

“A World of Light, Sound, and Motion—My World”:

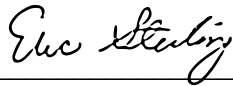
A Stylistic Overview of *The Wild Wild West* (1965–1969)

By Sarah G. Williams

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Approved by



Dr. Eric Sterling
Thesis Director



Dr. Darren Harris-Fain
Second Reader



Dr. Matthew Ragland
Associate Provost

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Dedicated to all the artists who inspire me

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Thank you to Michael Garrison, the creator of *The Wild Wild West*, who, by all accounts, was a considerate and imaginative producer who fostered a creative, fun, open-minded environment where the series could grow.

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Introduction

Series Background and Context for Discussion

The Wild Wild West is an hour-long narrative television series that aired new episodes weekly on CBS from 1965 to 1969 spanning four seasons. The show centers around two agents of the United States Secret Service, James or Jim West (played by Robert Conrad) and Artemus Gordon (played by Ross Martin), and their activities in the Western frontier during the administration of Ulysses S. Grant. Producer Michael Garrison created the show, pitching the premise of “James Bond set in the West,” drawing on the contemporary genre trends of espionage and Westerns (Kesler 8). From this foundation, the series developed into a distinctive entity that drew on various genres while cohering to the backdrop of a Western. The episodic format of the show usually had the protagonists face a different villain in each episode, rarely featuring storylines or characters that ran across multiple episodes.

In its earlier days, the show struggled to find its footing and generic identity. During development, the network gravitated towards a clear Western influence, even casting Rory Calhoun, an actor who had appeared in several Western films and television series, to play the lead role of Jim before replacing him with Conrad (Kesler 9–10). Executives at CBS were hesitant to experiment too heavily with the show, perhaps in fear of alienating audience members with unfamiliar styles. Audiences often rely on preconceived ideas of genre conventions to comprehend new texts (Ryall 336), and executives might have feared that too extreme a reconfiguration of the Western would baffle audiences. CBS executives might have wanted to imitate the traditional Western genre rather than experiment because preexisting formulas were more reliable: “because television is continually catering to what is popular, it has also relied on conventional genres that have worked well in the cinema...and adapted them for the new

medium” (Rodman 227). Additionally, distinct genres have a “privileged status for the popular audience” because they “[reaffirm] the audience’s values and attitudes” (Schatz 646), suggesting that coherence to familiar patterns would attract more viewers.

CBS executives were unsure about the success of a genre hybrid. One executive who worked on the show, Ethel Winant, stated that “CBS was terrified of this elaborate show that nobody understood” (qtd. in Kesler, 24). According to star Robert Conrad, “the regime [of CBS executives] said it’s not a standard show. It’s not a western. They don’t know what the hell it is” (qtd. in Kesler, 24). The show’s foundation from the beginning, that it was a version of “Bond in the West,” was already an eclectic starting point, but Garrison’s eventual vision, which relied on the creative freedom of others who worked on the show and which incorporated even more bizarre, fantasy-based elements, became more apparent as the show evolved.

Garrison, by many accounts, was an innovative and collaborative mind. According to Richard Donner, who directed several episodes of the series, “Garrison was one of the most crazy, outgoing, wonderfully funny men I had ever met. Back then, directors had little input on the episodes they worked on, but with Garrison, I had free-rein [*sic*]. I was involved with everything, editing, music and effects” (qtd. in Kesler, 54). Makeup artist Don Schoenfeld similarly stated that Garrison “would let me do whatever we wanted ‘cause it wasn’t an authentic western, it was tongue-in-cheek. He let us do whatever we wanted as long as it was far out and went with the character” (qtd. in Kesler, 121). Garrison was more creatively driven and less concerned with the financial feasibility of ideas, especially compared to later producer Bruce Lansbury, whose sensibilities kept the budget lower (Kesler 98–99). However, this lack of regard for the practical limitations of TV production ultimately enhanced the ideas that Garrison had, according to Winant (Kesler 83). Garrison’s willingness to experiment with genres and his

tendency to actively incorporate the creative decisions of the others involved surely contributed to the bizarre and ever-evolving style of the series. Although Garrison passed away suddenly in 1966 during the production of the second season of *The Wild Wild West*, the foundation he laid for the show's hybridized nature and the landscape of its familiar style and characters essentially remained throughout the rest of the show's run.

