

as an insider or as an outsider, as a friend or a foe, to all devotees of horror films and/or students of critical theory. And so on.

These points and other arguments concerning how, why, who and what gets into or is excluded from the established canons of Anglo-American literature deserve, and will get, further discussion later on. But of equal importance for our purposes here, Wolfe's dialogue also demonstrates the kind of first-hand knowledge of 'high' art that it is (on the one hand) taboo for a virile American hero, but (on the other hand) traditional for some insufferably snobbish, snotty, British or otherwise un-American villain to possess. Can you imagine John Wayne playing a character with a first-hand knowledge of the works of *Christopher Marlowe*?

### THE UN-AMERICAN VILLAIN AND THE ALL-AMERICAN MAN'S MAN

There are rare exceptions to this rule (e.g. *The Dead Poets Society*) but generally speaking, a man portrayed as a hero deserving of a red-blooded young man's admiration or emulation in any popular American film, TV series or novel produced during or after the Second World War *cannot* display any interest in poetry, to say nothing of any appreciation for or knowledge of classical music, art or ballet. For it is traditionally taboo for an All-American Male to display any artistic or intellectual knowledge, passions or interests of the kind invariably associated with a range of villains from the evil scientist (with a middle-European accent) who seeks to dominate the world, to the succession of cultivated murderers brought to justice by Peter Falk in *Columbo*. Indeed, in American popular genres, unless it is treated as a conspicuously incongruous, specialised interest on the part of some beauty-loving beast or an otherwise tough gumshoe-type, any knowledge of the 'fine arts' such as the opera or the ballet, and certainly any interest in matters intellectual, is virtually bound to mark a male character as either a sissy (by implication a homosexual), an ineffectual intellectual (a wishy-washy liberal), a doomed and damnable Faust-type scientist or a sinister, un-American villain. The historical origins of this Hollywood taboo may stem from the premium traditionally placed on the egalitarian virtues of frontier times, when a man was judged by what he was and not by what he knew and the lack of a classical education did not count against you. It may also have to do with the traditional, mythical opposition between the unfallen Adam and the serpent in the Garden of Eden, as

well as the ancient, pastoral opposition between the decadent city and the unspoiled country and so on through to the conflict between the sophisticated, polished, silver-tongued, lecherous, treacherous city-slicker and the plain-spoken frontiersman exemplifying homespun American virtue, who was so perfectly embodied on screen by Gary Cooper in *The Plainsman* (1936) and Henry Fonda in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1936). And, of course, by the honest, populist Jimmy Stewart as opposed to urbane Claude Rains, who played the most corrupt and worldly wise of all the senators in *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* (1939).

Yet this historically based, albeit dangerously fallacious, American equation between the most admirable of all its democratic, populist, agrarian, egalitarian values and a manifestly and indeed virulently anti-educational, anti-intellectual tradition that later lent strength to McCarthyism was most indelibly reinforced in innumerable Second World War movies defining the hero, who personified natural and national virtue, in dialectical opposition to an autocratic, aristocratic, and always well-educated Enemy-Alien-Other, who personified un-American vice. Thus, the ultimate enemy of the American way of life was the sadistic, smiling, fiendishly treacherous Japanese officer who spoke impeccably polished English as a result of having been educated 'at Havahdt' and who, it could go without saying, had obviously been a straight-A student there. There were other ways of stereotyping Japanese characters. In contrast to the Harvard-educated commanding officer stereotype, Japanese soldiers were portrayed as subhuman monsters, as Grendels, as gooks (see Chapter 4).<sup>3</sup> But the traditional hostility to the aristocratic, élitist, European tradition that so many Americans had originally crossed the ocean, or gone West to get away from, was most dramatically – and arguably most perniciously – reinforced in the stereotype of the cultivated German villain who appeared in practically every Hollywood film dealing with Nazis and their atrocities during the Second World War.

Smooth, suave and cultured, with a predilection for classical music and paintings, knowing the best wines and the histories of their occupied chateaux, the movies' conception of the Nazi villain was one of the most stereotyped.

(Bowen (1972), p. 212)

*Ergo*: virtually every male character who displayed comparable cultivation in a Hollywood movie made during the Second World War or subsequently was marked as villainous and/or as un-American, if not unmanly.

