.

Analysis

The Western Genre: A Historical Perspective

This section of my analysis will focus on the history of the western genre. This is a deliberate attempt to establish Tudor's common cultural consensus, and Buscombe's accretion of meaning, through various filmic examples of the western genre. Throughout this section, I will apply the concepts mentioned in the theory section of this thesis: iconography, inner and outer form of genre, semantic/syntactic relations, ideology, myth, and characters.

The western genre is perhaps the most elaborated genre in the history of American cinema. From the early beginning of cinema's history this genre has had its foothold in American culture from Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Trainrobbery* (1903) up till Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012), or Gore Verbinski's *The Lone Ranger* (2013) based on the original series *The Lone Ranger* (1938). The western genre's influence on American cinema is immense, as it was the offset for the action genre, which used the themes and characters of the western and applied them in another setting.

The western genre itself had its starting point in the pulp fiction of the late 19th century, and was recreated as a cinematic genre in the beginning of the 20th century, with the aforementioned *The Great Trainrobbery* as the first example of a genre that would dominate American cinema for the next 60-70 years. The following analysis of the western genre will begin with the filmic example *Stagecoach* (1939) by John Ford. The reason to start with *Stagecoach* is that it sparks the golden age of the western genre. *Stagecoach* is, by critics, often cited as one of the most influential westerns, because it encompasses many of the conventions of the western.

The Classical Westerns of the 1940's and 50's

John Ford's *Stagecoach* can be regarded as a classical example of a western film. From the beginning to the end of the film, the film conveys many conventions of the genre. Briefly, *Stagecoach* is about the ride of the stagecoach through Indian territory (I choose to use the conventional name, Indians, as it was the term used at the time, as opposed to

the contemporary politically correct term native Americans). Already at the beginning of the film, we have established the conflict and the all-important thematic construct of the western, the frontier thematic. The frontier thematic is deployed from the beginning, as we hear that the infamous Indian chief Geronimo is on the warpath. In fact, the opening sequence with the credits in the foreground is a montage sequence portraying the two ideological oppositions. The iconography of this sequence shows us first the stagecoach travelling alongside the cavalry. The music of this first line of pictures is the heroic tunes of the cavalry. In the following sequence there is a change in music to a more dramatic tune, as we are presented with the image of the Indians. The Indians of course represent the untamed nature of the west, whereas the stagecoach with its citizens aboard and the cavalry represent civilization. Furthermore, we are presented through dialogue with another characteristic theme of the western - the revenge theme. This thematic is mentioned in the dialogue of the Marshall Curley (George Bancroft), as we hear about Ringo Kid, whom we have not seen yet, and the Plummer brothers, who framed Ringo Kid for killing their foreman, and massacred Ringo's family.

As most genre films do, the central characters are presented in the beginning of the film. These characters are the passengers aboard the stage travelling from Tonto to Lordsburg. The common denominator of these passengers is that they are all running from something. This can be attributed as a symbol of the American dream, in the sense that these characters are all uprooting themselves in the pursuit of happiness elsewhere. Among these passengers we have several archetypal characters: we have the drunken doctor Boone (Thomas Mitchell), the notorious gambler and charlatan Hatfield (John Carradine), the prostitute Dallas (Claire Trevor), the corrupt bank manager Gatewood (Berton Churchill), reverend Peacock (Donald Meek), the conservative lady Louise Platt (Lucy Mallory), and the stagecoach driver Buck (Andy Devine). The hero of this story is the character Ringo Kid portrayed by John Wayne, and in fact this film was his breakthrough as an actor, both as a western actor and it was the starting point of a glorious acting career.

Ideological tensions are present in this film, as the characters themselves represent ideological oppositions. The prostitute Dallas is the opposition to the chaste Louise Platt, the former representing sexuality and the latter representing the repression of sexuality and the virtuous life, this creates tension throughout the narrative. Furthermore, ideological tensions are of course present in the frontier

structure, in which the Indians (a representation of nature and savagery) are the threat to civilisation.

If we look at *Stagecoach* by applying Buscombe's inner and outer form, it is evident that the interplay between the two forms enacts a special dynamic. We have the iconographical components: Indians, cavalry, stagecoach, horses, weapons, deserts, Mexicans wearing sombreros (this emphasises the frontier structure), the hero Ringo Kid is wearing a white hat, the villain Luke Plummer (Tom Tyler) is wearing a black hat, the vast desert landscapes, and the small hearths located throughout the untamed nature, the western towns etc. All of these iconographic elements located in the outer form of the genre, contribute to the forming of the inner form, which are the themes of the film. The iconography of the film reinforces the themes of the film, through the ideological tensions for instance created by the binary oppositions such as: Indians vs. cavalry (nature vs. civilization) or the hero vs. the villain, these tensions develop the frontier structure, and in the latter case also the revenge theme. They also serve a function in the elaboration of the western mythology.

The mythic proportions of *Stagecoach* are also signified in the way the hero is presented. In this case Ringo Kid appears in the desert landscape, almost out of nowhere, he is wandering the plains in order to go to Lordsburg to avenge his family's death. That he appears out of nowhere is an indication of the five modes of character that Douglas Pye mentioned. In this case we can apply the character Ringo Kid as being a romantic hero, in the sense that he is superior in kind to other men and his environment, however, he is a mortal man, as can be derived by the fact that he is a fugitive, and was previously sent to prison. Other conventions set in action by this film is the showdown, in which the hero defeats the villain in the ending of the film. Another important convention of the western genre appears in the end of the film, as Ringo Kid and Dallas ride off into the wild. This sequence is emphasised by Doc Boone's line: "Well... They're safe from the blessings of civilization (Ford 1939, Walter Wanger Productions). The quote here underlines the mythic figure that is the characteristic of the mythic western hero, who, nearly always, rides off into the sunset.

Of course, the American landscape is a mythic capacity and a convention in itself, which is repeated in every genre film. As I have briefly mentioned the American landscape is an indication of the frontier structure, of which the narrative of every western revolves around. The narrative of *Stagecoach* has, as I have stated, a frontier

structure. Furthermore, the narrative has the characteristics of a quest narrative. This term I borrow from travel literature. Within the quest plot structure the hero, (in this instance the heroes as I am including all the passengers of the stagecoach), sets out on a journey that tests the moral, resolve, and ethics of the character, in order for the character to achieve a higher understanding of themselves and his/her environment. The journey in *Stagecoach* can be attributed to this form of narrative. As I mentioned earlier all of the characters aboard the stagecoach are running away from something: Dallas the prostitute wants another life than the life of the prostitute. The corrupt bank manager has stolen cash from one of the clients of the bank he manages. Ringo Kid is running away from the confines of the prison in order to seek both revenge and redemption. Reverend Peacock wants to reach the bosom of his family in Kansas etc.

Another perspective of *Stagecoach* is how the film belongs to the western mythology. *Stagecoach* reveals a romantic portrayal of the classic western hero and the western way of life. As I stated earlier in this section, the modern action genre had its offset in the western genre, and this is also evident in this filmic example. Violence is a crucial element of the western genre, which can be seen in the many gunfights, deaths, killings etc. However, one convention, which is a crucial element of the modern action film, is the high-speed chase. In *Stagecoach* we have one of the best and most intense examples of this convention. In this sequence we follow the stagecoach as the Indians are chasing it. This sequence stands out as one of the best high-speed chases ever made in film history, primarily because it was made in a time when stunt technology was at its very beginning, and this makes it even more impressive.

This close-up of *Stagecoach* serves as a starting point of this section. Throughout this brief analysis, I have established many of the conventions of the western genre. In order for us to gain the historical perspective of the western genre, and in this process establish Tudor's common cultural consensus as well as Buscombe's accretion of meaning, I will look at other filmic examples of the western in order to gain the full spectre of the genre.

In the following, I will include other films of the western genre. I will not go into full detail, as I did with *Stagecoach*, however, my intent is to elaborate certain tendencies and characteristics of the portrayal of the western mythology. Before proceeding further into the analysis of other filmic examples, I wish to make a reference to the notion that genre films can be considered representations of the surrounding society, and that these

films project the problems and dilemmas of society and offer resolutions to these within the realm of fiction.

To this statement we can add that *Stagecoach*, if we look in a cultural historical context, offers resolutions to the tensions and dilemmas of American society in the late 1930's. The escalating events in Europe in the 1930's, the rise of Nazi Germany and the rise of fascism in Spain and Italy can be regarded as some of the reasons for producing these highly nationalist films in the US. This creates a paradox, because a fear of fascism and nationalism would perhaps cause a decline in the production of nationalist films, however, this is not the case. The response to the ideological oppositions is to produce, with *Stagecoach* as the prime example, even more nationalist films, thus solidifying the dominant ideology of America. The western genre works perfectly in this respect, as they portray a period of American history, in which the common citizens of America rose to the occasion and expanded the borders of civilization. The western hero thus becomes a symbol of the power of the individual and a manifestation of the American dream. The classical western hero, as I have stated earlier, is a mythic figure. His appearance is immensely masculine, and masculinity is one of the most characteristic traits of the western hero character. His resolve is immense as he disperses with the forces of evil, whether they be Indians (nature represented), or the villain who uses brute force to claim ownership over lands and wealth. This is of course another ideological aspect, in which we see an idealised male figure as the embodiment of the dominant ideology.

Moving on from *Stagecoach*, we can see that the classical western hero is a convention, which is applied over and over throughout the genre's history. In many cases, the western hero character is anchored around a specific actor. John Wayne is an actor, who has portrayed the rugged masculine western hero in many filmic examples, which earned him the nickname "The Duke." Another actor who embodies this classical hero figure is Henry Fonda. In John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946), Fonda portrays the mythic character Wyatt Earp, one of the great American mythical figures in the western mythology. *My Darling Clementine* is set in the town Tombstone, and can be considered, like *Stagecoach*, a classical western. In post World War II America, *My Darling Clementine* stands out, from an ideological critical perspective, as an element of nation building. The hero Wyatt Earp is the focal point of this storyline, in which he must protect the town of Tombstone from the Clanton family. In this respect the Clanton

family “signify the threat of fascism, reduced in this context to a family of thugs who appropriate wealth through acts of violence” (McGee 2007, 79). As was the case with *Stagecoach*, *My Darling Clementine* has the revenge thematic written into it. In the beginning of this film, Wyatt Earp and his brothers are cattle farmers, but the Clantons kill James Earp, the younger brother of Wyatt, and steals the cattle herd. No longer cattlemen, the Earp brothers settle in the town Tombstone, where Wyatt takes on the job of Marshall, and the remaining brothers as deputies. Therefore the Earp brothers must avenge the killing. The revenge theme is a typical western theme, which is also present in *Stagecoach*, in which the Ringo Kid avenges his family’s death, by killing the villain Luke Plummer and restoring order to society.