The recurring villain Dr. Miguelito Loveless is a hallmark of this unique style that both played on the contemporary format of espionage supervillains while showcasing a fresh but surprisingly apt configuration of Western themes. While most antagonists in the series were one-offs (with the exception of evil magician Count Manzeppi, who appeared in two episodes), Dr. Loveless was so popular with audiences from the beginning that the network demanded his continual return (Kesler 31), and he ultimately appeared in ten episodes. Loveless is a scientific genius who holds a grudge against society at large, often inventing devices or concoctions that threaten society on a mass scale. His dynamic on the series involves his threat to the order and progress of society while Jim and Artemus, two lawmen, fight against him to protect society and its values, a Western trope discussed further in Chapter 1.

The series has a reputation for its bizarre imagery and plots. The stranger episodes often receive the highest praise from fans, often because of their strangeness. Authors and fans Mark Presnell (51) and Susan Kesler (89) both praise one of the strangest and most fantastical Loveless episodes, "The Night of the Raven," as one of the best and most memorable in the overall series. While the series cultivated a distinctive style of its own, it pulled inspiration from a variety of sources that molded it into the Frankenstein's monster of media that it was. Lansbury, a frequent producer on the series for seasons two through four, comments on the show's tendency to pull inspiration from a variety of sources: "Classics of literature, film and

contemporary science were shamelessly commandeered as their elements were submerged and made over in a style that was, and still is, unique to television” (qtd. in Kesler, v). Some of these filmic influences include, prominently and unsurprisingly, the James Bond films, especially in the gadgets and the characterization of the leads. Additionally, the series appears to draw on classics of Western cinema for its settings, characters, stories, and situations.

Stylistically, narrative television series have followed in the footsteps of film for several decades. In the earliest days of television, narrative programs imitated the visual style of theater (Rodman 107) and the sonic style of radio (6). However, “by the mid-1950s movie studios were investing time, space, and money in the [television] medium” (Rodman 5). Due to various circumstances in the film industry and due to the rising popularity of television, film studios began turning their sights to the new medium in the 1950s and trying their hands at making shows for it (Hayward 357). Upon noticing the economic viability of the new medium, film studios started to form subsidiaries to produce television series, and “these new studio-produced programs resembled movies, complete with the cinematic codes of production and reception” (Rodman 103). Major film studios, such as Warner Bros., MGM, and Twentieth Century-Fox, as well as many smaller studios, began producing television in the 1950s (Rodman 104–105). Given this trajectory of the television form, I speculate that *The Wild Wild West* was influenced by Western films. Additionally, given the tendency of many 1960s TV shows to overtly imitate the James Bond films, including *TWWW* as stated in its pitch, films are clearly not outside the series’ scope of possible influences.

The influence of Western films on *TWWW* is a prominent focus of my thesis. Throughout my study, I examine various aspects of the series, including genre, style, and characterization. To set a reasonable scope for a single thesis, I will only focus on the ten episodes that feature

Loveless. As a point of reference, I'll consider possible cinematic influences on the series, primarily through the Western film genre before and during the 1960s, not surpassing the run of the television series. My thesis includes three chapters. In the chapter about genre, I primarily discuss the series' adherence to and subversion of the Western film genre, with some discussion of other generic influences. In the chapter about style, I analyze visual elements such as cinematography and color, as well as aspects of the musical score, before touching on the show's association with the steampunk style. The final chapter is dedicated to examining the characterization of the series' two protagonists, Jim West and Artemus Gordon, as well as the show's most famous villain, Dr. Loveless.

To provide context for my arguments, here are summaries of the ten Loveless episodes. (Throughout my thesis, I shorten titles to omit "The Night...")

- "The Night the Wizard Shook the Earth" (season 1, episode 3): Jim and Artemus face a new foe, Dr. Miguelito Quixote Loveless, a brilliant and mysteriously wealthy scientist who has threatened to detonate a massive bomb in California large enough to kill five thousand people. Loveless demands a portion of the state's land that he claims rightfully belongs to him by way of his ancestors. Jim successfully deactivates the bomb and has Loveless and his goons arrested.
- "The Night That Terror Stalked the Town" (season 1, episode 10): Loveless escapes jail and kidnaps Jim with the elaborate plan of recreating his face with plastic surgery on his crony, Janus, to infiltrate the U.S. government and retrieve his rightful land. Artemus saves Jim, and the two agents once again stop Loveless and apprehend him.
- "The Night of the Whirring Death" (season 1, episode 20): Jim and Artemus are assigned to collect bonds for the state of California from wealthy individuals in the state. Loveless,

who has once again escaped from prison, interferes by sending bombs to the wealthy donors, all in the effort to take his rightful land. Jim and Artemus are able to protect the donors and defeat Loveless, but the villain escapes the agents' clutches.

