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Raoul Walsh, between the Western and the Southern: *Pursued* (1947), *Silver River* (1948), *Colorado Territory* (1949)

Sarah Hatchuel

- ¹ “If I were a man, I would have killed him long ago” (*Pursued*, dir. Raoul Walsh, 1947): through this Shakespearean assertion that sounds like words from Lady Macbeth or Beatrice,¹ Thorley (Teresa Wright) explains her plans to marry Jeb, the man who killed her brother, as the first step of her plan to murder him. Although *Pursued* was released as a Western, it seems to follow the codes of the “Southern” to construct a complex Scarlett-like female character, both manipulative and in love. This essay analyses how three films directed by Raoul Walsh, *Pursued* (1947), *Silver River* (1948) and *Colorado Territory* (1949), released at the end of the forties, are, in fact, steeped in the codes of “Southern” films not only through their music — Max Steiner, the famous *Gone with the Wind* composer scored *Pursued* and *Silver River* — but also through their motifs and themes. They recall films such as *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and herald *The Night of the Hunter* (Charles Laughton, 1955) or *Band of Angels*, Walsh’s own “Southern” (1957, with a music also scored by Max Steiner). These three films feature classical themes of the Western genre — wild barren landscapes, the conquest of the West, mining, railroad extension, attacks on stagecoaches, train robberies, outlaws — in a typically male world. When they were released, the three films were advertised with trailers that placed them, without a doubt, within the Western genre.² The excerpts selected for promotion emphasized shootings and pursuits on horseback, and the film titles were written in square and thick fonts associated with the Western. The films have also been received, reviewed and scholarly analysed as Westerns. For instance, *Silver River* looks, according to Marilyn Ann Moss, “like a stock western that falls flat after the early action sequences” (Moss 274). However, if one adopts a fresher look on these three films by putting aside the promotional background and overcoming the expectations that the genre generates, it soon appears that the films also include the

subjects and motifs of plantation films and of movies taking place in the Southern States of America — themes such as the unavoidable passing of time, the nostalgia for a paradise lost, a past that cannot be escaped and a clandestine or mixed-race identity, as well as visual cues such as dilapidated houses, graveyards and *memento mori*. Moreover, they feature female characters with strength, resilience and “gumption”. It is then possible to uncover a whole intertextual network of references, a flow of visual and musical motifs as well as a circulation of actors, which are all at the source of “ghosting effects”.³ The meeting of the Western and the Southern gives, therefore, rise to an intense confrontation between a male-coded world and a female-coded world, questioning both filmic and social codes. In other words, these three films challenge *genre* and *gender* norms at the same time. The “ghosting effects” may sometimes be retrospective. When defining intertextuality as “the reader’s perception of relationships between a text and other texts that preceded or followed it” (Riffaterre 9, my translation), Michel Riffaterre emphasizes the active role of readers or, in this case, of viewers. The perception of an intertext may, indeed, appear as a *reading effect* and depend on the reader’s own memory of other texts or films — which may have been read or watched in an order that does not correspond to the chronological order of release. Whereas in traditional source study intertextual dialogues are considered to work from the past to the present (as scholars usually look for influences in older works), it can be argued that they also work from the present to the past. A reader/spectator may shed light on a text/film by using texts/films that were produced before but also *after* it, as a lens through which it may be reconsidered and seen to be connected to its successors. Riffaterre’s definition of intertextuality will be useful for the following study since it implies an anachronistic and retrospective dimension that can challenge a purely historical and linear view of artistic works and encourage us to go back and forth in terms of compositional time to analyze narrative and aesthetic links and networks.

***Pursued*: The spectral Southern**

- 2 *Pursued* (1947), located in the wild landscapes of New Mexico at the turn of the 20th century, is built on Jeb Rand’s quest to recover his identity, on the return of the repressed and on the recognition of, and identification with, the destroyed childhood home. Jeb (Robert Mitchum) tells the film in flashback as he is stranded in a dilapidated house. This house, he comes to remember, is his former home (“That house was myself”, he says), where his father was killed when he was just a child. From the start of the film, Jeb is haunted by the ghost of his father’s murderer and by nightmares of boots and lights (which are disclosed to be Jeb’s father’s spurs and the flashes of gun shots as he tried to defend himself), in a dream puzzle reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock’s 1945 *Spellbound*.
- 3 Jeb Rand, as a child, is taken and adopted by Mrs Callum (Judith Anderson), and raised with her daughter Thorley and son Adam (John Rodney), with whom he fights regularly, from childhood to adulthood, in scenes that emphasize Jeb’s otherness from the “real” Callums. We will eventually discover that Mrs Callum was Jeb’s father’s lover: Mrs Callum’s brother-in-law, Grant (Dean Jagger), who could not stand her unfaithfulness, killed Jeb’s father. Grant is determined to kill all the Rands he knows, even the young boy, who is pursued not only by his recurring nightmares but by this