The other theme central to the genre is the frontier theme. In this instance, Tombstone represents the civilised world, and the outlawed lands surrounding it represent the frontier of civilisation. Another convention is deployed in the form of the shootout at the OK Corral. This is again a testament to the fact that the western genre is relying on several conventions that are repeated through the countless filmic examples. From the example of *My Darling Clementine*, we move to Fred Zinneman’s *High Noon* (1952). *High Noon*, elaborates the central convention of the semantic duel between villain and hero. In *High Noon*, set in the western town Hadleyville, we have the hero Will Kane (Gary Cooper). At the start of this film, we hear that the bandit Frank Miller (Ian Macdonald) is set free from the prison, in which he serves a life sentence. Will Kane was the man who captured Miller in the first place, and Miller seeks revenge over Kane. This film elaborates the semantic element of the duel, as it is the entire town of Hadleyville that becomes under siege, by the Miller gang.

Once again, we can state that the frontier theme is deployed, as is the revenge theme, further underlining the conventions of the western. However, while the conventional themes are deployed, there is another underlying theme of *High Noon*, the theme of class struggle. Throughout the film Will Kane’s character comes under scrutiny as we hear about the people up north (the ones who probably set Frank Miller free). Suspicions arise in the town Hadleyville, as the citizens suspect that the people up north have the motive to open shops in the town. They are of the belief that the Miller gang is sent out as a tool to frighten and abuse the citizens of Hadleyville, in order for them (the people up north) to move in and take over the town. Here there is a clear subversive thematic of class struggle. This does not correlate with the celebratory fashion of the

myth of the building of the capitalist America that westerns usually deploy. The reasons for this portrayal can be found in the director's origins. Being an Austrian Jew, Zinneman "understood the experience of having been betrayed by a community and by a capitalist that handed the reins of power over to a gang of thugs" (McGee 2007, 115). Furthermore, this example is subversive in response to the ideal western hero. Gary Cooper's character Will Kane is a man on the verge of a nervous breakdown, as he can see his doom in the forthcoming showdown. However, his doom was postponed and of course the western hero was victorious once again.

In the above, I have now established some of the characteristic conventions deployed in the western genre. In the next example we shall see the ultra classical appearance of the western hero. In the film *Shane* (1953), the myth of the hero is very much evident. In the opening sequence we see Shane, portrayed by Alan Ladd, descending from the mountains and riding across the deserted plains. He is the lone rider descending from the mountains in a god-like way, to help the mortals on earth. This image of Shane as a demigod is further elaborated, as he is faster than any other gunslinger of this world. The romanticised portrayal of Shane as the mythic hero is explicit in the way the camera looks up to him, further emphasising his heroic stature. In the end of the film Shane rides out alone, as it is the convention, he is not a part of this world, and once order is restored, he must ride out again to combat the forces of evil elsewhere. In the following, I will briefly look at how other westerns deploy similar narratives and themes, before proceeding with the culmination and perhaps the death of the western genre.

With *Stagecoach* as the primary example, other westerns have deployed the quest narrative. Among these are John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) and Henry Hathaway's *True Grit* (1969), both starring John Wayne. Both of these filmic examples revolve around the revenge theme and the frontier structure is also established in these examples. Furthermore, *The Searchers* can be categorised as an Indian vs. cowboys film, in which John Wayne's character Ethan Edwards, after hearing the news of the massacre of his brother's family, rides out in search of his surviving niece, who has been captured by the Indians. Likewise, in *True Grit* Rooster Cogburn, a burned-out drunken Marshall, rides out in search of the criminal Tom Chaney, who recently killed the father of Mattie Ross.

In the late 1950's, there is a gradual shift in the portrayal of the western. The opening scene of Howard Hawks' film *Rio Bravo* (1959), suggests that the western has become more violent than it has before, and a more realistic portrayal of violence has been put into play. The opening sequence shows the burned-out drunken ex-deputy "Dude" (Dean Martin), being humiliated at the saloon in Rio Bravo. The sheriff, John Chance (John Wayne), intervenes and a fight breaks out, where an innocent bystander is killed by the local bad guy Joe Burdett (Claude Akins). Joe Burdette is arrested by sheriff Chance and the plot revolves around the struggle to keep the bandit inside the jail. Furthermore, the development of the character Dude is what I would like to point out as significant. Dude is an alcoholic, and a plot structure is developed in which he must redeem himself, and return to his former glory. Through alignment with the several other characters, mainly the sheriff, Colorado Ryan (Ricky Nelson) and Feathers (Angie Dickinson), we experience the change of the character Dude. This is an elaboration of the revenge theme, instead of taking revenge on another character, Dude takes revenge upon himself and rises to the occasion.

Another film that deploys the narrative revolving around a captured bandit is Delmer Daves' film *3:10 to Yuma* (1957). This film is of particular interest because it deliberately sets out to challenge the conventions of the western to a certain extent. To this I would like to bring up the subject of ideology. Ideological tensions are evident in this film as it is shot in black and white, at a time when every film was shot in Technicolor. The inspiration is to be found in the film noir genre. And a particular scene is of great interest here. After the capture of the bandit Ben Wade (Glenn Ford), the hero Dan Evans (Van Hefling) finds himself locked up in a hotel room along with the villain of this story, waiting for the 3:10 train to Yuma in order to bring Ben Wade to prison. The characteristic trait of this scene is the use of lighting. The light seeps through the cracks of the venetian blinds, like the lighting in a film noir. The effect of this lighting is to manifest a claustrophobic feeling, as the bandits are closing in on the hotel, and the final showdown can be implemented. This corresponds with Rick Altman's suggestion that genres through processes of mixing semantic and syntactic conventions from other genres innovate or enriches the genre.

Furthermore, the portrayal of the characters in this example creates ideological tensions. Ben Wade is an unconventional villain in the sense that he appears to have a conscience. In comparison to the ruthless bandits of the west, who can be considered as

unscrupulous characters, Ben Wade shows mercy to his capturer and accepts his fate. In the following section I will progress to the westerns of the 1960's, where I believe the pivotal moment of the western genre is located.

The Westerns of the 1960's and the Start of the 70's – The Foreign Influence, and the Death of the Western

The previous chapter served to function as frame of reference in accordance with the theories of the two scholars Andrew Tudor and Edward Buscombe. The theories involved Buscombe's accretion of meaning and Tudor's common cultural consensus. As we can see from the analysis of the western in the 1940's and 50's, there are sets of clear formulaic patterns, of narratives, iconography, the use of myth, and themes thus confirming the theories of Buscombe and Tudor.

The 1960's were a fundamental decade for the western genre. The following part of this section will show that within this decade, the portrayal of western mythology would change in terms of both aesthetics and the illusion of the western myth. As implied by the title of this section, the western genre was influenced by a group of foreign directors in the 60's. Especially the influence of Italian directors cannot be ignored, as they established a western sub-genre that would change the landscape of the western entirely. For the purpose of this analysis, I will focus on two Italian directors, who had the biggest impact on the genre: Sergio Leone and Sergio Corbucci.

The first film in the line of Spaghetti Westerns that we shall take a closer look at is Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964). This film sparked the popularity of the sub-genre. *A Fistful of Dollars* conveys the conventions of the western up to a certain point, and it subverts the conventions as well. This film, which was a remake of Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961), portrays the western hero in another light, and inaugurates an entirely different heroic type within the western genre, the antihero. The established conventions of the western are, however, present in this film. The conventions present are: the frontier structure (seen in the vast desert landscapes), the revenge theme, and the multiple iconographic elements inherent in the western genre. The crucial distinction between *A Fistful of Dollars* and the classic western lies in the portrayal of both the character and the western myth. The character I described as the antihero has

the characteristics of the low-mimetic mode that is Northrop Frye's fourth distinction of character modes. He is a mortal man. However, he is also superior to the other characters of this film, in terms of intellect, moral (to a certain extent), and gun fighting skills. He is a deceptive, scheming, and cunning character. Furthermore, he is a bounty hunter/killer. The characteristic of this heroic figure is in stark contrast to the common western hero, who is noble and chivalrous.

In terms of the mythic representation of the western, this film stands out as being more gritty and violent. This explicitly shows in the way the narrative is constructed. The setting of this narrative is the Mexican border town of San Miguel (frontier structure is established). This town is held in grips by two competing gangs, the Baxter family, who is led by the sheriff John Baxter (Wolfgang Lukshy), and the Rojo family led by Don Miguel Rojo (Antonio Prieto Puerto), however the central character of the Rojos is Ramón Rojo (Gian Maria Volonté). The hero of this story uncharacteristically has no name, which is why Leone's *Dollars Trilogy* is often referred to as the *No Name Trilogy*. At the start of the film the hero (Clint Eastwood – an actor who became synonymous with the western genre, because of the impact of the spaghetti westerns) enters the town and we are introduced to the revenge aspect of this film. The Rojos have captured the innocent married woman, Marisol (Marianne Koch), because of her husband's debt to the Rojos. This is a far more brutal image of the scrupulous villains, than seen in previous westerns. However, more brutality is to come as the narrative unfolds. The hero uses his cunning and plays the two gangs out against each other, and this leads to the massacre of the Baxter family later on. The Baxter family are brutally killed by being burned alive, and the surviving members are gunned down, as they surrender. Towards the end, the hero's deceptive schemes are discovered, and he is beaten half to death. However, in the end he defeats the villains in the gunfight duel.

Another filmic example of the spaghetti western is Sergio Corbucci's *Django* (1966). This film is the most violent of the spaghetti westerns, and was immensely popular. The film was also a huge inspiration for future directors, such as Quentin Tarantino (*Django Unchained*) and Japanese filmmaker Takaschi Miike (*Sukiyaki Western Django*), both of whom enjoy the image of explicit violence in their films. The central issue of *Django* is the violent portrayal of western mythology. At the beginning of the film, we are confronted with the image of Django, portrayed by Franco Nero, wandering alone in the desert landscapes. He drags a coffin behind him, which is an

indication that death follows in his trails. Soon after, we are encountered with a group of bandits torturing a woman. The scene unfolds as we see the woman being strapped to a cross and whipped by the bandits, this can be attributed to the European torture methods (an image which we encounter in another spaghetti western that I will return to later in this section), further emphasising the violent representation of the western myth. Furthermore, Django shows the cunning and deceptive nature of the antihero, who in the end, when the betrayal is discovered, is brutally beaten and both of his hands are broken. This reveals that the spaghetti western, unlike the classic western, has established a narrative model, in which the hero is beaten senseless only to rise again for the final duel, revealing the robustness and resolve of this heroic figure.

