

## 論文

# The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: A Quick Shot at the Spaghetti Western

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## 要 旨

この論文は、西部劇映画と、マカロニウエスタン映画で描かれている、それぞれのアメリカの歴史と神話を比較したものである。比較することで、文明が行き届いていない、つまり『ワイルド・ウエスト』の情景が、どのようにマカロニウエスタンの倫理観に影響を与えているか知ることができる。ここで、The Good, The Bad and The Ugly (エクステンデッド版, 2004年) を例として取り上げる。西部劇映画とマカロニウエスタン映画で描かれる西洋文化の対照的な面を考察することで、不道徳さ、パロディ、観客の欲求を満たすものを見出すことができる。The Good, The Bad and The Uglyは、文明世界と未開の大自然世界の同じような苦闘を示している。マカロニウエスタン映画で描かれる苦闘は、西部劇映画で描かれる苦闘と同様であるが、前者はアウトロー、つまり無法者の視点で描かれており、後者はその反対の立場の人々の視点で描かれている。マカロニウエスタンは、19世紀開拓時代のアメリカ『ワイルド・ウエスト』に広がった文明文化的価値の拒否という結果の表れなのである。

Keywords: Film (映画), Genre (ジャンル), Western (西部劇映画), Spaghetti Western (マカロニウエスタン映画), Play-Theory (演劇理論), Cultural Values (文化的価値), Wilderness, (未開の大自然), Civilization (文明), Myth (神話), Cultural Binaries (文化の二面性), Manifest Destiny (米史自明の宿命), Anti-hero (反ヒーロー)

A distinction must be made right away regarding genre. Between a “genre film” and “film genre.” Though easy enough to differentiate, some perspective needs to be established. A “genre film” is the physicality of the movie; the creation that is exhibited to the audience, which falls within an agreed upon set of rules and standards regarding that genre. Therefore, “film genre,” is as Andrew Tudor is quoted in the online *Film Reference* as stating, a “common cultural consensus” (Elements of Genre, 2012). Genre films then can only be produced in accordance with the rules set forth by the genre, as agreed upon by the audiences, and deeper still, reflective of held and or changing cultural and societal beliefs and sentiments. Any element in any “film genre” requires a level of familiarity and expectation from the audience, but depends “less on recognizing a specific setting than on recognizing certain dramatic conflicts that we associate with specific patterns of action and character relationships” (Schatz, 2004, p. 695). The importance of these patterns are crucial to defining what genre a film belongs to. It is the reason why characters singing songs don’t necessarily make it a musical, nor does a passionate kiss make the film a romance. It is the way characters interact with each other on superficial levels within deeper cultural contexts that it’s (the film) a “community of interrelated character types whose attitudes, values, and actions flesh out dramatic conflicts inherent within that community” (Schatz, 2004, p. 695). This “community” does not always include the setting of the film, but in the Spaghetti Western (or the Western in general) setting is crucial to understanding the dramatic conflicts that arise between the characters, their environment, and the culture they emerged from and are now rejecting. The setting in the Spaghetti Western is the foundation of the sub-genre. As is with the Western, the untamed West is a place where decency and social order is threatened and continuously challenged. Unlike the Western, however, these barren landscapes are where all decency is subverted. Instead of fighting to preserve Judeo-Christian ideals, the Spaghetti Western disregards them.

“Disregarding” is important to consider. To draw from theories of play, Johan Huizinga (1955) asserts that the rules of play are very important. “All play has its rules. They determine what “holds” in the temporary world circumscribed by play. The rules of a game are absolutely binding and allow no doubt” (p. 11). We can take this theory of play as a metaphor for the cultural context in the (Spaghetti) Western. The goal of the “game” is the successful settlement of the wild heathenish West into