dangerous, armed figure. Performed by Judith Anderson, the character of Mrs Callum retrospectively calls to mind Southern figures such as Big Momma Pollit that the actress plays in Richard Brooks's screen adaptation of Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, a film released eleven years later. She also evokes another figure of Southern films, Mrs Cooper (played by Lillian Gish) in *The Night of the Hunter*, who protects the orphaned children against the evil preacher Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum). In male-dominated worlds, the two female characters share the courage of taking arms against men who threaten their young *protégés*. In a paradoxical reversal, Robert Mitchum, who plays Jeb in *Pursued*, will embody Harry Powell eight years later, as if the former child victim had become the stalker in turn. In *Pursued*, a deep-focus shot (see Figure 1) shows a lonely Mitchum in the foreground being trailed by a mysterious figure on horseback up a cliff in the background. Unaware of being followed, Jeb/Mitchum is riding and singing "The Streets of Laredo" — a song about a cow-boy expressing his last wishes before dying. The sequence heralds the famous silhouette shot in *The Night of the Hunter* (see Figure 2) as Powell is tracking the children while ominously humming the hymn "Leaning on the everlasting arms" — again, a song about the imminence of death and the belief in after-life.

Figure 1: Mitchum in the foreground being trailed by a mysterious figure on horseback up a cliff in *Pursued*

Credits: all figures are DVD screen captures.

Figure 2: Mitchum tracking the children in *The Night of the Hunter*

- 4 *Pursued* is linked to the genre of the “Southern” not only through the retrospective ghosting of actors, but through the theme of the dysfunctional family and the question of identity, in a re-playing of a Greek or Shakespearean tragedy. Jeb and his stepsister Thorley fall in love, while his stepbrother Adam, who has always considered Jeb an outsider to the family, is jealous of his military achievement. Adam allies with Grant, tries to murder his stepbrother, but Jeb kills him in self-defence and thus becomes the hate object of Mrs Callum and Thorley. These incestuous overtones come with an emphasis on death through Gothic elements — bones, graves and metaphorically haunted houses. When Jeb finally finds his childhood home, the camera lingers on the ruins as if they had been the outcome of a terrible conflict (see Figure 3), recalling the derelict houses after the Civil War in *Gone with the Wind* (see Figure 4). The film also creates powerful *memento mori* in the form of cattle skulls as well as unnamed graves, which might actually be Jeb’s parents’ (see Figure 5). Eros and Thanatos are coupled even in Thorley and Jeb’s wedding: Steiner’s musical adaptation of Mendelsohn’s wedding march is gloomy and would be better suited for a funeral.

Figure 3: The ruins in *Pursued*

Figure 4: Derelict houses in *Gone with the Wind*

Figure 5: The unnamed graves in *Pursued*

- 5 The film creates its own version of the American Civil War. As Jeb joins the war against the Spaniards in the Caribbean in 1898 and comes back a hero, the film plays popular songs from the Civil War such as “The Girl I left Behind Me”, “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” or “The Battle Cry of Freedom”. Other musical references evoking a “Southern” include the “Chicken reel” that can be heard in *Gone with the Wind* when Pork, one of the house slaves, tries to catch the last chicken at Aunt Pittypat’s, and the “Varsouviana” that Blanche hears in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a play which Tennessee Williams wrote the year *Pursued* was released. In *Pursued*, the Varsouviana is played as Jeb, after having killed Adam, meets Thorley at a ball and forces her to dance with him. Just as this polka tune is associated with the death of Blanche’s young effeminate husband, so is it linked, in *Pursued*, to the imminent death of Prentice, Thorley’s young and clumsy beau, whom Grant has pushed to duel with Jeb to defend Thorley’s honour.
- 6 *Pursued*’s most “Southern” creation is certainly the strong female character of Thorley, regularly named Thor, thus evoking the hammer-wielding god associated with thunder in Norse mythology. In the film’s opening, the camera shows, in a long shot, a rider in an impressive expanse of barren mountains — before revealing that the rider is a young woman. From the start, Thor goes against our gender expectations. She imposes her female touch upon the male genre of the Western while, at the same time, subverting what is expected from a woman. Thor, like a genuine Southern Belle, has Jeb bring her back a dress from town. Like a Southern Belle, she expresses her frustration by throwing objects in a fit of rage: just as Scarlett (Vivien Leigh) hurled a vase after her failed wooing of Ashley, Thor angrily flings the coin that was tossed to decide who, of Jeb or Adam, would go to war. And, like a true Southern Belle, she asks Jeb to court her, although they were raised as brother and sister:

I want you to come courting me. I know that seems silly when we grew up together, but I want to pretend we didn’t. [...] You can get dressed up real fashionable, so will I. I’ll have two chairs out in the gallery. I’ll bring out some lemonade. We’ll sit there

and talk. You can ask me if I let you smoke. I'll say yes. [...] After a while, you can hold my hand.

- 7 Her lines metafilmically insist on play-acting, make-believe and the direction of actors, as she imposes her will in a scene that is irrigated by a playful, Southern-like melody by Max Steiner, which evokes the simpering behaviour of Southern Belles on screen. However, that scene can also be read retrospectively as a portrayal of female *hubris* which will lead to tragedy. Because she wants to be wooed like a Southern Belle, Thor will refuse to elope with Jeb before he is forced to kill Adam.
- 8 Like Scarlett, Thor does not hesitate to face scandal when she accepts to be courted by Jeb after he has murdered her brother, in a precise enactment of the wooing Thor had asked him to perform. As they cross town in a buggy, the old women's reactions ("Am I seeing things?", "Well, I declare") are reminiscent of the matrons' gossiping over Scarlett's remarriages or "shameful" behaviour in *Gone with the Wind*. Moreover, Thor does not hesitate to enact what Scarlett told Rhett Butler (Clark Gable) she would do — shut the door of her room upon her husband. Thor plans to murder the very man she married, a project, in Mrs Callum's words, "no woman ever lived who could go through with" — a statement which clearly presents Thor's endeavour as going against the "nature" of her gender.
- 9 At the end of the Civil War in *Gone with the Wind*, in a Westernized moment of the Southern, Scarlett kills a Yankee soldier in cold blood as he was stealing personal belongings from the Tara plantation house. In this sequence, even the colour codes borrow from the brownish and wooden tones that are generally associated with Westerns. If Scarlett is a Southern Belle who can kill, Thor ultimately cannot go through with her murderous plan. Her resolve melts into erotic desire during her wedding night with Jeb, in a reassertion of the husband's "natural" domination and sexual attraction. Still, the vision of a bride with a gun in her hand (see Figure 6) constructs a challenging version of the wedding night, since the phallic object is not where we expect it to be.
- 10 When Grant manages to capture Jeb and hangs a rope to a tree, we fear a lynching will take place — a motif that remains hinted at and never shown explicitly in classical Southern films. Although Jeb is a white man, the sequence of this attempted lynching reinforces his identity as a *racial* outsider (see Figure 7). However, the *deus ex machina* saves the day in the person of Mrs Callum, who shoots Grant and reveals her past love for Jeb's father — a final scene which gives us the rare sight of a middle-aged woman wielding a gun (see Figure 8), in a fulfilment of her daughter's former attempt to kill the male figure during her wedding night.

Figure 6: The bride with a gun in *Pursued*

Figure 7: The attempted lynching of Jeb in *Pursued*

Figure 8: Mrs Callum saving the day in *Pursued*, gun in hand

Colorado Territory: The South versus the West

- 11 Contrary to *Pursued*, *Colorado Territory* (1949) has no *deus ex machina* and the tragedy can go on to its deadly conclusion. This *noir* Western, a remake of Walsh's 1941 *High Sierra*, is marked by a tension between "Western" and "Southern" codes. Ideas of change and transplantation were, in fact, embedded in the very first sentence of the 1929 novel *High Sierra* by W. R. Burnett, from which both films were adapted:

Early in the twentieth century, when Roy Earle was a happy boy on an Indiana farm, he had no idea that at thirty seven he'd be a pardoned ex-convict driving alone through the Nevada-California desert towards an ambiguous destiny in the Far West. (Burnett 1)