This narrative convention is used in every example throughout the spaghetti western sub-genre. *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), Sergio Leone's second film and also the second in the *Dollars Trilogy*, tells the story of two competing bounty hunters/killers, "Manco" the man with no name (Clint Eastwood), and Colonel Douglas Mortimer (Lee Van Cleef). Within this story the revenge theme is evident as we see the story about a young woman, who kills herself while being raped by the villain El Indio (Gian Maria Volonté). We later discover that the woman was Mortimer's bride, confirming the revenge theme. The two heroes of this story are likewise beaten half to death, before the last confrontation of the duel. This convention is again repeated in the last film of *The Dollars Trilogy* – *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* (1966).

The final example of this study of the spaghetti western, is Leone's epic western *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968). This film portrays the building of the transcontinental railroad, and the establishment of civilization. This is evident from the film's introduction, in this scene we have a railway station placed in the middle of nowhere and we see three bandits waiting for the train. The pictures of this scene portray the vast mythic landscape of the west, and the railroad. In this sequence the hero of the story is introduced, and in a way that evoke the conventions of the mythic hero. Three bandits are waiting for the arrival of the train, and once the train appears the bandits turn away disappointed as the man they have been waiting for does not appear. The train continues its travel, and the sound of a harmonica is heard. As the train leaves the station the hero is revealed as the train coasts past him, like the rising of a curtain in the theatre. This is a general tendency of this film that the hero "Harmonica" (Charles Bronson) slides into the frame emphasising the mythic capacity that he is. In

this sequence we also see his skills with a gun, as he shoots down the three bandits (two of these are portrayed by the iconic western actors Jack Elam and Woody Strode) in a Mexican standoff.

As it can be argued that the opening sequence of *Once Upon a Time in the West* evokes the classical conventions of the western (the establishing of the frontier by portraying the mythic landscapes and contrasting this to the railway), elements of the rest of the film suggest a subversive approach to the western mythology. The ideological opposition to the hero is the Villain Frank. He is introduced in the following sequence, in which we see the image of a nuclear family that lives on the borders of civilization. The family of four (father, two sons, and one daughter) are massacred and they are shot from afar. Up until this point the conductor of this crime has not been revealed. In the following scene, we are presented with the image of Henry Fonda as the murderous unscrupulous villain Frank, who kills the family McBain and saves the youngest of the McBain children for last. This is a highly unconventional portrayal of the actor, who until this point has been the image of the classical western hero in his role as Wyatt Earp and also the actor who portrayed Abraham Lincoln in *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939). This portrayal must have come as a shock for the cinemagoer, as Fonda was usually contextualised as the hero of genre films. Further into the film, we discover that Frank is also the murderer of Harmonica's older brother, who he murders in the most brutal fashion, in which Harmonica's brother is placed on the shoulders of Harmonica with a noose around his neck, reaffirming the violent portrayal of the spaghetti western genre. The fact that the hanging of Harmonica's older brother takes place beneath a roman arch placed in the middle of the desert also a reaffirming image of the frontier structure, which again can be attributed to the medieval torture aspect of the European influence. This confirms the conventional revenge theme of the western, as Harmonica is seeking revenge for this crime, and also on behalf of the McBain family, as well as society.

The motive for the massacre of the McBains is revealed as we are presented with the railway mogul Morton, who wishes to claim the lands of the McBain family in order to expand his railroad. This thematic construct is an indication of the conflicting portrayal of the expansion of the west, and how wealth is distributed. It is similar to the portrayals in *High Noon*, *My Darling Clementine*, and, as it will show later in the analysis, *Deadwood*.

At the start of this section I mentioned the aesthetic aspect of the spaghetti western genre. This comes to show in the prolonged ritualistic duels at the end of the films. In *Once Upon a Time in the West*, the most prolonged of these duels occur. The scene is portrayed in the most aesthetic fashion as the camera first portrays how the two duellers approach each other, with the deafening score of Ennio Morricone as the soundtrack to this duel. Morricone's music is another iconographic element of Leone's westerns, as he is the composer in all of his films. The duellers then stop and the music escalates, it is of course the score of Harmonica's that is playing as it symbolises the conflict between him and Frank. The technical aspects of this duel are the catalyst of the aesthetic capacity that is this scene. The camera shifts from the duellers with close ups and ultra close ups, with the western landscape in the background, until the music stops and the guns are drawn. Harmonica guns down Frank, and as a symbolic gesture he gives back the harmonica to Frank, and Frank realises that Harmonica is the brother of the man he brutally hanged. Like the conventional western hero, Harmonica then leaves the film by riding away further out west towards the setting sun.

Once Upon a Time in the West serves as a film that both conveys the western myth in a romantic way, however, it also deploys a subversive attitude towards the western genre. This film indicates the beginning of the end of the western genre, as it portrays the killings of the conventional archetypical characters, and emphasising the building of the railroad as the indicator of modern America. This image is not new to the western genre. However, we get the sense that the killings of the characters within the film are an indicator that these conventional characters no longer belong in this film, and indeed that they don't belong in the next period of American history.

From this thread we move away from the spaghetti western and on to an unconventional portrayal of the western of this period. Sam Peckinpah's epic western *The Wild Bunch* (1969) elaborates the violent approach established by the spaghetti western. Furthermore, this film also represents a landmark in the death of the conventional western. Set in 1913 an ageing group of outlaws prepare for one final score. The time period of this film is in itself rather unconventional in terms of the classical western historical setting. Furthermore, this film breaks the conventions of the classic western by letting the protagonists of the film die, further emphasising the breakdown of the western genre.

The last example I wish to draw here is that of Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* (1970). This film is significant as it shows the break with the illusion of the western myth. This film tells the tale of the oppression of the Indians as well as telling the tale of Custer's fall at Little Bighorn. The crucial distinction here is that in a historical context, *Little Big Man* represented the critique of the Vietnam War, as well as breaking with the racial conflicts in the turbulent time of the 60's. Whereas the classical western of the 1940's and 50's represented a reaffirmation of the American values, in a world of escalating Cold War tensions, and the belief in the American dream, *Little Big Man* subverted these values and portrayed the western mythology in an entirely different critical light, in tune with the zeitgeist of that time.

This marks the end of the western genre as a dominant genre within American popular culture. In the following I will skip historically to the 1990's western.

The Westerns of the 1990's – The Leonean Inspiration

This section will deal with two films of the 1990's, one can be claimed as being a western, and the other can be claimed as a mixture of two genres. The first film, which I will focus on, is the western *Unforgiven* (1992), both directed by and starring the iconographic western hero Clint Eastwood. An ageing Eastwood portrays the ex-alcoholic gun fighter, who abandoned this life for a life as a pig farmer. However, he is drawn into one last conflict between a group of prostitutes, who seek revenge of two men guilty of disfiguring a fellow prostitute, who were giving leniency by the town's corrupt sheriff Little Bill (Gene Hackman). The film draws on the spaghetti western's violent tradition, but is slightly darker and more gritty in its appearance. From the modes of Northrop Frye we can distinguish that the character Munny is not the mythic mode but encompasses the low-mimetic mode, similar to the characters of the Leone westerns. Furthermore, Eastwood portrays the western landscapes similar to Leone's, in terms of the deadly aspect of the western landscape.

The second film I will emphasise is Walter Hill's remake of Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*. This film, called *Last Man Standing* is of particular interest in relation to what I stated earlier in this chapter that the western was taken over by the modern action film. This film applies the setting of the western ghost town, and applies the storyline of

Leone's film (which of course was a remake of Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*). In terms of iconography, this film combines the desolate western landscapes with the semantics of the gangster film. Furthermore, the film has the frontier thematic written all over it as it is set in a town on the borders of Mexico, and in the sense that there is a lawlessness aspect as well, distinguishing civilisation from the untamed wild. The ideological tensions are clearly evident in this film, as it is a genre mix with several characteristic traits of both the gangster film and the western.

In terms of Characters the film also applies the Leonean western hero in the form of John Smith portrayed by Bruce Willis. He has the characteristics of the Clint Eastwood character of the Leone films in the sense that he is the strong, resolute, masculine, and silent type.

This example exemplifies how the western genre is integrated within *Last Man Standing*, while other genres also play a part. Most striking is the mixing of the gangster genre film semantics with the structures of the western genre. Set in the prohibition era of the US, and with gangsters as the primary iconographic locomotors, we have a perfect example of generic ideological contradictions.

In the following chapter of my analysis I will proceed with an iconographic and semantic analysis of the HBO series *Deadwood*.

Analysis of *Deadwood*

The Setting and the Semantic components

The following analysis will be of David Milch's western drama series *Deadwood*, produced by the network HBO. Throughout this section, I will focus on the series' semantic components in relation to the genre theories established in my theory section. Furthermore, I will include David Lavery's anthology on *Deadwood*, called *Reading Deadwood: a western to swear by*, in which he has comprised several essays by established critics on the subject of *Deadwood*. This part of the analysis will consist of an analysis of the two first episodes of season one entitled *Deadwood* and *Deep Water*. In the following, I will proceed with the series' introduction sequence also known as the credits.

The credit sequence of any visual cultural production has in recent times obtained a central function in the production of a TV series. Amanda Klein writes,

while these segments certainly work to establish a mood for the program which follows, the images we see are primarily lifted from the diegesis of the series. [...] These credit sequences clearly borrow their stylistic cues from music videos, which employ chains of disparate images that stress discontinuities in time and space to evoke abstract concepts (Lavery 2006, 93-94).

Having established the function of the credit sequence of a TV series, we will now take a look at how *Deadwood* makes use of this convention in relevance to the generic context. Klein's distinction is evident in the credit sequence of *Deadwood*. The sequence is put together by disparate images lifted from the series narrative, and thus, from the credit sequence, we have established sets of expectations to the generic capacity of *Deadwood*. The images of this sequence are: mud, a boot in the mud, a horse running, a man with a pickaxe, wooden wheels travelling through the mud, butchers, blood, hands in a gold water stream, gold, naked women, poker cards, tents, wild landscapes indicated by the horse running through them, whisky poured into glasses, and the final image is of a saloon. All of these images contribute to the expectation of the western genre, as they are a chain of abstract images of life out west (Lavery 2006, 94). Furthermore, in this credit sequence we are presented with images of ideological oppositions: the wild landscape and the town indicating the frontier structure of the western. All the images

function as preliminary definitions of the narrative, which is about to unfold. The gold and the men with pickaxes indicate that we are situated in a prospecting community, and the tents indicate that this is a rather new settlement (or camp as it is frequently referred to throughout the series), and therefore we can expect the following narrative to be an elaboration of this central theme of the western. The image of naked women suggests a sexual thematic, and the poker cards and the image of whisky suggest that these vices will be of importance. Finally, the final image of the sequence, the saloon, indicates that this setting will be of central importance within the following narrative.