The Hollywood stereotype of the cultured Nazi villain was decidedly not based on real life, but in large measure derived from the

First World War stereotype of the sadistic Prussian officer-aristocrat portrayed by Erich von Stroheim ('the man you love to hate' in silent films – and see also his portrayal of Rommel in *Five Graves to Cairo*, 1943). It thus gave rise to some continuing historical confusions. It is certainly true that a premium on high culture and education has not resulted in the moral perfection of humankind. But then neither has ignorance of the creative arts and sciences. And if virtue knows no social, sexual, intellectual, racial or educational distinctions, neither does vice. There is no doubt that some European intellectuals, such as Martin Heidegger and the young Paul de Man, willingly or reluctantly collaborated with the Nazis, wrote anti-Semitic propaganda, etc. Conversely, however, many victims of and refugees from the Nazis (Einstein, Eric Auerbach, Ernst Gombrich, Bruno Bettelheim, Karl Popper, and so on and on) indisputably knew a lot more about science, literature and the fine arts than their oppressors. Indeed, it is hard to name any regime that has, historically, been more hostile to intellectuals in general and to the creative arts and sciences in particular than the Third Reich. The rise of the Nazis thus resulted in the immediate termination of the German film industry's historical claim to international distinction, as its most creative people fled to Britain and the United States. For that matter, the Nazi scum who participated in the beer-hall putsch and smashed windows on Kristallnacht no doubt had far more in common with today's nigger-hating, Jew-baiting, native-American-agrarian Ku Klux Klan or with the all-English proletariat Paki-bashers in the National Front than they had in common with, say, the devastatingly attractive (to women – he was a real ladies' man) romantic actor Conrad Veidt, who escaped from Hitler's Germany with his Jewish wife and subsequently made a career in Hollywood films playing suavely sinister Nazi villains, such as Major Strasser in *Casablanca*.

To compound the confusion, comparably cultured Nazi villains were played by British actors with upper-class accents such as Cedric Hardwicke, George Sanders, Herbert Marshall and Basil Rathbone (Bowen, pp. 212, 220). And in so far as they were likewise portrayed as profoundly hostile to the American way of life as well as to the American ideal of manhood, the smooth, well-educated German or Japanese officer-villain blended with and finally merged into the general stereotype of the cultivated villain as played in a host of Hollywood films by the self-same British actors, from George Sanders and James Mason on to Terence Stamp in *Superman II* (1981) and *Alien Nation* (1989), who could and did play romantic leads in English movies, but whose accents generally typed them in Hollywood films as educated, cultured, un-American, evil. Or as ineffectual or effete.

And so (to add to our list of un-historical incongruities) in the quintessential Hollywood swashbuckler, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), the decadent Norman (French) aristocrats, as played by Basil Rathbone and Claude Rains, spoke with posh *English* accents while the good, hardy, democratic Saxon (British) outlaws led by the dashing (Tasmanian born) Errol Flynn spoke with *American* accents. By very much the same token, the Americans Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis led the heroic gladiators in their revolt against the decadent Romans, played by Laurence Olivier, Charles Laughton and Peter Ustinov, who spoke with cultivated British accents in *Spartacus* (1960). Placed in the enviable position of being ardently sought after by both Kirk Douglas and Laurence Olivier the beautiful slave girl, Jean Simmons, remained true to the American Spartacus and equated the embrace of the elegant, patrician Olivier with a fate worse than death. Of course, this practice of portraying manly, heroic embodiments of national virtues as irresistible to women of all nationalities, while simultaneously stereotyping the national enemy male as decadent (comparably effeminate) goes back a long way. In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, for instance, the French are portrayed as snobbish and effete in contrast to the hardy English 'band of brothers' led by manly King Harry, who eloquently inspires his troops with his impassioned patriotism and Churchillian rhetoric, but subsequently woos the French princess in the down-home language of an English yeoman, presenting himself to her as a 'plain soldier' with a true heart, who 'hath not the gift to woo in other places'. He thus sounds very much like an Elizabethan Gary Cooper, Jimmy Stewart, or the young John Wayne proposing to the pretty school-marm, 'Aw, shucks, ma'am, I'm not much good at sayin' things, but. . . .' 'Do you like me, Kate?' the tongue-tied King Harry of England asks the elegant Princess Katherine of France,

I am glad thou canst speak no better English; for if thou couldst, thou wouldst find me such a plain king that thou wouldst think I had sold my farm to buy my crown. I know no ways to mince it in love, but directly to say, 'I love you.'