- 12 From *High Sierra* to *Colorado Territory*, Roy Earle's doomed trajectory from the Midwest to the Sierra Nevada is rewritten in Wes McQueen (Joel McCrea)'s ill-fated journey from Missouri to the Colorado territory, thus leading the male hero into an even wilder and deserts place. Walsh's Western remake changes the setting but also shifts the time period from contemporary to turn-of-the-century: cars become stagecoaches and horses, while a heist at a fashionable California resort hotel is turned into a train robbery. Whereas the two films' narratives unfold in a linear way, their respective trailers open like Burnett's novel: they start by revealing the perilous situation in which the hero finds himself in the end. The trailer for *Colorado Territory* opens, for instance, with Wes's voice in voice-over: "My name is Wes McQueen and there's a price on my head. I'm up here on one of the highest peaks in the Colorado territory. [...] But where did it all begin? Where does it end? What really brought me here?" While the reference to the "highest peaks" acknowledges the connection with the earlier *High Sierra*, the trailer's emphasis on determinism and its presentation of the film as a long flashback in which one's fate cannot be escaped, associate the Western remake with tragedy, a genre in tune with the Southern.

- 13 In the film itself, the tension between the Western and the Southern appears from the opening shot of a Wild-West barren landscape (see Figure 9), which is immediately followed by the fertile plains of Missouri (see Figure 10) and the Southern-like sight of a buggy from which an old lady descends to bring a cake to her nephew and reminisce about his childhood horse. In this opening scene, even the music composed by David Buttolph emphasizes the clashing of film genres. The music is first epic and powerful, with brass and Indian-sounding percussions, and ends up cheerful, light and bouncy with the sound of a banjo. As the old lady is eventually revealed to be an accomplice to outlaw Wes McQueen, there to help him escape from jail, the codes of the Southern are then broken and appropriated by the Western. As he escapes, Wes is presented as a runaway slave, cutting into fields and wading through rivers to hide his trail — the situation heralds the opening of Walsh's *Band of Angels* (1957) in which slaves are hunted and caught. On his way to Colorado, Wes stops at his childhood place, in a nostalgic visitation of the past — only to find out that his former sweetheart, Martha, is now dead (see Figure 11). Shots of her grave echo other *memento mori* throughout the film — skulls, corpses, scavengers and prophetic Indian songs about death.

Figure 9: The Wild-West barren landscape at the start of *Colorado Territory*

Figure 10: The fertile plains of Missouri at the start of *Colorado Territory*

Figure 11: Wes discovering that Martha is dead in *Colorado Territory*

- 14 The Gothic elements of the film are underlined when Wes joins other outlaws in the ghost town of Todos Santos, described by an old cowboy in these terms:
The Spaniards moved in first; Indians came along and massacred them. Then the pox came along and took care of the Indians. Left nothing but scorpions; then an earthquake came along and took care of them.
- 15 The main location of the film is thus associated with ruins, death and destruction — layers of civilizations gone with the wind (see Figure 12). Wes sleeps in an old Indian

kiva, symbolically full of ghosts from the past, and dreams of his dead sweetheart. Love and death are clearly inseparable. At the end of the film, Wes's symbolic marriage with Colorado takes place in a dilapidated church, heralding the couple's imminent death. Wes's last refuge, the abandoned Pueblo cliff dwelling, the City of the Moon, is filled with skeletons — the ultimate figure of the Dance of Death that this film seems to choreograph. Just as Thor exclaimed "There's the moon out" in *Pursued*, the name "City of the Moon" places *Colorado Territory* under the signs of the crepuscular and the feminine.

Figure 12: Ruins in *Colorado Territory*

- 16 The film is also invaded explicitly by Southern characters. The story focuses on the uprooting of the Winslows — a father and his daughter, Julie Ann — after their departure from the Deep South to settle in the Far West (see Figure 13). When Wes meets them in the stagecoach travelling westward, Mr Winslow (Henry Hull) is proud to assert "The sun goes West, and so does the opportunity". He has sold everything he owned back in Georgia and bought a ranch in the Colorado territory, a "promised land" for him but which will reveal to be barren and unprofitable. The West is seen as not easily conquered by a man from the South, who is pictured as over-optimistic and weak. When the stagecoach is attacked, Mr Winslow is seen cowering and praying like his daughter, while Wes, the man of the West as his name indicates, is standing — on top of things, literally and figuratively.