From the credit sequence we can now derive that the iconographic images arise from the generic expectation of the western genre. However, while the generic expectations arise through the images of this sequence, they are also images, which portray an unusual western, a western specked with blood and guts like the ice block of the butchers with blood running down. In the following I will proceed with the semantic analysis of *Deadwood*.

In the opening scene of *Deadwood*, we are presented with an image of a western town. The image includes a gallows and a street with buildings of the architectural period of the old west. The fact that the first image we see is of a gallows suggests that death is a theme of this scene and in fact can be seen as a recurring theme of the entire series. The camera pans to the building, which is the office of the town's marshal. The following scene plays out inside the office, where we are presented with marshal Seth Bullock (Timothy Olyphant). Through the dialogue in this scene we hear for the first time about the settlement Deadwood. We hear that there is no law in Deadwood, and that it is located on Indian land. This underlines the frontier thematic, the characteristic narrative structure of the western. Furthermore, this presents us with the ideological oppositions that are civilization vs. the wild untamed nature, which the Indians represent. In the following scene we witness the hanging of the criminal Clell Watson (James Parks), and after the hanging we see marshal Bullock and his partner Sol Star (John Hawkes) riding off in a wagon to settle in Deadwood.

The following scene portrays a caravan of wagons, displaying the image of the migration period again confirming the settling of the west thematic. Furthermore, within this scene we are presented with the mythic western hero Wild Bill Hickock (Keith Carradine), alongside another mythic figure of western mythology Calamity Jane (Robin Weigert). In this series the mythic capacity of Wild Bill Hickock is both a historical

mythic figure to us, the audience, but also a contemporary mythic figure, a celebrity, within the framework of the series, as signified with Calamity Jane's remark towards the stalling of the caravan: "It's only Wild Bill Hickock, you got stalled here in the muck!" (Milch 2004, HBO). After this little exchange of dialogue, Jane moves forward and looks out. The next images we see are those of Jane's point of view: a panoramic view of the caravan progressing through the mountains before revealing the town of Deadwood placed in the midst of these mountains. The significance of this camera shot is to further emphasise the frontier structure of the western genre, placing Deadwood as a representation of civilisation in the midst of the untamed wilderness. The generic capacity of this line of images reveals the crucial convention of the western genre. Throughout the genre's history this convention has been used as both a form of establishing the frontier thematic, but also as a way of conveying the myth of the wild western landscape, as a mythic representation of the ideological opposition to civilisation.

In the following sequence we follow the travel of Seth Bullock into the town. The image we see of him in the foreground riding the wagon with the cemetery in the background is a further implication of the theme revolving around death. The montage sequence here reveals the structure of Deadwood as a western town in the making. It has all the iconographic traits of a conventional western town.

So far the central issues of iconography have been evoked by the series' portrayal of the journey to the town, as well as the central western conventions and themes have been established.

The following sequence features the inside of the Gem Saloon, in which we meet several of the central characters of the series. Al Swearengen (Ian McShane) the Saloon owner, Trixie the whore (to use the show's conventional language) portrayed by Paula Malcomson, the town doctor Doc Cochran (Brad Dourif), Dan Dority (W. Earl Brown), Johnny Burns (Sean Bridgers), and the prospector Ellsworth (Jim Beaver) are all presented in this sequence. In the dialogue between Swearengen and Ellsworth we are presented with a central conflict of the series' narrative. The central issue here is the lawless society of Deadwood, who has broken the treaty between the US government and the Indian Sioux tribe, and has settled the lands of the Black Hills. Again this is an indicator of the theme revolving around the frontier.

Other iconographic traits, which help us define this series generically is the costumes. The people who inhabit *Deadwood* wear the conventional western attires of this historic period. There is also significance in the costumes worn by different societal classes. The New York characters, Brom and Alma Garrett (Timothy Omundsen and Molly Parker), are dressed according to their distinction as upper class New Yorkers. This distinction is also to be found in the way they speak and the way they interact with the people of Deadwood.

The characteristic western convention of violence is very much evident in this series. Throughout the first episode we experience no less than seven killings: the prostitute Trixie kills a customer at the Gem saloon; the Metz family, who fled the town of Deadwood, was massacred on the path home to Minnesota; Tim Driscoll is killed by Swearengen's right hand Dan Dority; and Ned Mason (Jamie McShane) is gunned down by Bullock and Hickock for the conspiracy of the Metz family massacre.

The Gunning down of Ned Mason is of significance here, because it evokes the convention in which the hero eliminates the villain in the standoff. In this example it is the characters Seth Bullock and Bill Hickock, who do the duelling against the suspect of the Metz family massacre Ned Mason. To this convention Amanda Klein states, "the western resolves its central conflict through the violent elimination of this binary [opposition], rather than the integration of these opposing forces" (Lavery 2006, 95). However, what needs to be pointed out here is how *Deadwood* diverges from this typical convention of the west. It does so by allowing the heroes to kill a man based solely on a suspicion. We clearly see that Will Bild Hickock and Seth Bullock do not have any evidence that Ned Mason was behind the massacre. Another shootout happens when Tom Mason (Nick Offerman) tries to avenge his brother's death, and Wild Bill Hickock draws first and kills him based only on Hickock's skills of perception in gunfights. These are just some of the ways in *Deadwood* breaks with the conventions of the western.

Having now established the iconographic traits of episode one, I will now focus on the second episode, however, my primary focus will be that of a few sequences conveying the generic conventions of the western.

The second episode of *Deadwood*, entitled *Deep Water*, further elaborates the iconographic traits, which I described in the previous pages. However, within this episode there are a few distinct scenes, which portray another semantic characteristic of the western. Following the death of Ned Mason, two strangers arrive in town, and they

enter the Gem saloon. We discover that it is Tom Mason (Nick Offerman), the brother of Ned Mason, who was shot dead by Bullock and Hickock, and Persimmon Phil (Joe Chrest). This incident reveals the conventional theme of revenge.

The immediate recognition of *Deadwood* as a western genre text is evident throughout the series' first episode. It has all the iconographic traits of a conventional western. However, what separates *Deadwood* from other filmic examples of the western, is the way it portrays the mythic landscape of the western, and the societal order as well. *Deadwood's* portrayal of the western mythology is characterised by its brutal nature. Although, it remains rather conventional in its form if we apply Buscombe's distinction of inner and outer form, in terms of the characteristic iconographic elements that are present in the conventional western as well as the themes that these iconographic and narrative traits create, *Deadwood* retains an unconventional attitude to these conventions. This is evident in the de-romanticised approach, which is very much in play here. This comes to show in the violent nature of this portrayal and the general lack of morality. To this Amanda Klein adds,

Deadwood's vision of the Western relies on the ambiguity, or perhaps even the impossibility, of morality and values over the traditional and more digestible binary oppositions of the classic film western (Lavery 2006, 98-99).

The uncharacteristic western portrayal, which *Deadwood* deploys, comes to show in the issues of morality explicit in the character of Al Swearengen. Swearengen is a man with apparently no concern for human life as is revealed in the series' first two episodes. His actions display the lack of moral of Swearengen's character, an example is his interaction in the cheating of the New York character Brom Garrett. Swearengen orchestrates the sale of a gold claim, which has no apparent value (a mistake he later regrets, as the claim reveals itself to be of great value), by conspiring with the hotel manager E.B. Farnum (William Sanderson) and Tim Driscoll. Swearengen later denies Tim Driscoll his promised share of the score, and his remark to his right hand man, Dan Dority, "Don't forget to kill Tim" (Milch 2004, HBO), reveals his general lack of concern to the value of a human life. This casual remark is also an evidence of the profane wittiness inherent in *Deadwood*. Furthermore, *Deadwood's* violent approach is emphasised in the way the corpses are disposed of - they are eaten by Mr. Wu's (Keone Young) pigs. The show can be described as portraying the western in a dark realistic

light, as seen in the examples mentioned in the above and also in the scene where Trixie has killed her customer, in which Doc Cochran sticks an object through the bullet hole in the man's head. This dark hyperbolic portrayal is characteristic throughout the remaining narrative of the series.

Another way this series subverts the normal conventions of the western genre can be seen in the portrayal of Wild Bill Hickock. In this series, Wild Bill Hickock represents the mythic western hero. His portrayal remains, however, a subversive element in the overall portrayal of this series' generic capacity. Normal conventions would portray the mythic western hero, as a man with uncompromising moral ethos, who shows great resolve, and always helps the people in need. This convention is to some extent met, as is evident in the first episode of the series. In episode two *Deep Water*, which refers to Hickock's situation within the Deadwood camp, it is evident that the semantics inherent in the mythic hero character begins to crumble. Hickock's capacity as a mythic hero in Frye's distinction, digresses in the way Hickock acts and in his general state of mind. Hickock's character reveals affections for violence, alcohol and gambling, not all in conflict with the classical portrayal of the western hero. The digression of Hickock is expressed in episode two, in which Hickock's gambling brings him in conflict with Jack McCall (Garret Dillahunt). Through alignment with the character Charlie Utter, we experience this digression, seen in his growing concern for the future of Wild Bill. An incident, in which it is most evident that Hickock's character separates from the classical representation of the western hero, is the shooting of Tom Mason. This incident breaks with the convention that the hero always draws last, further emphasising the digression from the classic representation of the hero.

In the following section, I will focus on the narrative of the first season of *Deadwood*.

The Narratives of *Deadwood*

The previous section dealt with the iconographic and thematic traits of *Deadwood*, and on how *Deadwood* separates itself from the conventional western films of the genre. The following section will deal with *Deadwood's* narrative structures. The focus of this

section will be on how *Deadwood*, being a TV series, structures the semantic elements and how it portrays the conventional narratives of the western genre.

Starting with the first episode, which I described in the previous chapter, we can derive that the narrative of this first season is a complex case. The series sets out with the characteristic frontier structure, and this narrative structure is the dominant narrative of the entire series. This is underlined in episode five, *The Trial of Jack McCall*, in which Jack McCall is tried for the murder of Wild Bill Hickock. In this episode, Swearengen in a conversation with Cy Tolliver (Powers Boothe) elaborates the conflict that would arise if Jack McCall were to be found guilty of the murder of Wild Bill Hickock

Swearengen: We're illegal. Our whole goal is to get annexed to the United fucking States. We start holding trials what's to keep the United States' fucking Congress from saying: "Oh excuse us, we didn't realise you were a fucking sovereign community and nation out there. Where's your cocksucker's flag? Where's your fucking navy or the like? Maybe when we make our treaty with the Sioux we should treat you people like renegade fucking Indians. Deny your fucking gold and property claims, and hand everything over instead to our ne'er-do-well cousins and brothers-in-law" (Milch 2004, HBO).