(see *Henry V*, V, ii, 121-6)

The virile national heroes and decadent foes of the English (Robin Hood against the aristocratic Norman overlords; King Henry V against the French) have thus been dramatically stereotyped in ways comparable to the stereotype of the American hero opposed to the suave Nazi villain – and so, no doubt, have the traditional heroes and enemies of many other nations and cultures. But in Hollywood the equation between education, culture and vice became internally as well as externally axiomatic: the foreign intellectual was a villain; and if the

native American intellectual was not himself the villain of the piece, he was almost invariably a traitor, a communist dupe, a homosexual. Thus, in post-war Hollywood, un-American (treacherous, ineffectual, unmanly) behaviour was equated with education and culture in general and not just with suave enemy aliens. In any event, by the middle of the twentieth century, a familiarity with the fine arts and a cultivated British accent were all it took to establish a given male character as an enemy of the American way of life. And well nigh invariably in American popular genres even the most attractive gentlemen of the British school were unfavourably contrasted to the all-American man of action. On the New York stage and then on screen, the English heart-throb, Leslie Howard, played the intellectual who was dramatically overpowered by Humphrey Bogart as the escaped killer – the man of action – in *The Petrified Forest* (1936). Prior to *The Dead Poets Society* (1989), this tradition was so strong that virtually every intellectual *American* male character portrayed in a Hollywood movie is either (a) shown up as an ineffectual wimp like Ashley Wilkes (also played by Leslie Howard) or (b) politically stereotyped as an indecisive, wishy washy liberal humanist such as the Stevensonian character played by Henry Fonda in *The Best Man* or (c) ultimately revealed to be the villain. And so the ultra-sophisticated Waldo Lydecker, who was played by Clifton Webb in *Laura*, as it were inevitably turned out to be the murderer in the end.

And no matter who plays them, or in what kind of Hollywood movie they appear, if there is a contest for the heart and hand of an attractive and virtuous heroine, the anti-intellectual or non-intellectual male will invariably win the girl in the end and thus, like the hero of an old-time melodrama, rescue her from the clutches of a sinister, sophisticated villain. In the one classic Hollywood movie I know of where the cultivated male does get the woman he wants, she is just as villainous as he is, and to be possessed by him is her ultimate damnation. 'You belong to me. . . . We deserve each other', says the devilishly suave drama critic, Addison de Witt (as played by George Sanders) to the treacherous upstart, Eve (played by Anne Baxter), when he claims the body and soul of the gifted actress whose ambition has doomed and damned her to belong to him – and so in effect wedded her forever to the theatre – in the Faustian denouement of *All About Eve*. By contrast, the hearts and hands and bodies of all really nice young heroines, such as the lovely Gene Tierney in *Laura*, invariably go to an all-American, anti-intellectual type such as the gum-chewing, baseball-loving gumshoe played by Dana Andrews, rather than to her cultured Svengali, Waldo Lydecker (for further discussion, see Chapter 2).

All this seems designed to reassure certain men in the audience that they don't need book-learning or good manners or anything else but their God-given all-American gun-toting masculinity to attract the best women imaginable. And all this is of course quite at odds with the fact that some of the most glamorous and desirable of all women in real life, and perhaps most notably in Hollywood itself, have so often preferred intellectual men to the hunks beloved of masculinist fiction. Both Mia Farrow and Diane Keaton (for instance) went for Woody Allen. The glorious Marilyn Monroe herself initially adored Arthur Miller even as her personal pin-ups were Albert Einstein and Abraham Lincoln. And the witty and urbane Adlai Stevenson was as devastatingly attractive to Lauren Bacall as he was to Marlene Dietrich (Bacall (1979), *By Myself*, pp. 203-5, 213-14). Thus, the only true answer to the question 'Do women prefer cave-men to gentler men?' obviously has to be 'Some do; some don't'. For that matter, so great is the appeal of intellectual men to some women that, as any faculty wife will testify, the male lecturer at a university who is so unattractive that none of his female students ever developed a crush on him has yet to be born.