Figure 13: The Winslows going west in *Colorado Territory*

The difference between the South and the West is reflexively dramatized in the opposition of two strong women — the Southern Belle, Julie Ann (Dorothy Malone), and the Indian half-blood, Colorado Carson (Virginia Mayo). Both first names assert the characters' geographical origins: Colorado, with the obvious echo to the territory; Julie Ann with the Southern tradition of double names. The symbolic opposition between the two women soon becomes literal and peaks when they start wrestling physically. Wes first falls for Julie Ann and imagines marrying her. He brings her a fancy dress (see Figure 14) in a scene reminiscent of Rhett giving Scarlett a fashionable hat from Paris. In both cases, the female character marvels at the piece of clothing she is unpacking from its gift box as if a woman's excitement and affection could only be triggered by a dress or a hat. Julie Ann's love cannot be bought so easily, however. She regrets the South and Carter Randolph, the man she had to leave behind — he wouldn't marry her because of her lower social status.⁴ She is ready to do everything in her power to go back home, even if it means "living in sin" with Carter and going against her father's will. To this end, she tries to steal Wes's robbed money and, when that fails, plans to give him away — again, against her father's wishes — to claim the reward set on his head. As a girl who defies paternal authority, Julie Ann is presented as a villain. Wes realizes that Colorado Carson is the one who truly embraces him and his past. The "good" woman is the one who is ready to fight for her man against all odds. However, this ideological dichotomy may be more complex than it seems. The film appears as a site of cultural negotiations⁵ where the idea of the perfect woman is constantly constructed and deconstructed.

Figure 14: Wes bringing a fancy dress to Julie Ann in *Colorado Territory*

- 17 Before her hidden agenda is revealed, it is Julie Ann who stands for the “good” marrying-type girl, while Colorado appears as the wild woman with a past — a former saloon dancer, born from a White father and an Indian mother, who does not hesitate to tell Wes she wants him. When Wes asks her how she’s understood so quickly that he courted Julie Ann because she reminded him of his dead fiancée, Colorado simply replies “I’m a woman”, asserting intuition as part of the “essence” of her sex. Colorado may proclaim her womanhood in a very conservative way but she certainly subverts the 1940s codes of femininity. She cooks, but refuses to serve his meal to Reno (John Archer), the man she travels with. She is brave enough to remove a bullet from Wes’s shoulder and cauterize the wound. Wounded, weak and bed-ridden, Wes is treated by Colorado who operates on him with scissors and clamps. While the Winslows squeamishly look away during the procedure, Colorado is gazing straight into Wes’s eyes, in a scene that stands as the most erotic moment in the film, with the woman symbolically on top and penetrating the male body (see Figures 15 and 16). Colorado defies men by appropriating their codes: she refuses to do their bidding; she spits at the man who attempts to bribe her into selling out Wes (a behaviour that recalls Scarlett’s spontaneous reaction of throwing dirt at the man who came to buy Tara); she holds them at gunpoint (see Figure 17) and does not hesitate to shoot to defend the man she loves, till death do them part , à la Bonnie and Clyde.

Figure 15: Colorado penetrating the male body in *Colorado Territory*

Figure 16: The woman in charge in *Colorado Territory*

Figure 17: Colorado shooting in *Colorado Territory*

- 18 Colorado's hybrid identity echoes that of Amantha Starr (Yvonne De Carlo) in Walsh's *Band of Angels*. Amantha is a Southern Belle who discovers, at the death of her father — the master of a plantation — that her mother was Black. She is herself considered Black and is sold on the slave market. In both films, Amantha and Colorado — especially, in the latter's case, with her blond hair — can pass for White, making their hybrid identity a secret that they may choose to hide. Wes's doomed attempt to start a new life and leave behind his past as a train robber also creates a tension in his identity. As he takes the name "Chet Rogers" to hide who he is to the Winslows ("Chet" is paronomastically close to "cheat" and highlights his deceit), Wes heralds the character of Hamish Bond in *Band of Angels*, a former slave trader who kills his boss, takes his name, and then struggles to change his life and atone for the evils he committed. The theme of the borrowed and/or mixed identity creates a powerful link between Raoul Walsh's acknowledged Southern film and his "Westerns", while presenting a *mise-en-abyme* of the actors' performances in the films.
- 19 In *Colorado Territory*, the couple's death is eventually fertile: it is visually related to the resurrection of things past. The mission of Todos Santos is rebuilt thanks to the stolen money Colorado leaves in the church in what can be read as a redemptive act, and, this time, Spaniards and Indians can live there together in peace.