This quote exemplifies the frontier narrative structure, which is the underlying narrative of the entire series. It further emphasises Swearengen's position in accordance to the narratives of the series. He is the orchestrator of many of the sub-plots throughout the show. The frontier structure is the key thematic construct of the western genre, and is therefore also the primary narrative of this series. The entire narrative of *Deadwood* revolves around this central narrative structure, as it portrays the building of a civilised community on the borders of civilisation, and indeed between Dakota Territory and Montana Territory, from the mud of the Black Hills to the established prospecting society of Deadwood.

The primary narrative plays out in all three seasons of *Deadwood*, and is elaborated with the coming and goings of various officials from Yankton, Dakota. Each of these situations comes into conflict with the series' primus motor Al Swearengen, thus keeping an intense pressure on the series' leading character and orchestrator of events.

As mentioned, the frontier structure is kept throughout the course of the three seasons. However, this structural narrative is not the only narrative at play in the series. The first season begins with the narrative concerning the easterners Garret, who

purchases the gold claim from Tim Driscoll, of course steered by the puppet master Al Swearengen. This narrative has a central significance to the course of action of the first season. Swearengen deceives Brom Garret into purchasing the gold claim, which by the first look of it seems deprived of gold. Brom Garret threatens Swearengen by telling him about his relations to the Pinkerton agency, thereby forcing Swearengen to eliminate him. In the killing of the Garret character, the gold claim reveals itself as a bonanza. The widow, Alma Garret, then has to decide if she wishes to sell the claim, but she suspects foul play and enlists the help of Hickcock, who then assigns Bullock to do the job. The interaction between these two characters very quickly trigger the semantics of a romance narrative, conflicting with the integrity of Seth Bullock, as we hear that his wife is on her way to Deadwood. These narratives function as a sub-plot in the overall frontier structure narrative. The plot is elaborated throughout the course of the first season, and is further elaborated in the following two seasons, as we experience Alma and her efforts in establishing her as a dominant figure within the hegemonic structure of the Deadwood community.

Another plot throughout the first season is manifested in the character of Reverend Smith (Ray McKinnon). The religious thematic is commenced in episode one as it is signified before we enter the Deadwood camp. It is in the interaction between Jane Cannery and the Metz family that we get the first signs of Deadwood as a godless place not suitable for the traditional family life. This religious plot is further elaborated through Reverend Smith, as we follow his story throughout the first season. Our first encounter with the reverend is the very first episode, in which he quickly establishes relations with Seth Bullock and Sol Star. Throughout season one, his character serves as the religious representation in *Deadwood's* godless society. As the story progresses Reverend Smith takes ill by an unknown disease, which causes seizures and we experience his digression towards the ending of season one. In an action of mercy, Swearengen kills the sick reverend. This narrative evokes the feeling that god has now left Deadwood, leaving the town as a godless society. However, we (the audience) have had that feeling all along the narrative, as we have experienced the violent, brutal nature of the town.

The massacre of the Metz family is also a significant narrative of the series, as it represents the dismemberment of the conventional family and all values that it represents. However, Jason Jacobs points out that

Nonetheless *Deadwood* is a kind of family story, one where the 'family values' of love, loyalty, jealousy, betrayal and grief are developed through the interactions and intersections of its main characters. [...] So *Deadwood* begins with a family literally torn apart and then proceeds to make one anew; the formation of the Deadwood family begins with the dismemberment of the Metz one (Jacobs 2012, 44).

The significance of the Metz family massacre then becomes a way for the series to segregate itself from the conventional western series' portrayal of the frontier family, who lives on the borders of civilisation, and then *Deadwood* creates an entirely different family structure based not on the traditional family structure, but instead on the gradual coming together of the Deadwood community.

In terms of conventional narrative structures inherent in the western genre, *Deadwood* makes use of several characteristic narrative structures. Firstly, revenge thematic narrative constructs are evident in this series. Examples of these are Tom Mason's attempt to kill Wild Bill Hickock for the killing of his brother Ned Mason, and Seth Bullock's vengeance on Jack McCall for the killing of Wild Bill.

Furthermore, in the sixth episode entitled *Plague* Seth Bullock rides out in search of Jack McCall. This example evokes the quest narrative structure, as seen in many of the classical westerns such as *Stagecoach*, *The Searchers*, and *True Grit*. Bullock sets out on the journey to avenge the death of Wild Bill Hickock, and his encounter with an Indian is of great significance for his character. The encounter, which again displays a tendency for a hyperbolic violent portrayal of a fight to the death, represents a spiritual experience of the hero character. The Indian both represents the untamed nature, as the indicator of a frontier structure, and also a spiritual entity, as Indians are often portrayed as being in touch with nature and a higher power, and therefore comes across as a wise and spiritual representation of mankind. Bullock's encounter with the Indian, then can be seen as a spiritual encounter common to the quest structure narrative. This quest narrative is a common feature of the western genre, as I have already mentioned, but what makes this encounter significant is the change of Bullock's character. After the encounter with the Indian we see a change in Bullock's behaviour. He does not kill Jack McCall, which would be the conventional end result if this series followed the typical conventions of the genre vis-à-vis Klein's quote on the elimination of binary oppositions. His change is further emphasised in the following episode *Bullock Returns to the Camp* in the dialogue between Bullock and the widow Garret. This change of character seems to

be Bullock's way of adapting into the new societal order, which is the series' premise – the establishment of a new society and order. However, as the series progress Bullock's character struggles to throw away his typical character mode, seen in the way he tries to throw away his aggressive and violent behaviour (a character trait inherent in the typical western hero), and does this to some extent, but goes back to his old ways leaving a further testament of the complexity of the series narrative. This again underlines the generic ambiguity of *Deadwood*, as its appearance as a conventional western is continually challenged by its subversive approach to the established generic conventions.

Another important narrative revolves around the Hickock character. Wild Bill Hickock represents the conventional western hero, and if we apply Frye's distinction of modes of character, we would place Hickock in the mythic mode. However, as the narrative progresses, Hickock's character comes under scrutiny. His alcoholic tendencies and gambling addiction, becomes a central conflict within the series as well as a central conflict within the generic frame. Hickock struggles to adapt to the new social order of *Deadwood*, as is evident in many sequences throughout the show. Hickock's character digresses from the mythic mode and can be determined to belong to the low-mimetic mode instead. Hickock's death and the events leading up to his death can be seen as another subversive approach to the western genre. Traditional conventions of the western would dictate that the mythic character is the focus point of the narrative. However, Hickock's death represents the death of the western hero, and becomes a representation of the death of the western myth. Douglas Howard points this out.

Bill's death is that important because it marks the end of an era. If they ever did exist in the first place and if there was anything so simple or idyllic about them, the days of frontier justice and street duels and lawmen maintaining order largely with their guns is over (Lavery 2006, 51).

The issue of Hickock's representation further emphasises *Deadwood's* de-romanticising portrayal of the western myth. That *Deadwood* works as a contrast to the many western genre films is illustrated by Ina Rae Hark, who characterises *Deadwood* as a town western, and she states

The cinematic version of this story is the “town tamer” Western in which the newly arrived lawman must drive out or subdue the illegal profiteers who have taken over in the absence of a functioning judicial system, as in the various versions of the battle of Wyatt Earp and his brothers against the Clantons or Will Kane against Frank Miller in *High Noon* (Hark 2012, 12-13).

This further illustrates that the Hickcock character deviates from the traditional character inherent in the western. However, this can also be said to apply to Bullock’s character, as he takes over the reins of town tamer in Hickcock’s stead. In the beginning of the series, we see Bullock’s character in the role of marshal. However, when he arrives in Deadwood his primary goal is to setup a hardware shop, but despite his intentions to abandon law enforcement, he cannot leave an injustice alone as is indicated by his involvement in the Metz family massacre and also in the aid of Alma Garret. As the narrative progresses, Bullock becomes an uneasy ally with Swearngen towards the end of the season, which is a further indication of *Deadwood*’s break with the conventional narrative of the western, in which hero and villain are binary oppositions and cannot coexist within the frame of the narrative; one has to eliminate the other.

The narratives of *Deadwood*, can be said to be both complementing the generic narratives of the western genre, but they also subvert these conventional narratives in a way that separates *Deadwood* from the typical depiction of the western genre. The primary narrative revolves around the frontier structure, a structure that is common in the generic landscape of the western, but the portrayal of this frontier is done without the nostalgic romantic portrayal of western mythology. The common attitude towards the frontier structure is to establish a clear boundary between civilisation and nature. These are represented through the iconographic elements: the town, which is situated on the borders of wild untamed nature. Other representations are the characters who distinct themselves by being heroes in one way or another, thus becoming the embodiment of civilisation. The binary oppositions to the town are the wilderness that surrounds it and the representatives of this wilderness, a common representative is the Indian, which is also the case in *Deadwood*. However, *Deadwood*’s portrayal of the civilised world obscures the boundaries between civilisation and the untamed wild. This is evident in the violent, brutal, and uncivilised manner that the characters inherent in *Deadwood* interact. Furthermore, Al Swearngen the series’ leading man is a subverted villainous figure in the western genre, and the fact that he is the anchor of the narrative

is a subversion of the common conventions of the western genre. In the following I will progress with my analysis of the series by focusing on the two central characters of the show: Al Swearengen and Seth Bullock. These characters are both the binary oppositions to each other, but also uneasy allies in the narrative, which again further testaments the subversive nature of *Deadwood*.

The Characters of *Deadwood* – Al Swearengen and Seth Bullock

“His greatest act of criminality was stealing the show” (Hark 2012, 13), so states *Time*’s reporter James Poniewozik, and this is exactly what the character Al Swearengen does. Ian McShane’s character Al Swearengen is the king of *Deadwood*. He is a cold, calculating, sinister, and uncivilised brute, who holds the reins of the series’ narrative. Swearengen’s character contains all the characteristic qualities inherent in the stereotypical villain of the western genre. However, these are not all the qualities that are located within this complex character Al Swearengen, and this illuminates *Deadwood*’s complex narrative. The villainous nature of Swearengen creates a paradox within the generic frame of this story. Typically we would align ourselves with Swearengen’s counterpart, Seth Bullock, who would be the conventional western hero within the generic frame, but that is not (well, to some extent it is) the case with *Deadwood*. The question then becomes: how do we achieve allegiance with a character such as Al Swearengen?