One British 'gentleman star' whose film persona was simply too sexy for him ever to be cast as any character other than the man-who-gets-the-girl-at-the-end-of-the-movie was Cary Grant. But, perhaps significantly, even the wryly urbane, British-born Grant seemed positively American when Hitchcock cast him in opposition to such suavely sinister, sophisticated, cultivated – and far more British-sounding – villains as Claude Rains in *Notorious* (1946) and James Mason in *North by Northwest* (1959). In contrast to the Hollywood he-man stereotype, however, he was 'consummately romantic yet consummately genteel'. Indeed, as Tom Wolfe observes in his tribute to 'The Loverboy of the Bourgeoisie' (p. 137) the emergent era of macho Brandoism in movie heroes left Cary Grant as it were 'by default', in sole possession of what 'turned out to be a curiously potent device'. 'Which is to say' to women he was 'Hollywood's lone example of the Sexy Gentleman.' Wolfe also notes that it was none other than the 'tall, dark and handsome' young Grant who Mae West (playing the finest woman who ever walked the streets in *She Done Him Wrong*) originally invited to come up and see her sometime. And it was, by the way, the self-same Cary Grant to whom she likewise referred in the immortal one-liner: 'When they make better men, I'll make 'em'. Yet in spite of his phenomenal popularity – he was one of the top ten box-office draws for eight consecutive years beginning in 1959 (see Shipman (1970), p. 263) – Cary Grant had no successor. He was the last of Hollywood's Sexy Gentlemen.

Yet apart from such atavistic stuff as the most chauvinistic American fantasies are made of, there seems no reason why, in an ever-increasingly complex, specialised, technological culture, the succession of male role models produced by the Dream Factory since the Second World War (up to and including the American man's man's favourite cousin from Australia, Crocodile Dundee) has reinforced the same, ego-reassuring, albeit ultimately pathetic male fallacy, just as the more urbanised and middle class many Americans became in real life, the less urbane, and the more brutally macho and primitive became Hollywood's male icons. Contrast, for instance, the debonair image of the laughing cavalier, Errol Flynn, who set out to win the Second World War single-handedly in *Desperate Journey* (1942), with Sylvester Stallone retrospectively fighting the Vietnam War in *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985). Flynn, by the way, was also a native Australian, but in contrast to Paul Hogan's 'Crocodile Dundee' his film persona seems infinitely more urbane and closer in sophistication to that of his English successor, James Bond, albeit nothing like so ruthless towards women. The dashing heroes portrayed by Errol Flynn genuinely loved and ultimately married the fair heroines portrayed by Olivia de Havilland. By contrast, in Bond's case his ubiquitously irresistible sex-appeal triumphantly overcomes female frigidity and lesbianism, while he himself remains both sexually and emotionally 'aloof and finely controlled, alert and unencumbered for the tasks ahead' (Glover (1989), p. 70), and so fits the masculinist image of a virile man as one who devalues his relations with women, and at the same time sleeps with lots of them. By the same historical token, as compared to the macho personas of Clint Eastwood and Lee Van Cleef, the earlier Western heroes such as the late, great, Gary Cooper, Henry Fonda and James Stewart were positively chivalrous in their attitude towards women. And so, like all the greatest stars of both sexes, they bridged the gender gap in so far as they were exceptionally popular with men and women (and for that matter with homosexuals, heterosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and trisexuals) alike. Or, as Julie Burchill puts it (*Girls on Film* (1986), p. 180), 'Damn damn damn damn damn damn damn': why can't a male hero nowadays 'be more like a - Gable, Tracy, Fonda, Bogart - man?'

For, of course, the more dominant, and indeed the more wildly romanticised and unrealistically idealised<sup>4</sup> the chauvinistic fantasy of the triumphant (over all enemies, over all females) all-American he-man became, the more hostile, contemptuous, and downright brutal became his treatment of women. Thus the persona of Bogart, the ultimately romantic tough-guy in *Casablanca*, gave way to the anti-

romantic tough-guy personified by Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and so on through to Jack Nicholson in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, that 'primal male whine in which women are either jailers or whores' – see Burchill (1986), p. 179. And which was celebrated as a positive 'triumph of the human spirit' by the Hollywood establishment which awarded it more top Oscars than any film since *It Happened One Night* (Maltin (1988), p. 774).