an orderly law-abiding, god-fearing society. The “rules” are exactly the ideas and belief structures that must be adhered to. Any deviation from these rules serve not only as an infraction against the world of ideas that underlie the society, but also an offense to the good people that hold those ideas dear in belief and practice. These “cheaters” or “false players” as Huizinga (p. 11) calls them are the ones who play the game, recognize the importance of the rules, yet deviate from them from time to time. These cheaters are correctable and in the Western, would be a character that can be reintegrated. However, there is another type of player that exists in these games, what Huizinga calls the “spoil-sport.” This spoil-sport is the one who cannot even acknowledge the rules of the game. Within this world of play, the spoil-sport is outside the rules. He completely disregards them. Thus, he is dealt with more severely than the cheat. For the spoil-sport the game is irrelevant. “He (the spoil-sport) robs play of its illusion. . . Therefore he must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play-community” (Huizinga, 1955, p. 11). We shall call them outlaws. Eventually then these outlaws must find some place to inhabit, away from where they have been outcasted from. “It sometimes happens, however, that the spoil-sports in their turn make a new community with rules of their own” (Huizinga, 1955, p. 12). In regards to the Spaghetti Western, the setting, that is, the lifeless arid landscapes, are where these outlaws come to. Even in the Western, we see the outlaw emerge but as forces that threaten the game. In the Spaghetti Western, they have created a new game, which is constantly under attack by the players of old. Though point-of-views may be opposite in the two genres, it is the setting that nonetheless makes the cultural clash possible. The setting is what allows the questioning of certain morals that were once held highly in the Western genre, and provides a new set of ethics or rules which are staples of great Spaghetti Westerns such as *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* (Extended English Version, 2004).

Films in the Spaghetti Western genre take place in small desert towns; pockets of civilization surrounded by a larger untamed wildernesses. They are set in historical periods when the United States was pushing westward under the banner of Manifest Destiny, and we can see the relationship between the two as they set the groundwork for characters’ conflicts. While the setting of the West doesn’t define the film as a Western movie per se, it is the conflicts, paradoxes and protagonists’ struggles within this setting that define the genre’s most complex attributes, as well as the grotesquerie

between the civilized and uncivilized world's ambiguously defined boundaries.

These dynamics clearly shift, and Schatz (2004) reminds us in his essay, "Film Genre and the Genre Film," it's "the evolution of western heroes from agents of law and order to renegade outlaws or professional killers [that] reflect a genuine change in the genre" (p. 691). In fact this evolutionary quality is possible in any genre since the "familiarity of conventions allows both for parody and subversive potential" (Elements of Genre, 2012). So the progression in style from the Western to the Spaghetti Western is not uncommon.

In the Spaghetti Western, parody and subversion are two main elements that define the anti-hero's nature and the extreme unrealistic actions of the characters. The characters act not so much in accordance with good and evil, but with greed. As we shall see, greed is not necessarily a vice in this grotesque world. We, the audience, root for the unnecessary violence and the acquisition of dirty money. We sympathize with the protagonists, because despite all the killing and double-crossing, they show a level of humanity that makes them more round and complex. They are cartoon-like in absurdity, but are emblematic of the darker side of humanity and civilization, and demonstrate through their actions, that society may have as little to offer as the barren landscape of the nineteenth century's Southwestern American wilderness.

Looking at arguably one of the greatest Spaghetti Westerns ever made, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, we can discern the seeming contradiction in action and emotion; the immoral act and the grace of human compassion. We see that Blondie (Clint Eastwood, *The Good*) leaves Tuco (Eli Wallach, *The Ugly*) rich, but stranded, in the closing scene, after Blondie shoots him down from the tree in the graveyard. We feel for Tuco and any hardships he may have had growing up, when he punches his brother, the monk, after being accused of abandoning the family. Tuco cries due to their estranged relationship, and helps his brother back onto his feet, but leaves him there, abandoning him once again as he leaves on his greedy quest for gold. We see a streak of compassion in Angel Eyes (Lee Van Cleef, *The Bad*) when he lets the soldier keep the rest of the alcohol he bribed him with, for information on Confederate troop movements so to bring him closer to the same gold that Tuco and Blondie are after. These sympathetic moments, juxtaposed with the lawlessness of their actions are paradoxical as they demonstrate a human side to the outlaw. We see that maybe these spoil-sports are not much different than we. We see that there is an

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element of affection towards fellow men, and though they have no need for the old rules, in our hearts they are redeemable as people that are not entirely villainous.