This question is answered in the character traits of Swearengen. He is a charming man, whose rhetorical skills and affection for the theatrical quickly establishes a bond between the audience and his character, within the frame of the show as well as with the audience on the other side of the screen.

In the series’ pilot Swearengen’s villainous qualities are displayed in the scene where we first see his misogynous tendencies. When Trixie kills her customer, Swearengen is forced to put her into her place, by threatening to break her arm and kill her. This is the first time we see this tendency, and this behaviour is further emphasised throughout the series. However, as the narrative progresses we clearly see his affection towards Trixie, who can be considered as Swearengen’s favourite whore. When Swearengen hears that Trixie has had sex with Sol Star, not only does he humiliate her, but tells her to sleep with her own kind. He then picks a random whore and, in what will

become one of the trademarks of this series, performs a soliloquy during a blowjob with the aforementioned whore. During this sequence we get a rare insight into Swarengen's tragic life story, a story that reveals that he was left by his mother outside an orphanage in Chicago. This scene is particularly disturbing by the fact that Swarengen performs a soliloquy about his mother, while getting sexual satisfaction. Even more disturbing it becomes, when Swarengen climaxes after saying: "she [his mother] wound up as a ditch for fucking cum" (Milch 2004, HBO). Afterwards, like the gentleman that he is, he says to the girl: "Okay, go ahead and spit it out. You don't need to swallow" (Milch 2004, HBO). Though this sequence may be disturbing on many levels, and certainly from a Freudian perspective, it reveals the tragic story of abandonment that Swarengen experienced, and thereby adds another layer to his character, leaving the audience with a closer connection to the character.

From this incestuous example of Swarengen's character, we return to what I mentioned in the previous section, in which I described the character setup in *Deadwood* as a family. This notion leaves Swarengen as the patriarch of the *Deadwood* family. It is evident in the way he controls, and in the way he interacts, with both the people whom he employs at the Gem saloon, but also a patriarch to the Deadwood community. His employees at the Gem saloon, and his allies too for that matter, continually fight for his attention. As is evident when Swarengen enlists Silas Adams (Titus Welliver), and the growing jealousy of Dan Dority results in a fight between the two for the recognition of their patriarch. His patriarchal status is further emphasised in his caring actions towards the other characters in the *Deadwood* community. Some of these actions in which Swarengen displays his affectionate characteristics lies in informing Alma Garret of a Pinkerton agent in Deadwood, who turns out to be Miss Isringhausen (Sarah Paulson) the teacher of Sofia Metz (Bree Seanna Wall). Swarengen's consolation of A.W. Merrick (Jeffrey Jones), when vandals assigned by Tolliver destroy his printing press, is also a testament to Swarengen's multifaceted persona. And of course his constant backing of Wu, the Chinese equivalent to Swarengen, also underlines this characteristic trait of him.

During the first season of *Deadwood*, Swarengen's actions are guided by his paranoia and his extraordinary skills of self-preservation. The narrative of the first season revolves around Swarengen's position in the camp, and the various threats to this position. We hear that a warrant is out for him for a murder committed in Chicago.

Furthermore, the introduction of the high-end saloon “Bella Union”, threatens Swearengen’s position as the alpha male in the camp. Towards these threats Swearengen reveals himself as a man willing to solidify his position with an all means necessary approach, which is often acted out through violence. Jason Jacobs states that “Swearengen is vulnerable to paranoia because of the thing that makes him such a successful saloon keeper; he is an athlete of perception” (Jacobs 2012, 49). Swearengen’s skill of perception comes to show in many instances throughout the series. He is able to read the characters he interacts with and also has an ability to read an entire room evident in the scene in the pilot when news is revealed that Indians have massacred the Metz family:

Swearengen: I know word’s circulating Indians killed a family on the Spearfish road. Now it’s not for me to tell anyone in this camp what to do, as much as I don’t want people getting their throats cut, scalps lifted, or any other godless thing that these godless bloodthirsty heathens do, or if someone wants to ride out in darkest night. But I will tell you this. I would use tonight to get myself organised and ride out in the morning clearheaded. And starting tomorrow morning, I will offer a personal fifty dollar bounty for every decapitated head of as many of these godless heathen cocksuckers as anyone can bring in tomorrow, with no upper limit. And that’s all I say on that subject, except the next round is on the house, and God rest the souls of that family. And pussy’s half price next fifteen minutes (Milch 2004, HBO).

Firstly, what is revealed in this scene is Swearengen’s rhetorical skill. He is able to capture the room, and convince the people in it to do what he proposes. However, what is even more interesting is the theatrical way he delivers his messages, in this scene he takes over the “stage.” This theatricality is a trademark of the entire series, also evident in the many soliloquys that are performed throughout the series, and this is also an element, which separates *Deadwood* from other series or films, not only belonging to the western genre, but to the media of television.

Previous to the scene in the Gem, in which Swearengen shows his rhetorical qualities, he tells Dan Dority that he needs to address the massacre and specifically states that it is crucial that the people in the camp think that Indians were behind this massacre and not white road agents, because it is of central importance that the frontier structure is kept so that the stability of the camp can be secured. This is another way, in which Swearengen reveals his patriarchal status; he protects the camp from outside interests. This is his primary role within the course of the narrative in all three seasons. In season two Swearengen navigates his way through the various officials from Dakota

carrying the responsibility of the camp on his shoulders, in order to gain the best possible transition of annexation to the United States. Furthermore, in season two another threat is exposed to the people in Deadwood. The narrative of season two revolves around the threat of George Hearst (Gerald McRaney), but he is not exposed until the very last episode of the season. Instead, the interests of Hearst are represented through Francis Walcott (Garret Dillahunt), who is the cause of many tensions throughout the camp in season two.

Jason Jacobs compares Swearengen's character to Milton's Satan

Swearengen embodies the compelling charisma of articulate villainy worthy of Milton's Satan. Like that Satan, Swearengen is rhetorically gifted and when he speaks with that rich bass vibrancy which floats from his chest to hum in his mouth, it is irresistible even when we do not immediately grasp its meaning (Jacobs 2012, 51).

Jacobs' description is a very accurate statement of the compelling character that Al Swearengen is. He is Satan incarnate, shown in his ability to compel audiences with his voice and appearance, while having villainous motives in his mind. This is of course even more evident in Swearengen's violent and brutal nature, in which he never shies away from cutting a throat or three, or gutting a man in his office. However, evil he may seem to us his actions also display a compassionate side to his persona. His affection for the "gimp" Jewel (Geri Jewell) is one of these examples, in which Swearengen reveals his softer side, albeit he shows this affection in his normal coarse fashion. All of Swearengen's characteristics display the ambiguity of this series. His compelling and very elaborated character digresses from the traditional villain of the western genre, and this is one of the causes that create allegiance with his character. We cannot ignore that Swearengen is a bad mouthed, misogynistic, and uncompromising brute, but his character also shows that he is not without the qualities of the hero type, which puts him in the long line of antiheroes, who have become an established character type within popular fiction, a character type perfected by Tony Soprano of *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) and Al Swearengen.

The best way to distinguish Swearengen from the typical villain is to compare him to his counterpart Cy Tolliver. In Cy Tolliver we have the typical villain, who displays no sign of remorse to his villainous acts. Tolliver, who runs the Bella Saloon, is charming like Swearengen, but he lacks the compassion of Swearengen's character, and therefore we cannot form allegiance to his character like we can with Swearengen's.

Swearingen's other counterpart is Timothy Olyphant's character Seth Bullock. As Swearingen's counterpart, Bullock portrays the classical western hero. By appearance Bullock's fondaesque stature makes him look like the mythological western hero. His voice resembles that of Clint Eastwood, with the low hoarse, hissing, almost whispering, characteristic tone, all of these traits make him the manifestation of the classical western hero, the lone wandering type. However, Bullock has to be compared to Wild Bill Hickock, and what distinguishes these two characters, is that Bullock, unlike Hickock, is a "transitional figure; like Hickock he is a cop, a man who can enforce order through his skill with violence, but his entire rationale for moving to Deadwood was to become a shopkeeper, not a lawman" (Jacobs 2012, 56). That Bullock is a transitional figure is manifested in season one episode four *Here Was a Man*, when a flat out tired Bill Hickock leaves Bullock at the building site of his store. In this scene Bullock tells Wild Bill to go home and get some rest and then says as he looks out over the town: "I got her covered" (Milch 2004, HBO). The signification of this scene is the transaction of character roles, Hickock's time is up, his end is near, there is no place for a character like him in the new world. Hickock's character belonged to the old west, a wild west in which tensions were resolved through gunfights. Bullock, on the other hand, is a hero type who belongs in the new world. He is a firm believer of the law, as portrayed in the very first scene in *Deadwood*. Here Bullock executes Clell Watson, because the law dictates him to do so

Bullock: I'm executing sentence and he's hanging under colour of law. [... addressing Byron Samson (Christopher Darga)] You called the law in, Samson. You don't get to call it off just cause you're liquored up and popular on payday (Milch 2004, HBO).

After executing the sentence, Bullock glances towards Sol with a facial expression that shows Bullock's displeasure of killing. This is the reason for moving to Deadwood, to get out of law enforcement. However, throughout the series Bullock shows problems in adapting to the new way of life that he sets out to live. Although his intentions are to quit law enforcement, Bullock cannot leave an injustice alone. This is evident throughout the narrative as Bullock time and time again involves himself in the affairs concerning injustice: he beats up Alma Garret's father Otis Russell (William Russ) for his inappropriate behaviour towards his daughter; he interferes when Con Stableton (Peter Jason) is appointed sheriff and reveals himself as a corrupt racist, and Bullock takes on the job himself; he arrests George Hearst and drags him out by the ear of the Bella

Saloon, for acting drunken disorderly, but of course the real motive is to put him into place for the escalating violence his arrival to Deadwood has spurred. Bullock is a man driven by his emotions, which primarily consist of a violent rage, and his strict sense of morality. Bullock lacks the social capabilities of Swearingen, which is why these two central figures, albeit ideological oppositions, end up being allies. On Bullock Jacobs writes,

A silent exterior masks and, in its stillness, implies an unspecified energy and power which dominates the spaces around it and confuses those who interact with him; he is not skilled in deceit, not good at hiding the emotions he projects so powerfully. He is a conscience in search of an object. [...] As the story develops Bullock will have to substitute Hickock [...] for Swearingen, whose strategic and social skills, can benefit the both of them (Jacobs 2012, 56-58).