One might argue that, looked at in political, allegorical and ideological terms, the ubiquitous triumph of the he-man over the gentle-man in Hollywood movies, represents the triumph of the virile American proletariat over the decadent (Old World) aristocracy. Or you could argue that it represents the dictatorship of an anti-intellectual American proletariat at the box-office, and/or the dictatorship of a kind of in-house un-American activities committee, if not a male chauvinist conspiracy, in the head office. For as everyone has noticed, the films made since the emergence of feminism in the 1960s have stereotyped women in every conceivably contemptuous way: as bimbo, as career-bitch, as fair game. But in any case the fantasy triumph of the anti-feminist, anti-intellectual man's man obviously has to do with desires, with wish-fulfilment, with dreams, with sexually as well as nationally chauvinistic – and conspicuously atavistic – articles of faith. For that matter, as Leslie Fiedler observed in his ground-breaking study of *Love and Death in the American Novel*, there is a masculinist 'boy's own' strain in American literature which has always been profoundly hostile to the town-based ideology that tended to sanctify work, education, duty, home, cleanliness, marriage, chivalry, motherhood (p. 587). For instance, in Mark Twain's archetypal home-town there are 'no bad girls, only good ones, marriage with whom means an initiation into piety and conformity, the end of freedom' (p. 581). And so Huck and Jim flee to the raft to escape the twin tyrannies of law (slavery) and women (domesticity):

The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would civilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out.

(*Huckleberry Finn*, p. 2)

Thus, from the Widow Douglas and her Old Maid sister, Miss Watson, to Ken Kesey's Big Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the woman who embodies order, cleanliness, domesticity, piety, civility, etc., is the foe of freedom, the ultimate tyrant to be feared and fled, the Holy Terror as well as the arch-enemy of man



and boy who is by instinct and on principle out to stop his fun.

And so, in both 'classic' and popular American fiction, any male who conforms to the town-based ideology is anathematised as a collaborator with the enemy: as a sissy, a mama's boy, a ladies' man. By contrast, the man who retains his freedom, riding off alone into the sunset, is the ultimate American hero whose theme song (based on an original refrain by Bob Fletcher – see Kimball (1984), pp. 179–80) is, paradoxically, a send-up of this whole tradition by the most urbane and sophisticated of all American popular song-writers, Yale's own Cole Porter:

## VERSE 1.

Wild Cat Kelly, looking mighty pale,  
Was standing by the sheriff's side,  
And when the sheriff said, 'I'm sending you to jail,'  
Wild Cat raised his head and cried:

## REFRAIN.

Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above,  
Don't fence me in.  
Let me ride through the wide-open country that I love,  
Don't fence me in.  
Let me be by myself in the evening breeze,  
Listen to the murmur of the cottonwood trees,  
Send me off forever, but I ask you, please,  
Don't fence me in.  
Just turn me loose,  
Let me straddle my old saddle underneath the Western skies,  
On my cayuse,  
Let me wander over yonder till I see the mountains rise.  
I want to ride to the ridge where the West commences,  
Gaze at the moon till I lose my senses,  
Can't look at hobbles and I can't stand fences.  
Don't fence me in.

## VERSE 2.

Wild Cat Kelly, back again in town,  
Was sitting by his sweetheart's side,  
And when his sweetheart said, 'Come on, let's settle down,'  
Wild Cat raised his head and cried:

## REPEAT REFRAIN

The identical sentiments are, of course, expressed in the last lines of *Huckleberry Finn*: 'I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of all the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and civilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before.'

The jail=female refrain in American literature, would seem to reflect the self-same, primal terror of Woman as equated with domesticity, convention, law, that is so perfectly encapsulated in Karen Blixen's portrait of the imaginary 'Madam Knudsen', the archetypal domesticating woman who is out to ruin the pleasure of

man and 'therein is always right' in *Out of Africa*. Old Knudsen, a Dane who lived on Blixen's farm and loved to tell her tall tales about his past life, had experienced many things: shipwrecks, plague, fishes of unknown colouring, drinking-spouts, three contemporaneous suns in the sky, false friends, black villainy, short successes and showers of gold that instantly dried up again. He often spoke of his abomination of the law, and all its works and all its doings: 'for the good citizen he had a deep contempt, and law-abidingness in any man was to him the sign of a slavish mind'. But he never in his narrations mentioned the name of a woman. It was, Blixen observes, 'as if time had swept his mind both of Elsinore's sweet girls, and of the merciless women of the harbour-towns of the world'.