- “The Night of the Murderous Spring” (season 1, episode 27): Loveless has invented a drug that causes its users to hallucinate while becoming violent and murderous, which the villain plans to administer into the water supply around the country. He emerges from hiding to test the drug on Jim, who hallucinates killing both Artemus and Loveless, but ultimately recovers without causing actual harm. Jim and Artemus disrupt the villain's plan and, in an attempt to escape on a lake, Loveless and his cronies seem to drown when their boat sinks.
- “The Night of the Raven” (season 2, episode 3): Loveless, who apparently did not drown, kidnaps Princess Wanakee of the Choctaw tribe, which has a pending peace treaty with the U.S. government and demands that Jim and Artemus alone come to meet him in a ghost town. Loveless uses this opportunity to test his new drug on Jim and Wanakee, a powerful powder that physically shrinks its user to the height of only a few inches, which the villain plans to distribute on a mass scale. Artemus gets an antidote to Jim and Wanakee, but Loveless shrinks himself and escapes on the back of a raven.
- “The Night of the Green Terror” (season 2, episode 10): Loveless has devised a poison that kills forest life and uses it to cause a localized famine, drawing the attention of Jim and Artemus. Loveless poses as the “lord of the forest” for a nearby Native American community, providing them with food during the famine that he actually caused himself. Jim and Artemus expose Loveless's hoax and turn the tribe against him, chasing him out of the forest, while a fire destroys his hideout and his work.

- “The Night of the Surreal McCoy” (season 2, episode 23): Jim and Artemus are assigned to protect the crown jewels of a visiting foreign ambassador, but despite tight security, the jewels disappear from the art museum where they were kept. Upon investigating, the agents discover that Loveless has invented a device that transports him inside and out of the three-dimensional worlds of his custom paintings. Loveless used this technology to steal the crown jewels and plans to use it to infiltrate and take over governments around the world. After an interdimensional ordeal, the agents box up all of Loveless’s special paintings, but the doctor presumably saws his way out while hiding in a painting of a carpentry shop.
- “The Night of the Bogus Bandits” (season 2, episode 28): Jim and Artemus notice suspicious activity in U.S. mint circulation and investigate, discovering that Loveless is training criminals to rob banks and run a new treasury department for the villain’s regime, once he overthrows the government and becomes dictator. Loveless has an elaborate plan to initiate a country-wide assault as a final push to overthrow the government, but the agents destroy his communications device, and he escapes once again without a trace.
- “The Night Dr. Loveless Died” (season 3, episode 4): Jim and Artemus learn about the ostensible death of Loveless and go to a mortuary to see the corpse for themselves. A key on Loveless’s wrist points the agents to information leading them to Loveless’s will and his neurologist relative, who turns out to be Loveless in disguise. The doctor eventually traps Jim in a sanitorium, where he attempts to lobotomize the agent. Artemus rescues Jim and the two chase the villain, who manages to escape once again.

- “The Night of Miguelito’s Revenge” (season 4, episode 12): Jim and fellow agent Jeremy Pike, filling in for Artemus, who has been called away to Washington, investigate a recent swath of missing persons. While seeking out information, Jim falls into a trap set by Loveless and finds himself kidnapped along with the several other people for whom he has been searching. Loveless has kidnapped the individuals for some kind of personal vendetta against each and plans to exact revenge on them. Fortunately, Jim and Jeremy are able to disrupt Loveless’s plans and save the others, but not before the villain makes an airborne escape as a human cannonball.

Through these ten example episodes, the series showcases a multifaceted relationship with genre, distinctive use of stylistic techniques for telling stories, and memorable characters, which are worthy of in-depth analysis.