Bullock is a character whom we would place a white hat on if this was a conventional western portrayal. However, if we apply Frye's distinction of character modes, we would place Bullock in the low-mimetic mode. Bullock's character flaws (his violent rage, and his lack of social skills) places him in this mode, because we can clearly see his humanity, and therefore we would not place him within the mythic mode. Furthermore, Bullock's character is a further testament on how *Deadwood* breaks with the mythical hero of the western genre. The fact that Bullock ends up being an ally to Swearingen is also a contributing factor to *Deadwood's* unconventional drive.

By comparison, Seth Bullock and Al Swearingen are representatives of two ideological oppositions. Swearingen is a representation of capitalism in its most brutal and villainous form, and Bullock is a representative of the virtuous and decent law abiding citizen. Between the two they represent two poles that are binary oppositions to each other. However, what is the paradox within the narrative of *Deadwood* is that these two separate poles join forces, thus obscuring the lines of the narrative structure, which is the frontier structure. Furthermore, the conventions of the western genre put the hero character as the eliminator of the savagery of the Wild West. Normal western conventions dictate that these eliminations come in the form of the hero killing the villain. However, the only kill we experience throughout the series that comes from the hand of our hero, Bullock, is the hanging of Clell Watson at the very beginning of the series. This is a clear violation of the conventions of the western, which is the characteristic ideological trait of *Deadwood*. In the following, I will analyse *Deadwood* from an ideological perspective.

Ideology and *Deadwood*

In the following section it is my intent to analyse *Deadwood* by applying the two ideological concepts the ritual approach and the ideological approach. Starting with the ritual approach, I wish to refer back to what I stated in the analysis of *Stagecoach*, about how a paradox was created when American film production responded to the growing ideological tensions in Europe by producing nationalist films with an even higher degree of nationalism.

Deadwood aired in 2004, three years after the pivotal event in modern American history, 9/11. In contrast to the westerns of the 1940's and 50's who portrayed the western mythology in a triumphant way, as was the custom at that time because film production could be used as a device of propaganda, *Deadwood* does the complete opposite. Although, *Deadwood* inherits the iconography and the narrative structure of the classic western film, it depicts these classical structures and conventions in a completely different way. In terms of iconography *Deadwood* leans more on the tradition of the spaghetti westerns, with its use of close-ups and its use of characters who are depicted in the low-mimetic mode rather than the classical mythic mode of the classic western. This is also evident in the lack of images displaying the grand wide open landscapes, which is a common convention in the classic western film, instead, *Deadwood* relies more on images from inside the town as David Drysdale remarks

[...] the cinematography is often claustrophobic. Most scenes take place inside the cluttered camp, where there is barely room to move in the midst of crowds of people, businesses, and mines being built in the middle of the street (Lavery 2006, 140).

He further notes that the iconography are intertextual references, connecting *Deadwood* to the westerns of the late 1960's and 70's, which are dedicated to the deconstruction of the western's triumphalism (Lavery 2006, 140).

If we take a look at the story arch in season one, we can see that it is a story concerned with the arrival of law in the Deadwood camp. This is evident through the narrative concerning Bullock, which is finalised in the ending of season one when Bullock becomes sheriff of Deadwood. The second season is concerned with the

annexation of Deadwood, and the third season spins around the arrival of George Hearst, the representation of industry and capitalism in its most brutal form.

Like the WWII westerns and the cold war westerns, which acted as counter ideologies by their representation of the idealised male figure, the hero, and their general glorification of the American history, a history that is mythologised through the frontier thematic of the Wild West. *Deadwood* has to be seen in the light of America's greatest tragedy within modern history. Time and time again, the western has been a focal point, in which ideologies could be consumed by audiences whenever a national crisis emerged, or an overseas ideological threat appeared. However, this is not the case for *Deadwood*. Instead, *Deadwood* through its portrayal of this epic part of American history becomes a self-reflective negotiation of America's past as well as its contemporary history.

On the issue of *Deadwood*'s depiction of law Drysdale states that

Deadwood, I will argue, successfully feeds the audience's hunger for what Forrest G. Robinson terms "bad faith"-a covert discussion of social injustices that a society or subgroup is uncomfortable with addressing openly. It enables its audience to address its own complicity and guilt regarding the nature of law and authority in the USA since the World Trade Center terror attacks. [...] more significantly, *Deadwood* also confronts its viewers with their fear that the American brand of democracy is imperfect and not a government of the people but of the privileged (Lavery 2006, 133-134).

Thus we can derive from Drysdale's reading of *Deadwood* that *Deadwood* is a response to the events occurring after 9/11. Some of these events are the implementation of the Patriot Act in 2001, the National Security Strategy in 2002, and the following invasion of Iraq in 2003. The National Security Strategy emphasised USA's right to use aggression towards rogue states before they were able to use WMDs against the USA, hence the invasion of Iraq. As stated earlier, *Deadwood* can be read as a "town tamer" western and this justifies the claim that *Deadwood*'s portrayal is a response to the "re-emergence of such explicit American interventionism abroad" (Lavery 2006, 139).

This reading is evident in the character of Seth Bullock. He is depicted, as a former lawman come to civilise the town of Deadwood, much like the conventional generic character. However, his intentions were to settle down, and leave his violent past behind, but he is pulled back in the game. Although, he is a man of strong moral and integrity, he has to ally himself with the very forces he is obliged to expel from civilisation, in order to do his proper function. Furthermore, Bullock compromises his

integrity by having a love affair with the widow Garret, a further indication of the deconstruction of the conventional town tamer. Through this subversive stance to the conventional hero character,

Deadwood interrogates the position of the western hero, and, by proxy, that of the USA in contemporary politics. The series seems to suggest that in order to redeem the world, the Western hero must become one with the world's most corrupt elements (Lavery 2006, 139).

Furthermore, Bullock's capacity as the western hero, or the town tamer, is shared with Swearengen, who in fact is the real town tamer of this story, Bullock is more of a tool at Swearengen's disposal. This further suggests *Deadwood's* subversive approach to the hero convention. Swearengen is comparable to those hero types, who are distanced from society - the lone wanderer type. Swearengen is the principal figure of the society of *Deadwood*, but he refuses to participate in social functions. Such a function is the wedding of Alma and Ellsworth, in which Swearengen does not participate. Instead, he is standing on his veranda overlooking the wedding talking to the severed Indian head, which was brought to him the day Hickock died, distancing himself from society. This is Swearengen's favourite position and many scenes portray him in this position, overlooking the events in the thoroughfare of Deadwood, as Ina Hark accurately states: "Like the classic Western hero, he enables community without ever joining it" (Hark 2012, 70).

Social institutions are another part that *Deadwood* treats with a ludicrous tone. The trial of Jack McCall is a good example of how these institutions are subverted. The trial is held in the Gem, and the jury deliberates by retiring to the whore's quarters, a suggestion of a deconstruction of the governing institutions. Furthermore, when the town elders assemble to form a municipal government, for the sole purpose of deciding who to bribe, and the fact that E.B. Farnum is elected mayor, and a later scene shows him stinking drunk and getting a hand-job in the Gem is a further indication of the humoristic tone towards these institutions.

Money is a central subject in the structure of *Deadwood*. Throughout the series money is what stabilises the camp, whether it be in the form of bribes to officials from Yankton, or if it is Swearengen trying to calm down a crowd by offering half price for pussy, or drinks on the house. Drysdale notes

Additionally, the sole motivation for annexation is monetary. There is no suggestion in the show that annexation will improve the camp by bringing “civilization” to Deadwood; rather, the civic leaders desire annexation because it would be good for business (Lavery 2006, 143).

The emphasis on monetary relations in *Deadwood* suggests a critical relation to the governing bodies of the USA, which has often been critiqued for favouring the wealthy. This is visible when George Hearst enters the show.

In the second season, the annexation narrative is elaborated, but another plot begins to form. George Hearst, the prospecting tycoon, is introduced in the last episode of season two, and he is the focal point of the narrative in season three. George Hearst represents capitalism in the cruellest sense possible. Ina Hark accurately describes him as being “the worst neoliberal nightmare: a ruthless business competitor backed by the regulatory power of government rather than constrained by it” (Hark 2012, 77). With Hearst’s introduction to the narrative of *Deadwood* many tensions arise. Hearst’s henchmen wreak havoc on the town as they murder and oppress the workers, who form unions. Furthermore, Hearst’s arrival in camp further emphasises the ideological deconstruction that *Deadwood* deploys. Unlike the classic westerns, which celebrate the myth of the frontier, *Deadwood* remains critical in its portrayal of this mythology. The capitalist and industrialist revolution, which is represented by George Hearst, is demonised rather than celebrated. This further underlines how *Deadwood* obscures the boundaries between savagery and civilisation. *Deadwood* becomes a portrayal of how civilisation was established through the savagery of the white man. Thus the line between the Indians in season one, who historically have been the ideological opposition to the civilised white population in popular culture, and the white man is erased, revealing the savage nature of civilisation. In the following I will conclude this thesis.

Conclusion

As described in the introduction to this thesis, this thesis has concerned itself with the concept of genre. The focus of these studies has been the western genre, and the primary textual object was the HBO TV series *Deadwood*, created by David Milch. My intentions with the analysis of *Deadwood* were to show how *Deadwood* related to the western genre. In the analysis I emphasised: *Deadwood's* iconographical portrayal, in relation to its generic origins; its narrative structure; its use of characters; and an analysis of the ideological relations.

In order for me to make this analysis, I needed to look at the theoretical concepts concerning genre analysis. In my theory section I discussed various theories concerning genre films. In the beginning of the theory section, I discussed the problematic concerns involving categorisation. Through the theories of Andrew Tudor and Edward Buscombe, I emphasised two critical concepts: Andrew Tudor's common cultural consensus and Edward Buscombe's accretion of meaning. These two concepts were crucial to the workings of genre theory as Tudor's common cultural consensus states that genre films can be categorised if we rely on this consensus. Buscombe disticted that audiences had learnt to recognise certain formal elements as charged with an accretion of meaning, which then defined the genre.

However, the two concepts needed a further examination, as they both left out the critical question of how do these concepts establish the consensus or the accretion of meaning. Therefore, I proceeded with some of the methods, which one could rely on in terms of establishing the accretion of meaning and the common cultural consensus. Firstly, I examined the method of Buscombe, which was an analysis based on the inner and outer form of genre. These concepts Buscombe borrowed from Wellek and Warren, as they had applied it in literary criticism. The outer form of genre was attributed to the various visual elements of genre films, in other words, the setting and the iconography of the genre, and also the narrative structures of the genre. The inner form of genre relied on the information gathered through the analysis of the outer form, because the inner form is attributed to the themes of genre films. Through this method of analysis it is possible to establish certain generic conventions, which is the basis for establishing an accretion of meaning, and a common cultural consensus.