At a more general plot level, what these characters show is a shared existence between the untamed wilderness and civilization's colonization of the western setting. They show that there is a false dichotomy between the "man versus nature" question in the Western film. In the Western, it's a constant struggle to fight the animalistic tendencies, or rather the non-Christian forces that intrude upon the settlements. In the Spaghetti Western, man and nature coexist in a world where the good, the bad and the ugly all share similar traits and are primordial enough in personality and being to be able to live outside the settlements if needed. The characters, specifically in *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, only come into the settlements to obtain some sort of monetary gain. And it is precisely in this aspect of their character that an important hamartia emerges. For better or worse, the outlaws are still reliant on human existence. They need the settlements at least to supplement their own greedy palates. As long as the settlements don't interfere too much with their own outcasted codes of conduct, then they can ensure at least some biological survival. Herein the hamartia looms over our protagonist rebels. Though they have rejected the game, they will flirt with it to fulfill their deepest passions. Passions only made possible by the players they have rejected. The spoil-sport then must be careful and walk a line that is neither too far out into the animal kingdom and not too far into the settlements. These anti-heroes actually demonstrate some heroic superhuman qualities as they are able to move freely between these two polarized spheres.

Regarding the economic nature of the "film genre" and the myth and history surrounding the development of the genre. Schatz (2004) explains:

Each genre incorporates a sort of narrative shorthand whereby significant dramatic conflicts can intensify and then be resolved through established patterns of action and by familiar character types. These dramatic conflicts are themselves the identifying feature of any genre; they represent the transformation of some social, historical, or even geographical (as in the western) aspect of American culture into one locus of events and characters. (p. 696/697)

In *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* we can consider the protagonists into larger "Western" categories, such as individualism and machismo. We can consider the isolated western setting and its time period, and conclude that this is a point in

history when the law of good is desperately trying to overcome the evil of lawlessness. As a Western we can see this. As a Spaghetti Western, these elements exist, evolved in relation to the protagonists. That is, elements of setting remain constant from the Western, but elements of character change. The Spaghetti Western approaches the world of the untamed West from the shifty eyes of the outlaw.

“The Classic Studio System” entry of the online *Film Reference*, says these formulae mean that “studios could turn them out quickly, and audiences could understand them just as quickly. Genre movies allow for an economy of expression through conventions and iconography” (2012). What then is it that the audience is seeking to associate with in the Spaghetti Western. After all, under the cartoonish exchanges between characters (verbal and physical), the shoddy camerawork and sets, and the silly overdubbing, lies despicable characters that most would be apt to avoid in real life. I contend that what the audience desires is the grotesque flight into an id-like inner space of the mind. Perhaps at a deeper animalistic level, the Spaghetti Western allows a certain type of thought-experiment and immoral romp against the myths and histories of the West. In its parodical and even farcical nature, it stabs the righteous, justice-upholding John Waynes of the Western in the back. To enjoy the Spaghetti Western is to imagine a cultural history without restraints, in a time when, on the one hand, the American myth was forming, and on the other, to momentarily free oneself of the cultural values that currently prevail, which were at the time of Manifest Destiny, being threatened continuously.

The “story of Manifest Destiny and the “winning” of the West” (Myth and History, 2012), along with the civilizing of the animalistic wilderness, and the individual’s “ongoing negotiation . . . between desire and restraint (what Freud called “civilization and its discontents”)” (Myth and History, 2012), creates the matrix for which the Western and Spaghetti Western fall in relation to each other and within the mythological landscape. Whereas the Western would fall further on a scale high in colonization and restraint, the Spaghetti Western would be opposite the Western, higher on fulfilled desire and un-colonized territory.

It is the notion of conquering that has led to the success of the Western, and the promulgation that law and order was brought to the West, though it was a long hard battle. The Western was made to signify, and to create a sort of fictionalized history of how the west was won and civilized by its settlers. The Spaghetti Western departs

from this Western mold. The conquering is inconsequential. All acts subvert the attempts at order . . . through parody and farce.