Chapter 1

“James Bond on Horseback”: Genre Reconfiguration and Hybridity in *TWWW*

Series creator Michael Garrison pitched *The Wild Wild West* to CBS executives with the premise “James Bond set in the West,” drawing on the contemporary genre trends of espionage and Westerns (Kesler 8). From this foundation, the series developed into a distinctive entity that draws on various genres while cohering to the backdrop of a Western. Thoroughly classifying and studying every genre influence on the series is outside the scope of this chapter. Instead, I will discuss the way the series imitates or subverts the conventions of the Western genre as established through famous Western films that precede or overlap with the airdates of the series. Just within the frame of *Loveless* episodes, the series reconfigures or comments on the Western genre in at least three major ways. Through the positioning of *Loveless* as voyeur, audience member, or director, the series showcases a meta stance and self-awareness of the predictability of its format and genre conventions. The series reconfigures the Western by placing its conventions alongside those of other distinctive genres, especially espionage and science fiction. Finally, through *Loveless*’s story arc, visual imagery, and various forms of symbolism, the series suggests a running theme of a “veneer,” or pleasant imagery that disguises something more sinister, perhaps as a metaphor for the more gruesome and cynical truths behind the glorified legends of Westward expansion.

Definitively classifying *TWWW* as a Western is an onerous if not impossible task. Genre theory is a complex and ever-evolving field of study, and no single complete definition of the Western genre exists. In fact, there is no ultimate consensus on the definition of genre in general. In the words of Rick Altman, genre is a “complex concept with multiple meanings” (14); film critics and theorists have conflicting or inconsistent definitions of genre, often including or

excluding certain films in their discussions for the sake of their arguments or frameworks (15–29). Genres are constantly evolving, especially due to the trends in entertainment industries and the demands of audiences (Schatz 644). Texts often overlap genres; many Westerns draw on broader genres, such as action, adventure, comedy, or melodrama (Altman 141).

Indeed, genre is so complex that an “exhaustive classification of generic elements is impossible” (Pye 144). Douglas Pye states that genre comprises various elements, including plot, character, time and space, iconography, themes, and various other structural features (146). Similarly, Thomas Schatz writes that a film genre consists of a few “fundamental structural components: plot, character, setting, thematics, style, and so on” (642). Even within the same genre, the endless potential combinations of the various generic elements make each text in that genre totally unique (Pye 146).

Altman proposes semantic and syntactic approaches to genre. The semantic approach defines a genre based on more superficial elements and iconography, providing a more widely recognizable meaning of a genre, while the syntactic approach relies on the “deeper structures” beyond the visual (89); a genre is the most potent when it draws on both approaches at the same time (90). Drawing on Altman’s framework, Ryall discusses the superficial versus underlying aspects of genre as well. In the case of Westerns, a more inclusive definition of the genre puts value on iconography, or the more visual and popular characteristics associated with the genre, such as horses, wagons, and the Old West setting, which are most useful in mainstream discussions and for film studios (Ryall 334). More restrictive genre definitions focus less on superficial qualities and instead form on the basis of a collectively chosen, exclusive canon of important and famous films traditionally associated with that genre (Ryall 334). Those more discussed films become “the foundation-stones for the canonic edifice known as the western

genre” (Ryall 335). Both inclusive and exclusive genre definitions have their respective uses and are more fit for certain contexts and discussions.

Given this foundational idea that genre parameters are dynamic and relative, several theorists have proposed frameworks or lists of characteristics for defining the Western genre. Jon Tuska in *The American West in Film: Critical Approaches to the Western* and Will Wright in *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* craft their own sets of Western story types under which to classify Westerns. *TWWW* falls under Tuska’s “Law Man Story” (35), centering around two agents of the government, perhaps not only in imitation of Bond but as a reconfigured version of Westerns that center around sheriffs, such as *Dodge City* (1939) or *Rio Bravo* (1959). The series also somewhat resembles Wright’s professional Western plot, in which specially skilled men use their abilities to help a community for pay (104), and perhaps draws inspiration from the premises of films like *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) or *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964). This is likely, given that “television has borrowed extensively from the narrative structures of film in order to produce its own stories” (Rodman 110).

According to Matthew R. Turner, the defining characteristics of the Western are its setting, taking place between the mid-1800s and the early 1900s, and its “clearly defined dramatic conflict between the forces of good and evil, man and nature, or law and anarchy,” while “composed of a complex set of codes and images,” both visual and thematic (218). Iconography is an important consideration in categorizing genre (Hayward 179). The Western genre especially is heavily associated with its visuals, such as horses, six-shooters, old-fashioned storefronts, saloons, desert plains, and cowboy garb. According to Altman, “in the popular mind genres are so tightly identified with certain readily recognizable semantic traits that they may easily be represented by no more than a suggestive element here or there” (132). In its essential

setting, the Western United States in the 1870s, as well as the protagonists' cowboy-style attire and the horses, guns, and Old West towns that are ubiquitous across the series, *TWWW* strongly signals itself as a Western.