All the same, when I was talking with him I felt in his life the constant presence of an unknown woman. I cannot say who she may have been: wife, mother, school-dame or wife of his first employer, – in my thoughts I called her Madam Knudsen. . . . She was the wife of the curtain-lectures, and the housewife of the big cleaning-days, she stopped all enterprises, she washed the faces of boys, and snatched away the man's glass of gin from the table before him, she was law and order embodied. In her claim of absolute power she had some likeness to the female deity of the Somali women, but Madam Knudsen did not dream of enslaving by love, she ruled by reasoning and righteousness. Knudsen must have met her at a young age, when his mind was soft enough to receive an ineffaceable impression. He had fled from her to the Sea, for the Sea she loathes, and there she does not come, but ashore again in Africa he had not escaped her, she was still with him. In his wild heart, under his white-red hair, he feared her more than he feared any man, and suspected all women of being in reality Madam Knudsen in disguise. (pp. 204-5)

Likewise, various heroes of American literature (man and boy) light out for the Territory – the wild, the river, the sea, the mountains, the forest, the wars – wherever 'she' (who rules by reasoning and righteousness and must therefore be obeyed) does not come. Compare, for instance, Blixen's description of Madam Knudsen with Huck Finn's virtually identical description of the ways of the Widow Douglas:

'The widdler wouldn't let me smoke, she wouldn't let me yell, she wouldn't let me gape, nor stretch, nor scratch before folks.' Then, with a spasm of special irritation and injury: 'And dad fetch it, she prayed all the time! I had to shove, Tom, I just had to. And besides, that school's going to open, and I'd a had to go to it; well, I couldn't stand that, Tom. . . . No, Tom . . . I like the woods, and the river, and hogsheads, and I'll stick to 'em too.

(*Tom Sawyer*, p. 219)

Historically speaking, as Jane Tompkins notes (in Longhurst

(1989), pp. 28–9), for most of the nineteenth century the places that women could call their own in the social structure were the home and the church (and of course, the schoolroom). It therefore seems no accident that men 'gravitated in imagination towards a womanless milieu that, when it did not reject culture itself, featured, prominently, whisky, gambling and prostitution' – three main targets of women's reform in the later years of the nineteenth century. 'Can it', Tompkins asks, 'be an accident that the characteristic indoor setting for Westerns is the saloon?' The Western, she concludes, is not – or at least not primarily – about the American desire to escape the problems of civilisation: 'It is about men's fear of losing their hegemony and hence their identity, both of which the Western tirelessly reinvents.' And so, even as Huck escapes to the river, the mainstream American literary tradition, 'popular' as well as 'canonical', has (as Leslie Fiedler also observed) historically tended to emulate its heroes, to take to the raft, to fear above all the stigma of being sissified and thus to exclude women from the central action. Or to marginalise them. And ditto, historically speaking, for the American critical tradition. Hundreds, if not thousands of students in innumerable American high schools and universities have studied Mark Twain's institutionally canonised books about boys for every one who knows that he also wrote about the young heroine, Joan of Arc. Twain's moving and sympathetic (*to young girls*) account of her great quest, her adventures, and the friends she made along the way has, in effect, been academically erased: long since dismissed as too sentimental for male critics to stomach.

Although there are some highly significant exceptions to this rule (see below), women are generally excluded from heroic quests. In John Huston's classic adventure films the quest for the Great White Whale and the treasure of the Sierra Madre, like the search for the Lost Kingdom of Kafiristan are undertaken by men only. And so is the heist in *The Asphalt Jungle*. Generally speaking, in adventure films as well as in popular thrillers (see Bromley, in Longhurst (1989), pp. 102–3) women are constructed passively (like Doll and Angela in *The Asphalt Jungle*) or they are not allowed to survive. Threatening (e.g. active) female figures such as Brigid O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon* are finally eliminated. And, of course, Huston's 'quest' films, such as *Moby Dick* and *The Man Who Would Be King* are as often derived from 'high' literature as they are from popular modern genres such as the detective story, even as B. Traven's story of the quest for the Treasure of the Sierra Madre, on which Huston's film was based, in turn had a plot markedly similar in outline to *The Pardoner's Tale* by Geoffrey Chaucer. In any event, in

works of 'high' and 'popular' art alike, and on screen as in the novel, women are marginalised as Ishmael joins with Queeg-Queeg to go on Ahab's quest for Moby Dick just as Huck and Jim team up on their raft, and so forth and so on, from classics of American literature by Melville and Mark Twain, through all those 'buddy' dramas of the fifties, sixties and seventies, where the occasional woman was only inserted to make sure (and to assure the audience) that Wyatt and Doc, and Butch and the Kid, and Starsky and Hutch sexually stayed on the straight and narrow.