In the beginning of *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, Blondie captures Tuco and turns him in to the sheriff for the reward money. Tuco receives a “suspended sentence,” whereby he is sentenced to hang, and as the sheriff begins the motions of carrying out the punishment, Blondie shoots the whip from the sheriff’s hands, shoots the rope that’s tied around Tuco’s head, and then proceeds to shoot the hats off four of the spectators, all from the second story of a stable. He doesn’t miss a shot, and all this in a matter of seconds, including riding off to a hidden place in the desert to meet Tuco and split the reward money; \$2,000. This type of absurdity, parodies the “quick shot” gunman of the western, but here is an essential element to the sub-genre. Eastwood notes, when speaking of the character Blondie, “in some films he would be ludicrous. You can’t have a cartoon in the middle of a Renoir” (Hughes, 2006, p. 114). The Spaghetti Western wasn’t made to be a masterpiece work of art, but more so, to propagate the complexities of man through violence and humor, somewhat akin to the pulp magazines of the early twentieth century.

These types of absurdities are commonplace in the sub-genre, and can be characterized as a sort of superhuman type of action. Another example of this is Tuco’s ability to cross seventy miles of desert and emerge with little more than extreme thirst. But this scene, juxtaposed with Blondie’s trek through the desert raises an interesting character trait in the protagonists of the film. Blondie, as we see once captured by Tuco, is too fair-skinned and doesn’t handle the desert very well. He is on the verge of death till he is inadvertently saved by the runaway stage coach with the near-dead body of Bill Carson in it. What this demonstrates is that the characters, while they seem to have these superhuman abilities and intuitions, are also capable of death and seem to constantly be threatened by it. They are by no means indestructible, and in addition to their greed, it is this fight for survival that defines their actions and subsequently through their actions, their anti-hero status.

The notion of the anti-hero, in the genre, comes with the subversion of moral binaries. The first Westerns contained heroes, who weren’t always on the right side of the law, but always on the side of good. They were champions of the Anglo-American, Judeo-Christian expansion to set the uncivilized world right. However, certain sins and vices that we learn are bad are in fact inherent character traits in

many of the Spaghetti Western's characters. They steal, they kill, they are greedy, and have little camaraderie or respect for each other. Sergio Leone himself said, "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, I demystified the adjectives" (Kaminsky, 2012). But there is no longer any such thing as true good, bad or ugly. All three of the protagonist share the same qualities of what is culturally perceived as evil, but the true success of the sub-genre is that they also possess redeeming qualities that give an air of humanity. For example, the compassion they tend to show to others at times, or even the fact that they all save each other in one way or another, even if their actions are sullied with greedy intentions. Blondie saves Tuco from being hung by different sheriffs, and Tuco saves Blondie from the desert. Angel Eyes even saves Blondie from a beating in the prison camp, because he understands that brutally beating Blondie would achieve absolutely nothing for him. All these actions are fueled by greed, but it doesn't change the fact that the characters save each other. What results is a grotesque sub-genre, and film, that is almost surreal, like a "comic nightmare more in the tradition of Kafka than that of John Ford or Howard Hawks" (Kaminsky, 2012).

Originally, Western heroes represented a paradox as both "rugged individualists and . . . agent[s] of a civilization that continually resists his individualism" (Schatz, 2004, p. 700). But what changes in the Spaghetti Western is not the individualism, or the opposition of society, but the fact that the hero no longer works within his society. What is meant by this is that since the protagonists no longer works for the greater good (as represented by society); they are no longer socially redeemable. The Spaghetti Western hero doesn't care about any societal rules, and civilization doesn't affect his actions morally. Civilization only affects his actions because it threatens his very survival. What anti-heroes like Blondie prove is that they can get along fine on their own, and they offer an outlook that resembles that of an "almost mystic survivor, a new ironic Christ offering a way to face life" (Kaminsky, 2012). This is true of most of the protagonists. In a genre that has been largely defined by the fact that the wilderness is being subdued by civilization, the Spaghetti Western demonstrates that there is a place in the desert for man and that civilization can be just as good, bad or ugly as any deep wilderness. These adjectives are indeed blurry in relation to each other. Then can this movie a fight between Good and Bad? Keep this question in mind. If the adjectives are indeed demystified, then how can the protagonists present this fundamental struggle of good and bad? The common struggle in the Western?