Schatz contends that the classification of genre requires more than just superficial settings and visuals but rather demands “certain dramatic conflicts that [audiences] associate with specific patterns of action and character relationships” (646). In other words, in this framework, the Old Western frontier populated with horses, saloons, and six-shooters is not enough to define a work as a Western. It must also include “specific patterns of action and character relationships” that “[reaffirm] the audience’s values and attitudes” about that genre (Schatz 646). While different authors present a wide range of characteristics of the Western genre, one quality is especially salient. The theme of some kind of dichotomy between civilization and wilderness is practically ubiquitous across the Western genre, an idea with which many theorists agree (Cawelti 63; French 107; Hayward 411; Pilkington and Graham 7; Schatz 647). Innumerable classic Western films play on this conflict, such as *Dodge City*, *High Noon* (1952), *Stagecoach* (1939), *The Searchers* (1956), *Man of the West* (1958), *Shane* (1953), *Rio Bravo*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). These films generally frame their protagonists as allies of law and order, while the antagonists threaten such values and therefore the development of society. In its premise alone, *TWWW* follows this theme, centering around two individuals who have committed their lives to the U.S. government as Secret Service agents, helping to not only protect their country but also to maintain its territorial and diplomatic interests. As agents of the government, Jim and Artemus defend the country against Loveless, who threatens the safety and stability of American society (or the world at large).

The Western genre traditionally involves the history of Westward expansion. Some earlier Western films, such as *The Iron Horse* (1924) and *Western Union* (1941), celebrate the advancement of American civilization into the West, especially as that civilization relates to advance in technology (Miller and Van Riper, 2011, 86). Later on, however, Western films became more nuanced on the topic and more often began to address rifts between advancement and old-fashioned values (Miller and Van Riper, 2011, 86). Such films feature characters who represent some kind of movement away from or toward cultural advancement, or characters who are caught in between the two ways of life, such as Link in *Man of the West* and Tom in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. In the framework of Westward expansion, *TWWW* coheres with this concept but on a grander and more political/government-focused scale than typical classic Westerns. Jim and Artemus, as agents of the U.S. government, help maintain, if not expand, the American empire with every mission they accept. Cohering with traditional Westerns, Jim and Artemus are self-sacrificing heroes who fight for the advancement of civilization (Miller and Van Riper, 2011, 86). As an especially stark reminder of the life-threatening commitment required by such agents, Artemus even jumps on electric telegraph circuits to sabotage Loveless's plans in "Bogus Bandits," electrocuting himself.

While *TWWW* imitates and resembles the Western film genre in several notable ways, it also defies and reconfigures the genre. Through three notable methods discussed here, the series makes its awareness of genre conventions known or otherwise subverts audience expectations associated with the Western genre. The first of these methods is self-reflexivity, a self-commentary on well-established Western genre conventions.

Meta-Western

The series often parodies Westerns, as “a parody is a comical imitation of a genre that uses its existing codes to examine the subject in a humorous way” (Turner 219). Humor is an important aspect of *TWWW*. John Kneubuhl, the writer who created *Loveless*, clarified that he liked to write stories that were “seriously silly,” and keeping “that very adult serious silliness” was important to him in writing for the show (qtd. in Kesler, 30). The show’s title itself is humorous, as it is “meant as a pun, highlighting the show’s contrast with the more traditional western,” simultaneously referencing the genre-specific setting as well as the protagonist (Kesler 25). The show includes hallmarks of the Western genre that are so on-the-nose as to seem intentionally humorous. For instance, *Loveless* frequently has an array of nameless henchmen dressed similarly in cowboy garb who wordlessly do his bidding. In “Bogus Bandits,” the henchmen even wear identical rubber masks that give them vague but eerily similar appearances. In “Surreal McCoy,” *Loveless* introduces Jim to his hired hands, the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh fastest guns in the West. These instances exemplify the self-reflexive humor the series sometimes had regarding the formulaic nature of its predecessors. John Javna contends that *TWWW* benefitted from its “self-conscious sense of humor,” a factor that helped it become successful (40). Parodies of Westerns typically “appropriate and transform” the conventions of the Western genre (Turner 228), as does *TWWW*. Additionally, Susan Hayward posits that “parody is the domain of oppositional art,” which “innovates through subverting [the] codes” of preexisting styles (262).