Women are likewise marginalised in popular Western films as well as war movies where the hero's primary duty is to his regiment, his men, to his badge of office as sheriff (see *High Noon*), etc., so any woman who interferes with that duty is an impediment. To qualify as such, the hero *has* to have a higher goal than love, domesticity, private life. Therefore, although it seems paradoxical, he has generally been required to take up arms and leave the girl he loves, as it were to prove himself a hero worthy of a woman's love. Or so the seventeenth century cavalier poet, Richard Lovelace, observed in his poem 'To Lucasta, Going to the Wars':

Tell me not (Sweet) I am unkind,  
That from the nunnery  
Of thy chaste breast, and quiet mind,  
To war and arms I fly.

True: a new mistress now I chase,  
The first foe in the field;  
And with a stronger faith embrace  
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such,  
As you too shall adore;  
I could not love thee (Dear) so much,  
Lov'd I not honour more.

Making exactly the same points in *Gone With the Wind*, Rhett Butler quotes this poem to Scarlett O'Hara, before he leaves her on the road to Tara and quixotically goes off to join the army (see Mitchell (1936), pp. 389-90):

'Oh, Rhett . . . how can you do this to me? Why are you leaving me?'

'Why?' he laughed jauntily. 'Because, perhaps, of the betraying sentimentality that lurks in all of us Southerners. Perhaps - perhaps because I am ashamed. Who knows? . . . No matter. I'm off to the wars.' He laughed suddenly, a ringing, free laugh that startled the echoes in the dark woods.

'"I could not love thee, Dear, so much, loved I not Honour more."  
That's a pat speech, isn't it? Certainly better than anything I can

think up myself at the present moment. For I do love you, Scarlett. . . . Be patriotic, Scarlett. Think how you would be sending a soldier to his death with beautiful memories. . . .'

When the furious Scarlett says she hopes a cannon ball lands right on him and blows him to a million pieces, Rhett wryly replies, 'When I'm dead on the altar of my country, I hope your conscience hurts you.'

Thus, as Rhett so ironically reminded Scarlett, the right kind of man's woman has traditionally and unselfishly and proudly waved her hero off to glory, just as in all those Westerns the heroine dutifully blinks back her tears as John Wayne or Errol Flynn rides out of the fort at the head of the US Cavalry. For a woman's duty as a woman is to see that her man does his duty as a man; to send her soldier to his death with beautiful memories, etc. Alternatively, the primary duty of a beautiful native woman (Sioux, Apache, Navajo or Mexican) is to sacrifice her own life by throwing her body in the path of the bullet aimed at her all-American hero and so make sure that his love for her does not interfere with his primary duty to his own tribe. He is supposed to die for his country, not for her; she is supposed to die for him.

Yet from Venus imploring Mars to make love, not war, to Dido pleading with Aeneas to stay with her, to Grace Kelly trying to uphold pacifist Quaker principles in *High Noon*, women in love in art through the ages have also, traditionally, sought to turn the hero away from his vocation as a warrior, and given a pro-war ideology, they therefore seem rather like anti-heroic versions of the demonic spirit in the form of Helen of Troy who tempts Marlowe's Dr Faustus away from his primary allegiance to God. Significantly, however, as Jane Tompkins has observed (Longhurst (1989), pp. 25-6), in popular Westerns such as *High Noon* 'the discourse of love and peace which women articulate' is always rejected, for it obviously belongs to the 'discourse of Christian domesticity - of Jesus, the Bible, salvation, the heart, the home - that the Western is at pains to eradicate'. Indeed, the viewpoint women represent 'is introduced *in order* to be swept aside, crushed, or dramatically invalidated'. For instance,

Near the beginning of *The Searchers* (1956), after a woman and her older daughter have been raped and murdered and a younger daughter carried off by the Indians, Ethan Edwards (John Wayne), who is heading up the search party, is addressed by an older woman, who says, 'Don't let the boys waste their lives in vengeance.' He doesn't even dignify her words with an answer, and the movie chronicles the seven years he and his adopted nephew spend looking for the lost girl. In this story, as in many Westerns, women are both

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

Ultimately, Tompkins concludes, 'the women and children cowering in the background of Indian wars, range wars, battles between outlaws and posses, good gunmen and bad, legitimize the violence men practise in order to protect them.'