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The civilized settlements and the wilderness provide a fundamental binary in the Western Genre. It is the lowest common denominator of the myth of the west. As Jim Kitses states, they are “clear binary oppositions . . . variations of the conflict between wilderness and civilization” (Myth and History, 2012). What is inherent in this opposition of civilization and wilderness is that we have a duality in setting that presents itself simultaneously as before and after man. Both sides of the dualism threatening each other. For the Western, there needs to be a conversion of the lawlessness to Godliness. The “Myth and History” entry in the online *Film Reference* states:

The genre thus offers a series of mythic endorsements of American individualism, colonialism, and racism, as well as a justification of westward expansion. The civilization that is advancing into the “wilderness” (itself a mythic term suggesting that no culture existed there until Anglo-American society) is always bourgeois white American society. (2012)

In the early scenes of the film, we have evidence of the white American repulsion of the “wilderness” when they react to Tuco’s charges, as he awaits the death penalty, twice. Among his various charges are murder, bigamy, using marked cards, assaulting a justice of the peace, raping a virgin of the white race, and statutory rape of a minor of the black race; to give a short list. In an early Western, the character, Tuco would no doubt be the villain, so how is it that in a Spaghetti Western he is a(n) (anti)-hero, and likeable? Simply put, the subversion of binaries between civilization and wilderness allows it.

Let us take a look at the binaries of the film title, and apply them to the sub-genre itself. We have good/bad and beautiful/ugly. Beautiful is implied automatically as an opposite of ugly, and is an important element to the film. In a sense, the characters are driven by a measure of beauty, and what more, they all agree on this aspect of beautiful grandiosity. Let’s get back to those questions regarding good and bad so that we may understand what is beautiful here.

First, we may agree that Blondie, Tuco and Angel Eyes are all ‘bad’ because they are undoubtedly criminals, who continually break the law for their own gain. Yet they never kill needlessly, and even Angel Eyes who is a paid assassin, honors the man he has just killed (the man has also paid a thousand dollars to Angel Eyes), by killing the man who hired Angel Eyes to kill the first man. “But you know the pity is, when

I'm paid, I always follow my job through" (Lee Van Cleef); he confesses to his second victim, establishing a strong sense of duty and honor in his character. In this sense, they are all (the protagonists) good as well, seeing as how they adhere to a strict code within their lawlessness. However, honor, here, is a tricky word. They all honor their codes in some way or another. But whereas Blondie and Tuco honor agreements through bartering (mostly with false unspoken promises), Angel Eyes is the only to exchange his services utilizing a monetary system. More on this to come. Second we may say that they are ugly people, not so much in a superficial way (though they are undeniably dirtier than the clean-cut John Wayne of the earlier Westerns), but through their actions, as Tuco steals a gun from an elderly gun salesman, and Angel Eyes robs and beats Confederate prisoners in a POW camp, and of course, Blondie, who kills Angel Eyes, who is one of his own, like a brother in a sense. So how can they be beautiful? They are because despite everything else, they helped each other to the gold. Granted each manipulated the other in a way that was much like carefully placed chess pieces on a board (some more wittingly than others), but they nonetheless arrive at the gold around the same time, which they would never have been able to do on their own. It is the greedy efforts of all three that allow for the gold to even be found. The gold is the object of beauty and passion and desire. It is the driving force between all three of the protagonist. It is the reason that they are even able to live together, ironically despite the violence. They stand there, at the end, in a three-man duel in the name of those beautiful gold coins, ready to die for the most beautiful thing they will most likely ever come across. The duel is poetic because despite their "evilness," their greed is pure. They are in this opposite universe, acting for the only thing they know how to regard with a true sense of beauty.