***Silver River*: The South meets the West**

- 20 The rise, fall and resurrection of a town is also the subject of *Silver River*, which follows the upward/downward trajectory of Mike McComb (Errol Flynn). McComb is dismissed from the army after the battle of Gettysburg for burning a one-million-dollar payroll to protect it from General Lee in an opening scene which recasts the traditional "stagecoach attack" motif of the Western in the context of the Civil War. McComb goes west and starts a gambling business. The sight of money, checks and bonds is a

recurring pattern in the film (just as in *Gone with the Wind* during the Reconstruction, borrowing here a feature of what could be called the “Northerns” or “Yankee” films). The initial burning of one million dollars will be often recalled as a past event that is to be repeated on a bigger scale. The cash Mike makes enables him to invest in silver mining and to open banks. With the help of a lawyer, Plato Beck (played by Thomas Mitchell, thus directly evoking Scarlett’s Pa), Mike builds an industrial and financial empire. The tension between the Western and the Southern appears in the oscillations between locations. *Silver River* combines the barren landscapes of the mountains and the mines with more sophisticated settings such as steamboats, banks, game houses, ballrooms and rich mansions.

- 21 Georgia Moore (Ann Sheridan), with a first name that connotes the South, embodies this oscillation. She is herself a dual female character, blending the Southern Belle and Calamity Jane: she wears either the crinoline (see Figure 18) or trousers with a gun-belt (see Figure 19). She is a headstrong business woman, unafraid to speak her mind, drive a buggy (see Figure 20) or use her whip against aggressive men, as Scarlett does to protect herself during her attack on her way through Shantytown. Georgia is at ease everywhere — at social events, political rallies and in industrial environments — again recalling Scarlett who runs a saw-mill during the Reconstruction period. When Georgia meets Mike, they are westbound on a steamboat. He is playing poker and minding his own interests, while she is collecting money from the Yankees for the wounded soldiers. She is also bringing back new materials to the *Silver River* mine that she runs with her husband, an engineer. The relationship between Mike and Georgia starts like a screwball comedy, with remarks on gender codes. When she dresses in pants, Mike wonders if he’s addressing her younger brother and admits he prefers her in a skirt. When they have to camp in the wilderness, she calls him a “greenhorn”, reversing the general assumption that men are more suited to life in the Far West. Mike’s swaggering moves to seduce an already married Georgia include a more or less forced dance (as in *Pursued*) at a fancy ball, followed by a cocky assertion that they should drink to what they both really want, to which she reacts by throwing her drink in his face. This aggressive action takes place in contrast with her very feminine attire in this ball scene (as she appears with a crinoline dress and ringlet curls). Throwing her drink at Mike is a soft literalization of the sentence “I’m so mad I could spit” she utters earlier when Mike arrives late for her party, as well as a more polite repetition of Colorado’s spitting at her enemies.

Figure 18: Georgia as Southern Belle in *Silver Rive*

Figure 19: Georgia as Calamity Jane in *Silver River*

Figure 20: Georgia driving a buggy in *Silver River*

- 22 The film's tone changes when Mike's obsessive love for Georgia leads him to send her husband on a prospecting mission, knowing that Indians are on the warpath. Plato lectures Mike not to do this and cites the Bible's King David who, lusting for a woman, sent her husband to war and certain death. Though Mike changes his mind and tries to go after Georgia's husband before he is killed, he arrives too late. Unaware of it all, Georgia eventually marries Mike, but their union is tainted by plotting and death, and the nickname of "King David" sticks to Mike among the town, to Georgia's puzzlement. Georgia's scandalous remarriage is another nod to *Gone with the Wind*; and the Gothic marble palace that Mike orders in honour of his "Silver Queen" echoes the *nouveau-riche* mansion that Rhett builds for Scarlett, complete with a grandiose staircase (see Figure 21) and a huge portrait of the Lady of the house (see Figure 22). In Mike's Western palace, the furniture is from Switzerland and France — creating the link with Old Europe generally found in the South.

Figure 21: The staircase in *Silver River* Figure 22: The portrait in *Silver River*

- 23 When his empire crumbles due to the attacks of other banking and mining conglomerates, he fights not for the general interest of the town and miners, but for his own. This, Georgia cannot tolerate. The portrait and the staircase — a regular motif in Southern⁶ — are used to intensify the drama of her walking out on him. Mike follows Georgia up the staircase to see that she, at her dressing table, is now cold with him (see Figure 23) — a scene that recalls Scarlett at her dressing table refusing Rhett's kisses (see Figure 24) because she is enthralled in her loving thoughts for Ashley Wilkes

(Leslie Howard). Georgia does not hesitate to remind Mike that he took her from another man and that she has always had the mind of a “fighter”. Mike goes up the staircase again, this time to find out that she’s gone and left nothing in her wardrobe — except for a hat box (see Figure 25). The empty hat box metonymically signifies the absence of the female character but also stands as a nod to Southern films: in *Silver River*, Georgia explicitly refuses to be just a Southern Belle interested in pretty clothes. She leaves her husband to assert her political positions and to join forces with lawyer Plato Beck who fights for the town’s common good.