In reappropriating characteristics of the Western genre, the series positions itself as a meta-Western. Consistent with the avant-garde, which often “[reworks] genres,” some *Loveless* episodes “draw attention to the filmmaking practice itself and are self-reflexive” (Hayward 22).

Texts act as their own metalanguage when they are “self-referential (pointing, say, to how they are made)” (Hayward 215). *TWWW* does this through references to itself as a television series. For example, in “Wizard Shook the Earth,” Artemus describes an invention that Loveless carried with him into his jail cell after his defeat: an “oddly shaped glass tube” with which he claimed “he could send pictures through the air” and “catch them in that tube.” While Artemus laughingly dismisses the device, Loveless was clearly decades ahead of inventing television itself, which would one day broadcast his escapades to numerous audiences.

Another example occurs in “Terror Stalked the Town” when *TWWW* portrays its self-reflexivity by positioning Loveless as an audience member. In one scene, after trapping Jim in a room, Loveless secretly observes and describes the agent’s characteristics as they relate to the hero’s fulfillment of his role on the series, in several ways overlapping with the heroic character archetypes on which he is based. In this scene, Loveless watches Jim seduce his henchwoman Marie through a two-way mirror. In one sense, this scene is reminiscent of the sexual promiscuity characteristic of James Bond and the Bond films that influenced *TWWW*. However, this scene may also function to place Jim and Loveless respectively as a heroic archetype and the audience that observes and categorizes him as such. An over-the-shoulder shot portrays Loveless watching Jim through a two-way mirror as if a character on a screen, delightedly taking amusement in the “entertainment” before him. In the process, using his crony Janus for exposition, Loveless describes and even predicts Jim’s characteristic functions and actions. For example: “Now, unless I miss my guess, he’s going to woo Marie, hoping she’ll help him escape.” Regular viewers of the series may resemble Loveless in this moment, enthusiastically observing Jim’s predictable, weekly behaviors as the hero of his own series. Similar imagery, in which Loveless watches Jim through a frame, appears in later episodes as well, including

“Murderous Spring,” “Raven,” and “Surreal McCoy.” This framing is an example of *mise-en-abîme*, the “reduplication of images or concepts referring to the textual whole” (Hayward 219), a process which contributes to deconstruction (220). Loveless also resembles an audience member in a scene in “Bogus Bandits” in which Jim fights Loveless’s cronies in a saloon: Loveless watches from the second floor through the railing, applauding after Jim wins the hand-to-hand fight. (In an additional layer of meta, one of the cronies proceeds to live-score the action scene with a playful ditty on the saloon’s piano, perhaps to augment Loveless’s viewing experience.) If, as Hayward suggests, the audience’s act of watching a performance is voyeuristic in itself (393), then Loveless’s observation of Jim without his knowledge is an imitation of what audiences do at home.



"The Night That Terror Stalked the Town"

In these moments, *TWWW* also comments on another aspect of its medium, the predictable structure of the episodic narrative series. Television shows have often relied on “generic narrative formulas” and aspects of consistency like familiar plots and characters to keep audiences engaged (Rodman 107). *TWWW* is no exception, as Jim and Artemus carry out their roles as protagonists and defeat another villain every episode. Loveless often draws attention to his role as villain and describes Jim’s essential and predictable heroic qualities. Loveless’s comments verge on the humorous, as if expressing what audience members may be thinking while watching the stylized scenarios: in “Terror Stalked the Town,” after Jim is electrocuted on a fence, Loveless shows awe at Jim’s still-pristine appearance after the injury by noting that there’s “not a mark” on him and that he’s “not even singed.”

In some instances, Loveless purposely orchestrates occasions for Jim to perform his essential role in the show or display his most essential characteristics, which often relate to his fighting prowess. In “Bogus Bandits,” Loveless ensnares Jim in a deadly obstacle course, ambushing him with physical threats from all sides to observe how the agent reacts while pointing out his behavior to a crony, as if observing a wild animal in nature. In the same episode, Loveless even positions himself as both a director and a teacher: in the opening scene, he “directs” a rehearsal of a bank robbery from his director’s chair; later on, he introduces Jim to his class of aspiring criminals, with the topic “how to rob a bank” written on the chalkboard at the front of the room.