The theories on inner and outer form of genre did not concentrate themselves on the notions of narratives within genre films. On this subject I turned to Rick Altman's theories on semantic and syntactic relations within genre. Within this section, I emphasised the importance of the narratives of genre films, as it was the central concern of Altman. Through the method established by Altman, it is possible to point out that genre films are bound up with certain narrative structures, which helps define the genre. An example of such a narrative structure is the western genre's structural narrative revolving around the frontier theme.

Rick Altman further contributed to the issue of ideology. It is evident that there are two critical approaches to the concept of ideology within genre measures. A ritual approach which stresses that genre films are representations of society and that the films concern themselves with the problems and dilemmas of the surrounding society, and offers solutions to these problems and dilemmas. The ideological approach, on the other hand, has a more pessimistic attitude towards genre films. This approach regards genre films as representations of the dominant ideology and that genre films are vehicles that address the citizens on behalf of the government, or an industry's appeal to its clients. Furthermore, Robin Wood and Barbara Klinger contributed to the forming of my ideological theory section. Robin Wood stated that genres were to be analysed in terms of binary ideological oppositions, meaning that genre films generically contradicts themselves by incorporating semantic elements from other genres. Furthermore, ideological oppositions are located in the structure of the genre films. Again, the western genre's structural narrative of the frontier emphasises the ideological oppositions of nature and civilisation. Barbara Klinger complemented Wood's theories of ideological contradictions. Klinger's theory was concerned with the form of genre. Her focus was on how genres evolve through semantic and syntactic experimentation, stating that genres deploy ideological oppositions to challenge the established conventions and therefore leading audiences to recognise other formal elements within the genre.

Furthermore, I examined how myth contributed to the forming of genres. Barry Keith Grant stated that genres are mythic capacities, which provide a means for cultural dialogue. Grant further commented that genre films are about the time they are made, which corresponds to the ritual approach, and that genre films are representations of contemporary social myth.

It is my conclusion that all the concepts described in the theory section contributes to creating Tudor's common cultural consensus, as well as Buscombe's accretion of meaning. However, throughout the theory section I noticed that the theorists did not concern themselves with the issue of characters. This is to be seen in the light of the fact that genre films work with static archetypal characters, and therefore they are not shown the same critical attention as other parts of genre analysis. However, my object of study was a television series, and a television series has a highly more complex structure than a traditional genre film. Therefore, television series rely heavily on characters as the foundation of the narrative.

The issue of characters relied on the theoretical work of Jason Mittell, and the five modes of character of Northrop Frye. There are three crucial concepts, which is to be considered in the analysis of characters: recognition, alignment, and allegiance. These three concepts are the foundation of a character analysis of a TV series, as they describe how an audience relates to the characters of a series.

My analysis consisted of two parts. Firstly, I analysed the historical development of the western in order to establish a common cultural consensus and an accretion of meaning. Secondly, I analysed the HBO series *Deadwood*, by applying the theories from my theory section.

The historical analysis took its outset in John Ford's *Stagecoach*, in which I established the iconographic elements inherent in the western genre. Furthermore, I can conclude that *Stagecoach* through its narrative clearly deployed the frontier structure as its thematic foundation. *Stagecoach* also revealed that ideology had a dominant role, as *Stagecoach* was produced in a time, in which ideological tensions were escalating in Europe. Therefore, *Stagecoach* can be read as an ideological counterpart to these escalating tensions, through its use of the idealised western hero, and its romanticised portrayal of the western mythology. This portrayal creates a paradox, because the response to the escalating nationalism and fascism in Europe is an even more nationalistic portrayal of American history. *Stagecoach* further revealed another characteristic theme of the western, the revenge theme.

With *Stagecoach* as the primary example, I continued my analysis with the historical development of the western. Through this analysis I can now conclude that the westerns of the 1940's and 1950's were dominated by this ideological portrayal of western heroes. The characters of this period were idealised male heroes, who we could

place in the mythic mode, if we apply Frye's distinction. However, a gradual shift in the themes was evident in this period. The revenge theme is still evident, but it is elaborated with a redemption theme. Such an example is Howard Hawks' *Rio Bravo*, in which the character Dude redeems himself, and therefore takes revenge on himself, from being a drunken former gunfighter into the hero character. Here we would place the character within the low-mimetic mode, which is a development within the western genre's history.

In the decades 1960's and 1970's, there is a radical change in the portrayal of the western mythology. The spaghetti westerns of the 1960's stand out as the pivotal change in the western genre. Although, these films applied the conventional structure of the western genre, as well as the iconography, they deployed a revision of the myth of the old west. It was no longer the romanticised portrayal, which dominated these films. These films adopted a far grittier image of the western mythology, as they were increasingly violent in their depiction. Furthermore, these films introduced a new type of hero, the antihero.

The 1960's and 1970's were dominated by ideological tensions within American society, as the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War caused a revision of American history, and American foreign policies. Thus can we read a film such as *Little Big Man*, as being a revisionist western, in which the frontier structure of the western came under scrutiny.

In similar mould Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, can be counted as a revisionist western, as it functions as a self-reflection on the hero character.

My analysis of *Deadwood* focused on how *Deadwood* separates itself from the western genre. Throughout my analysis of iconography, it is easy to recognise *Deadwood* as being part of the western genre, because it has all the characteristic iconographic elements of a traditional western. However, I can conclude that *Deadwood* in its portrayal of the western myth achieves another effect than those of the classic western. *Deadwood* deploys an explicit form of violence, bordering on the hyperbolic, which subverts the romantic idealised western portrayal. Furthermore, *Deadwood* does not rely on the convention of displaying the vast American landscape through panoramic images (only one time throughout the series), instead, *Deadwood* uses images from inside the clustered camp, creating a sense of claustrophobia. The characters inhabiting *Deadwood*

is also part of the iconography, and these are subverted as well. A mythic capacity such as Wild Bill Hickock, is reduced to being a former gunfighter past his peak, and his addiction to whisky and gambling, and the fact that he refuses to adapt to the new societal order, further emphasises *Deadwood's* subversive nature.

The narrative of *Deadwood* is the classic structural narrative of the frontier. It is seen in the way it establishes the boundary between nature and civilisation, Indians and white men. Furthermore, *Deadwood* deploys several characteristic narrative structures, such as the quest plot structure, the searching structure, and the revenge theme is also evident within this series. However, *Deadwood* obscures the boundaries between nature and civilisation. By its violent portrayal of life within the camp *Deadwood* achieves the effect of breaking down the borders between savagery and civilised behaviour, illustrated by the many murders, pigs digesting corpses, and misogyny etc. Thus I can conclude that *Deadwood* portrays the establishment of civilisation and capitalism in a way not seen before in the history of the genre. We clearly see the brutality, in which the American society was built, which is a further indication of *Deadwood's* subversive approach to the genre, which has always been a triumphant portrayal.

The characters of *Deadwood*, of which I focused on Al Swearengen and Seth Bullock, also revealed how *Deadwood* departed from conventions. Most significantly *Deadwood* had, to some extent, reversed the roles of the hero. In this story Al Swearengen is the focal point of the narrative, and he is also the hero in a paradoxical way. Al Swearengen is a villain in the sense that he is a brutal unscrupulous murderer, but he becomes the hero of the story. He is the patriarch of the camp, and he carries the fate of the town on his shoulders. Normally, two counterparts Swearengen and Seth Bullock form a partnership, whereas normal conventions of the genre would have Seth Bullock eliminate Swearengen because he is the villain. However, this is not the case, which again reveals how far *Deadwood* distances itself from the traditional western. In this respect *Deadwood* obscures the boundary between good and bad, which has been a consistent distinction throughout the history of the western.

From an ideological perspective, I can conclude that *Deadwood* can be read from a ritual perspective as being a critical portrayal of western mythology. Furthermore, *Deadwood* can be read as being a reflection on American foreign policies after 9/11. In addition to this, *Deadwood* remains critical or ironic towards the law, and social institutions by portraying them as ludicrous. Take the instance of the formal municipal

government or the trial of Jack McCall as perfect examples of how *Deadwood* ridicules such institutions. The arrival of George Hearst, the representation of industry and capitalism, is an indication of *Deadwood*'s stance toward this ideology. George Hearst is demonised in this portrayal, and thereby *Deadwood* demonises the unscrupulous capitalism. Furthermore, all of these ideological traits inherent in *Deadwood* can be seen as a response or a reflection on the distribution of wealth within American society, in which there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor.

This concludes this section and in the following I will take a look at *Deadwood*'s influence on the western genre.

Following *Deadwood* there are two examples in recent western genre history, which I would like to focus on. First, I will take a look at a film, which cannot be classified as a western, however, it resembles the western genre and indeed resembles the portrayal that *Deadwood* had set as an example. The film *No Country for Old Men* (2007), directed by the Coen brothers, follows the portrayal of western mythology that *Deadwood* deployed. Although, we cannot classify this film as a western in its original sense, it certainly resembles the western a lot. This film deploys the frontier structure of the western, but it is set in a different time, it is set in 1980. What is evident in this film is that there is decay in the moral ideals of the western "thereby forcing the western tradition to collapse into moral nihilism" (Csaki 2010, 222). The setting of this film indicates a time in which the taming of the west has occurred, however, where this film resembles the western is the distinction between good and bad; and law and lawlessness. An ageing sheriff, Ed Tom Bell (Tommy Lee Jones), is the central character who helps create the frontier structure, his counterpart is Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem), who is the villain of this tale. Although, this film portrays the western mythology in an unfamiliar setting, we can clearly see evidence of the frontier thematic. What is central to this film, in regards to *Deadwood*, is how it portrays the myth of the wild west, and in particular how it deconstructs the moral code of the wild west. Like *Deadwood*, this film represents another reflection on the myth of the west, portraying it as a cold blooded place where killers do as they please, and there is nothing the hero can do about it.

The second example is the Entertainment One Television series *Hell on Wheels* (2011), created by Joe and Tony Gayton. This series portrays the story about the

building of the railroad connecting east and west. It is classical in the sense that it deploys the themes and the traditional narratives (Expansion of civilisation, the frontier structure, and revenge themes) of the western genre. However, we can clearly see the influence of *Deadwood* within this example. The theatrical element of the soliloquy is incorporated within the series, thereby connecting it to the narrative tradition of *Deadwood*. Furthermore, it takes up *Deadwood* de-romanticised portrayal of the expansion of civilisation and thus obscures the boundaries between savagery and civilisation.

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