Figure 23: Georgia refusing Mike's kisses in *Silver River*

Figure 24: Scarlett refusing Rhett's kisses in *Gone with the Wind*

Figure 25: The empty hat box in *Silver River*

- 24 Later, when alone and in desperate need of cash, Mike has to sell everything in the house, he nevertheless refuses to let go of Georgia's majestic portrait. The empty house stands for the end of an era, marking the spoils of a (financial) civil war. Mike finally regains Georgia's love and respect when he decides to act for the public good, reopening the mines and rebuilding what was destroyed. At the end of the film, as Georgia says "I'm proud of you, Mike", the final judgement is symbolically passed on the man by the woman — but this "proto-feminist" conclusion is weakened by a high-

angle shot of Mike looking down on Georgia and by the fact that, when they ride away together on the same horse, she no longer holds the reins but sits side-saddle behind him (see Figure 26).

Figure 26: Georgia sitting side-saddle behind Mike in *Silver River*

Conclusion: From one Southern to the next

- 25 *Silver River*, like *Pursued* and *Colorado Territory*, merges the Western sun and the Southern moon, vulnerable men and women with guns, and more crucially, sexuality and death in compelling dark scenes. Thor attempting to murder Jeb during their wedding night but finally giving herself to him; Colorado offering herself boldly to Wes after he has dreamed of his dead love Martha; Plato accusing Mike of sending his rival to death to get the woman he covets; Georgia reminding Mike that he killed a man to have her — these Eros/Thanatos scenes at the heart of each hybrid film echo one Gothic sequence at the core of *Gone with the Wind*. Rhett, drunk and dejected, starts crushing Scarlett's head between his hands (see Figure 27) in an attempt to get rid of her obsessive love for Ashley before taking her up the giant staircase to an unseen rape. The Belle's forced sexuality — a motif that resurfaces in *A Streetcar Named Desire* or in Walsh's *Band of Angels* — is hinted at in Walsh's films. Colorado has certainly been abused in the past, as a girl dancing in saloons; Georgia has been, in a way, "taken" from her first husband; Thor is so isolated at the farm that she can only feel incestuous love for her step-brother. However, this theme is also revisited and twisted in an empowerment of the female characters. Colorado, Thor and Georgia all accept and assert their desire, claim their love or choose to leave, openly and freely. As female characters in Southernns made up as Westerns, they subvert the codes and help emancipate the Belle.

Figure 27: Rhett threatening Scarlett in *Gone with the Wind*

- 26 The Eros/Thanatos scenes in Walsh's films may act culturally as the missing links between the rape scene in *Gone with the Wind* and the love scene in *Band of Angels*. Hamish Bond (again played by Gable) has bought Amantha as his slave and could rape her, but he chooses to wait. In the storm scene, *she* is the one who eventually leads him to uncover his haunting past in Africa, initiates the first kiss and claims him as hers (see Figure 28).

Figure 28: Amantha initiating the first kiss in *Bands of Angel*

- 27 Although one may certainly question the ideology of such a moment in which the slave is doubly owned by the master (and even surrenders willingly to him), the love they share can also be perceived as freedom and renewal for both of them. From one Southern to another, from *Gone with the Wind* to *Band of Angels*, from women being raped

by men to men being loved by women, Walsh's Westernized Southern retrospectively seem to have been trailblazers. This reading might look like a teleological vision coupled with feminist wishful thinking. It certainly clashes with what is known of Raoul Walsh's apparent absence of political commitment. Apparently, he had "little interest in politics and might even be politically conservative"; he "consistently voted the Republican ticket and coupled that with true tolerance of anyone without regard to race or social status" (Moss 361). His tolerance regarding gender status was less impressive, however. Harry Carey Jr., the actor who played Thor's young and clumsy beau in *Pursued* recalls how, on set, Walsh and Mitchum behaved towards Teresa Wright:

Teresa Wright, who was a total sweetheart, was terrified of Mitchum, and was afraid he would deck her and wreck her. As a joke, Walsh had Mitchum carry Teresa over the threshold and over to the bed and drop her there, looking down at her as if we were going to rape her. Wright never trusted them after that. (Qtd in Moss 273)

- 28 Walsh's fiction seems to have bypassed his own personal agenda. His strong female characters in his so-called Westerns have certainly challenged and rewritten both genre codes and gender norms in order to transcend the past and to dream of a transformed, unchained tomorrow for both men and women.

