A GUN OF ONE'S OWN
GENDER REPRESENTATION IN CONTEMPORARY WESTERNS

Introduction
Since 1990, a trend of contemporary Westerns has challenged the ideology and form of the classic Westerns. Historical representation, race, the economy of the West, and the role of gender have been approached from new perspectives by revisionist films. This research aims to focus on how gender has been constructed in Westerns after the film Unforgiven (1992). Focusing on configurations of masculinities and femininities, it will be analysed whether the Western is able to embody feminist discourses or not. If this research can prove a feminist reversal in a traditionally masculine film genre, it would help it to maintain social relevance, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, it could result in some valuable dissemination of feminist ideology.

Critical framework
This research utilizes the concept of gender hegemony as critical framework. As a way to understand gender relations, gender hegemony is split into the ideas of hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) and hegemonic femininity (Schiippers, 2007). On the one hand, hegemonic masculinity refers to dominance over women and competition between men in order to be regarded as hegemonic. On the other hand, hegemonic femininity is constructed in order to legitimise such masculine domination.

Masculinities

3. Film form and hegemonic masculinity
Hegemonic masculinity is constructed through content, but also through film form. Using Appadoo and The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford, this section analyses how neo-classic film form (Cassett and D’Aci, 1990) and slow cinema theory (De Luca and Jorge, 2016) helps to construct a discourse on hegemonic masculinity.

4. Queer Masculinities
The classic Western is based on the figure of the hegemonic heterosexual male (Tomkins, 1992), and homosexuality is erased or subordinated. The contemporary Western has deconstructed this in Brokeback Mountain and In the West.

5. Black Masculinities
Apart from homosexuality, non-White masculinities have been subordinated in the Western: Native Americans, Asians, and Black Americans. Some Westerns have challenged this notion through violence and fantasy, as Django Unchained, or through labour discourses around the railroad building, like Hell on Wheels.

6. Contemporary Masculinities
The Western has become a hybrid genre, able to permeate other kinds of films (Paryz, 2015). Western iconography and body discourses (Connell, 1995) are key in the construction of contemporary masculinities in films like Logan.

Feminities

7. Film form and hegemonic femininity
A new output of feminocentric Westerns (McGee, 2007) has challenged the notion of hegemonic femininity and has proposed other forms of female characters through neo-classic or slow film form, such as Hostiles and Meek’s Cutoff.

8. Queer Feminities
Alongside heterosexual female leading characters, the contemporary Western has focused on queer femininities as an alternative to the classic Westerner. Queer theory, economic property and self-consciousness configure liberation discourses in the TV series Godless and Westworld.

9. Intersectional Feminism
From the perspective of black women, feminism needs to address racial situations differently (Carby, 1982). The interplay between Black and White femininities, the absence of it, and their relation to masculinity will be analysed in The Keeping Room and The Beguiled.

10. Contemporary Femininities
The spread of the Western has also played an important role in the definition of non-hegemonic contemporaneous femininities, from Kill Bill and the liberation from patriarchy and capital to the de-sexualization of the body of Charlene Theron in Mad Max or the performance of Frances McDormand as a classic Westerner.