Conversely, however, today as yesterday, individual artists may take the side of Venus against Mars just as Rubens did in a painting of 1637/8 for the Grand Duke of Tuscany (Gombrich (1972), pp. 126–7). The painter himself thus retrospectively describes the symbolism of a picture that came to be known as *The Horrors of War*:

The principal figure is Mars [writes Rubens] who . . . advances with his shield and his bloodstained sword, threatening the nations with great devastation and paying little heed to Venus his lady, who strives with caresses and embraces to restrain him, she being accompanied by her Cupids and lovegods. On the other side Mars is drawn on by the Fury Alecto, holding a torch in her hand. Nearby are monsters, representing Pestilence and Famine, the inseparable companions of war; on the ground lies a woman with a broken lute, signifying harmony, which is incompatible with the discord of war; there is also a mother with her babe in her arms, denoting that fecundity, generation and charity are trampled underfoot by war, which corrupts and destroys all things. In addition there is an architect, lying with his instruments in his hand, to show that what is built for the commodity and ornament of a city is laid in ruins and overthrown by the violence of arms . . . you will also find on the ground, beneath the feet of Mars, a book and some drawings on paper, to show that he tramples on literature and the other arts. . . . [The] Matron clad in black and with her veil torn, despoiled of her jewels and every other ornament, is unhappy Europe, afflicted for so many years by rapine, outrage and misery, which, as they are so harmful to all, need not be specified.

As portrayed by Rubens, Gombrich observes (pp. 128–9), 'Mars is not a heroic warrior, he is a brutal butcher, rather stupid in bearing and physiognomy – and who would not be stupid to allow the Fury Alecto to drag him away from the embraces of Venus? The Fury is a demon'. The painting thus 'teaches and preaches the blessings of peace and the horrors of war by placing the contrast between the two before our eyes', and it is 'precisely the strength of the tradition on which Rubens drew that divinities who are imagined as human and even all-too-human, shade over into personifications [such as 'unhappy Europe'] who are far from "bloodless" '. Likewise looked at symbolically and psychologically, it is, *mutatis mutandis*, as if the flesh-and-blood women who stand for mercy, pity, peace and love in

art are, simultaneously, externalised embodiments of the internal impulses *within* the hero (the psyche, the species, the nation) to lay down his arms, to abandon the feud, to make peace with the enemy, etc., and so their influence must finally be suppressed or exorcised or otherwise expelled from his soul and body when he dons the mantle of a tribal hero.<sup>5</sup> Thus, as eternally opposed to the full-metal jacket of he-manhood, any impulses towards charity, compassion, peace, domesticity, sensuality and love, whether from within or without – like works of art advocating them – have traditionally been characterised as ‘effeminate’. ‘O sweet Juliet,/Thy beauty hath made me effeminate,/And in my temper soft’ned valour’s steel!’ exclaims Romeo, immediately before he takes up the sword again to kill Juliet’s cousin (*Romeo and Juliet*, III, i, 110–12). On account of irrational passions that probably have to do with atavistic tribal priorities (the war must go on until the enemy is either totally crushed or killed; there will be an eye for an eye until all the world is blind; the feud must go on until ‘by and by everybody’s killed off, and there ain’t no more feud’ – *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 126), what is supposed to come first for a woman – domestic tranquillity, personal relationships, love, private life, and so on – must come second to a man. But there are, of course, obvious dramatic as well as ideological reasons for this dialectic.

It is, for instance, hard to imagine a literary or dramatic let-down comparable to the one that would occur if, at the eleventh hour, Melville’s Captain Ahab had decided to heed the virtuous Starbuck’s good advice, abandoned his vindictive quest for Moby Dick, reversed the course of the *Pequod* and headed home to live out his golden years with his dear wife and children back in Nantucket. By the same token, if Hamlet had heeded Gertrude’s advice and made peace with Claudius, or if Romeo had spared Tybalt and so made his peace with the Capulets, the show could not go on. Likewise, in innumerable other instances, there are virtually identical dramatic reasons why the hero can turn his full attention to the woman only *after* his primary goal has been achieved; and so (as in the case of Shakespeare’s King Henry V) his proposal of marriage signals ‘The End’ of the great adventure, of the quest, of the film or the novel. By contrast, in the romantic, chivalric tradition, of which certain stories and novels by Scott Fitzgerald – notably *The Great Gatsby* – are comparatively rare American examples, to win the woman herself may be the primary object of the hero’s quest, even as the main goal traditionally sought by any woman in literature, high or low, is to find herself a man.