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NOTES

1. Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "Come, you spirits/ That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,/ And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full/ Of direst cruelty! [...]/ Come to my woman's breasts,/ And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers" (1.5); Beatrice in

Much Ado About Nothing: “O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart/ in the market-place” (4.1).

2. The original trailer for *Colorado Territory* can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFZxhVJMMuM>; the trailer for *Silver River* can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-KIDS5kDVc>; the trailer for *Pursued* cannot be found online at the time of writing.

3. On ghosting effects created by actors, see Carlson (1994).

4. Mr Winslow had thought it best to take his daughter far from her native place to a Western land perceived here as a social leveller.

5. For this notion of “site of cultural negotiations”, see Sinfield (1992).

6. See Chapter “La sudiste déchue mais sisypheenne”, in Tuhkunen (2013).

ABSTRACTS

This essay analyses how three films directed by Raoul Walsh and released as Westerns at the end of the forties are, in fact, steeped in the codes of “Southern” films, recalling films such as *Gone with the Wind* and heralding *The Night of the Hunter* or Walsh’s own “Southern” *Band of Angels*. These “Westerns” merge classical themes of the genre (the conquest of the West, mining, railroad extension, attacks on stagecoaches, train robberies, outlaws — in a typically male world) with the themes of plantation films: nostalgia for a paradise lost, the predominance of the past, a clandestine or mixed-race identity, Gothic elements, dilapidated houses, graveyards and *memento mori*, and strong female characters. *Pursued*, located in the wild landscapes of New Mexico, is built on the hero’s quest to recover his identity, on the ghostly return of the repressed and on the recognition of the destroyed childhood home; the film re-plays the Civil War in a conflict against the Spaniards, while constructing a complex Scarlett-like female character. *Silver River* mixes the ruthless environment of the silver mines with more refined places such as steam boats, game houses and ballrooms; the character of Georgia, with a first name that connotes the South, represents a blend of the Southern Belle and Calamity Jane. Finally, *Colorado Territory* presents outlaw Wes McQueen as a runaway slave, emphasizes the uprooting of the Winslows after their departure from the Deep South to settle in the Far West, and dramatizes the direct opposition between two women — the Southern Belle, Julie Ann, and the Indian half-blood, Colorado, whose names assert their geographical origins. The meeting of the Western and the Southern seems to give rise to an intense confrontation between a male-coded world and a female-coded world, in a war of the sexes that challenges filmic and social norms.

Cet article étudie comment trois films de Raoul Walsh tournés à la fin des années 40 et présentés comme des Westerns sont, en fait, pétris de codes issus des « Southern », rappelant des films comme *Autant en emporte le vent* et annonçant *La Nuit du chasseur* ou le propre « Southern » de Walsh, *L’Esclave libre*. Ces « Westerns » mêlent les thématiques classiques du genre (conquête de l’Ouest, développement des mines ou du train, attaques de diligence, univers masculin, Indiens, hors-la-loi) aux thématiques des films de plantations : sentiment de nostalgie par rapport à un paradis perdu, prégnance du passé, identité secrète ou métissée, éléments gothiques, bâtisses délabrées, tombes et *memento mori*, personnage(s) féminin(s) fort(s). *La Vallée de la peur*, situé dans les paysages sauvages du Nouveau Mexique, est construit sur le mode de la quête identitaire, le retour fantomatique du refoulé et la reconnaissance des lieux détruits de l’enfance ; le film rejoue la guerre de Sécession dans un conflit avec les Espagnols, avec un personnage de femme « à la

Scarlett ». *La Rivière d'argent* mêle l'environnement brutal des mines d'argent et celui, plus raffiné, des bateaux à aube, maisons de jeux, soirées et bals ; le personnage de Georgia, dont le prénom évoque le Sud, est un mélange de *Southern belle* et de Calamity Jane. Enfin, *La Fille du désert* identifie le hors-la-loi Wes McQueen à un esclave en fuite, insiste sur le déracinement des Winslow venus du *Deep South* pour s'installer dans le *Far West*, et présente l'opposition de la *Southern belle*, Julie Ann, et de la métisse indienne, Colorado, dont les noms affirment l'origine géographique. La rencontre du Western et du Southern semble toujours donner lieu à une confrontation particulièrement intense entre l'univers (codé comme) masculin et l'univers (codé comme) féminin, à une guerre des sexes et à une remise en cause des codes sociaux.

INDEX

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