The final irony is that in the last duel we have this trinity of good, bad and ugly at a face off. Blondie has unbeknownst to Tuco, unloaded his gun, and thus shoots Angel Eyes (The Bad) there in the cemetery. Angel Eyes is the only one that lives according to any rule or code outside of spoken agreements. And it is a monetary code. Of this trinity, the Bad is the only one reminiscent of a civilized society that honors the exchange of money for goods and services. The only one that fulfills his obligations when he is paid, and really the only one we can come close to believing that he will not double-cross Blondie when he takes him on as his partner in finding the gold. And for all this, in this faraway territory, he is the final remnant of a world

that existed, or rather still exists east of the Mississippi, but not in this place. He is unlike Blondie and Tuco, representing what they have rejected. “The Bad” must be killed off. Yes, like in the Western, Good triumphs over Bad in *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. However, that is because there is no place for The Bad (Angel Eyes/civilized values) in this new wilderness. In a John Wayne film, perhaps all three, Blondie, Tuco and Angel Eyes might have been outlaw members of the same posse. However, Angel Eyes would have been the only redemptive character in that scenario. Despite Blondie’s warmhearted acts, he does not possess the societal abilities to function and contribute to the economy as does Angel Eyes, (his name even reminiscent of the Christian past that these characters come from). He then is the only one that must die and therefore in this Spaghetti Western world of opposites, The Bad loses out to The Good (as we would always expect), except that The Good represents everything that undermines our sense of humanity. And of course the great trick of the film and the genre in general, is that we who hold these values as dear and necessary, root for their usurpation. We are forced, in this “thought-experiment,” to examine, if even in jest, what we believe(d).

The evolution of the Western film genre into the Spaghetti Western has had a seemingly drastic course. Stemming from the American myths and histories of the nineteenth century, the Western has perpetuated these elements of Wild West Americana into a genre which “we collectively believe it to be” (Elements of Genre, 2012); our identities. But the Spaghetti Western shows us that what we believed isn’t exactly objective. The sub-genre emerges by parodying and subverting the mother-genre, the Western, and calling into question all the Judeo-Christian binaries of good and bad, beautiful and ugly. We can no longer take these binaries on a true or false basis, but we are forced to regard our protagonists as incorporating all the truths and falsities that we, the audience, were led to believe in, in the original Westerns. When we see Tuco slice the three Indian targets’ heads off with one bullet for each, we are reminded of the absurdities of *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. Throughout the film, is the “feeling of unreality . . . of bizarre coincidence and horror” (Kaminsky, 2012). It’s a mixture of comedy and immorality, and consequently, purposefulness in destroying the civilization/wilderness binary and all the loaded truths and falsities that come with these “opposites”.

Consider, Blondie hangs Tuco, but shoots him down, so that he has the

opportunity to enjoy his gold at the end of the movie. However, Blondie has ridden away on Tuco's horse, and has left Tuco, rich but stranded, at the mercy of his own wits. Blondie doesn't care about Tuco, but has given him the benefit of the doubt so that he may survive. This doubt is I argue, the inkling that maybe Tuco is a friend. But in a world like this, who can you trust? No body would ever make the first step in confirming such an emotionally bonding possibility. That could mean the difference between life and death. Just an example of the Spaghetti Western's futility of compassion and its proximity to death. We are reminded of when Blondie left Tuco out into the desert, seventy miles from town. Blondie responded to Tuco's discontent and anger with, "such ingratitude, after all the times I've saved your life" (Clint Eastwood). In the final scene, Tuco runs out across the cemetery with the noose dangling from his neck, after being shot down from the tree by Blondie. His (The Ugly's) hands still tied behind his back, but now rich with gold, yells out to Blondie (The Good), "Hey Blondie . . . You know what you are . . . Just a dirty son of a . . ." (Eli Wallach); the last word drowned out by the score. We are left with the unethical pointing fingers at the unethical.

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