Jim stands in the front of Loveless's bank-robbing class in "The Night of the Bogus Bandits"



Genre Hybridity

Another way that *TWW* innovatively approaches the Western genre is by positioning it alongside elements of other distinct genres. Several authors have commented on the Western's marked flexibility and adaptability to different eras and settings (Pilkington and Graham 2, 10; Johnson et al. 1; Cawelti 52, 94). According to Michael K. Johnson et al., the genre has the distinctive ability to "form unexpected combinations with other genres," producing an "odd resonance" between the genres (2). *TWW* takes advantage of this generic flexibility and draws on many genres and media influences. Since the concept of genre itself contains multiple elements and can be expressed in different ways, a text can easily mix genres by emphasizing

one genre in one aspect, such as the plot, while emphasizing another genre in another aspect, such as imagery (Altman 131).

The Wild Wild West is an example of a Weird Western. According to Cynthia J. Miller (2016), Weird Westerns are texts that utilize “figures and themes drawn from horror, science fiction, steampunk, and more” and “[weave] elements of the fantastic into traditional Western plots, characters, and settings to create stories that complicate, reinforce, and comment on our understanding of Westerns and the West” (4). For example, producer Jed Buell, called the father of the mutant Western (Miller, 2005, 67), took alternative spins on Westerns in the early twentieth century by casting actors not usually seen in the genre: he produced some of the earliest all-Black Westerns as well as *The Terror of Tiny Town* (1938), which stars only little people (Miller, 2005, 74–78). Weird Westerns such as Buell’s “draw attention to the traditions they [invert]” by combining well-established elements with unconventional ones (Miller, 2005, 78). Such genre reconfigurations are an example of counter-cinema, which “questions and subverts existing cinematic codes and conventions” (Hayward 58).

Hayward also describes the avant-garde tradition in cinema, wherein “genres were mixed, intercalated, and juxtaposed” and the “popular was fused with the experimental” (21). While *TWW* does resemble the traditional Western genre in several ways, it subverts the expectations of that genre and surprises the audience with unexpected additions to the genre, such as alternative imagery. Since iconography is such an important aspect of the Western genre, *TWW*’s fusion of Western visuals with advanced technology reminiscent of science fiction, or even the extensive presence of toys in set decoration (as seen in “Whirring Death” and “Miguelito’s Revenge”), defies audience expectations associated with the traditional Western genre (Hayward 180).

TWWW's stance as both a Weird Western and possible parody go hand in hand. Much in the way that Weird Westerns juxtapose well-known conventions of the genre with more unexpected elements and genres, "parodies subvert the conventions of the Western in ways that breathe new life into the genre," as "comedy relies on the reversal of expectations" (Turner 218). An example of these conventions is the shoot-out, a "codified ritual in which conflict is resolved through violence" (Turner 229). In "Surreal McCoy," *TWWW* takes its own unique spin on the shoot-out, as Jim and Artemus team up on Loveless's goons while in the ridiculous circumstances of having been transported inside a painting by Loveless.

TWWW is a Weird Western partly in the way it combines the traditional Western with elements of science fiction. Paul Green (2016) labels several episodes of the series as science fiction Westerns, which entail "a traditional Western setting with science fiction elements or themes" (2, 276–279). Thematically, the Western and science fiction genres meld together quite well. Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Riper (2022) describe the similarities between the Western and science fiction genres, noting that both "rely heavily on the themes of frontiers and uncharted territories in their settings and narrative structures" (61). Philip French argues that the Western and science fiction genres share some qualities in common, namely that they are both "concerned with teaching lessons to the present," either through a "rewriting of the past or by extrapolations of current tendencies projected into the future," respectively (39). Johnson et al. agree that the Western shares characteristics with its "historical sibling, science fiction" (2); both genres are about exploring new frontiers and have historical connections to the contemporary issues of colonialism and imperialism (11–12). Hayward asserts that science fiction arose in the nineteenth century in response to scientific and technological advances (303). Given the Western's acknowledgment of the conflicts that arose during Westward expansion due to the gap between

advancing society and the wilderness, the topic of advancing technology easily melds into the main opposition found in Westerns. Since science fiction often plays “on our fears of science” by presenting situations in which technology advances beyond human control (Hayward 303), *TWWW* incorporates this dimension of the science fiction genre into the Western by having Loveless, the brilliant scientist and inventor, stand in as the fearsome and antagonistic symbol of scientific advancement that has gone out of control. Along these same lines, Miller and Van Riper (2011) describe the steampunk Western, which draws on the era’s obsession with progress and advancement by “[playing] with notions of control” and “[calling] into question centuries-old assumptions about the destiny of humankind” to “prod at the soft underbelly of American national identity” (91).

While the style of steampunk emerged in the late twentieth century, it originated in earlier decades with works such as Jules Verne’s novels and even *The Wild Wild West* television series, “which showcased fantastic technology-out-of-time long before its association with an identifiable subgenre or ‘aesthetic’” (Miller and Van Riper, 2011, 87). An analysis of *TWWW* within this framework involves its representation of society’s relationship with technology. The series often features anachronistic or completely fantastical technology, especially as used by villains against the protagonists. Dr. Loveless takes credit for not-yet-patented devices, such as the airplane (“Wizard Shook the Earth”), but he also harnesses the power of audial tones to allow interdimensional travel into and out of paintings (“Surreal McCoy”) and devises a drug that can shrink a human to the height of only a few inches (“Raven”). Such technology, whether too advanced to exist in the 1870s or perhaps too extravagant to be possible, exoticizes the Western backdrop of the series. While many Western films draw on actual historical technological advances from the time period, like the steam train or telegraph lines, *TWWW* imposes more

exotic and stylized technology on the Victorian frontier setting. Such imagery makes for a memorable and interesting visual experience, but the transposition of advanced tech in such a setting may point to more complex themes: “Western steampunk in television and film uses fantastic images of technology-out-of-time to create critical commentary on the idea of progress and the inherent tension between ‘civilization’ and nature” (Miller and Van Riper, 2011, 85). Steampunk does not necessarily warn against advanced technology entirely but rather comments on the potential for great prosperity or great disaster, depending on who harnesses the technology (Miller and Van Riper, 2011, 91). Miller (2016) argues that steampunk Westerns, like *TWW*, illustrate “the tension between popular fascination and fear in relation to technology and the Machine Age—a commentary on the loss of wilderness, independence, and the freedom of the frontier West” (10). While Jim and Artemus perform their jobs with the help of their own high-tech gadgets, such as a makeshift blowtorch (“Raven”), Loveless devises more advanced and larger-scale inventions that have the potential to affect the country or the world.

Another Weird Western that parallels this conflict involving dangerously advanced technology is *The Phantom Empire* (1935), a twelve-part Mascot film serial starring Gene Autry. Like *TWW*, the serial is a hybridized science fiction Western that suggests an “alternative, advanced history” characterized by unfathomable “technological advancement” (B. Davis 563). *The Phantom Empire*, through its frontier-roaming protagonist and tyrannical antagonist who rules a technologically advanced kingdom, demonstrates a conflict between two ways of life. As the hero, Autry defends himself and the honor of his homeland, through his “closeness to nature” and expression through music, against the oppressive regime of the advanced Queen Tika (Miller and Van Riper, 2022, 58). This conflict, which mirrors the dynamic between heroes Jim and Artemus and their foe Loveless, reconfigures a hallmark of the Western genre, the wilderness

versus civilization opposition. The science fiction elements, especially the fantastical advanced technology harnessed by antagonists Dr. Loveless and Queen Tika, represent the threat of excessive technology on freedom and fundamental humanity, while heroes such as Jim West and Gene Autry fight for a way of life that is not so utterly contingent on technology. Another parallel in *The Phantom Empire* involves Frankie, a scientific-minded boy who helps Autry. Much like Artemus, Frankie occasionally invents devices that conveniently aid the hero's cause at the right moment while still remaining immersed in a less radical and therefore more heroic level of technological engagement. In other words, Frankie and Artemus represent a "relationship between humankind and scientific progress...that is more balanced—slower to mature" and that is ultimately beneficial to the hero's cause rather than threatening to the core way of life, as the antagonists' world-shifting technology is (Miller and Van Riper, 2022, 62).

Many of the science-fiction elements found in *TWWW* probably derive from its parallels with espionage trends of the 1960s. According to Wesley Britton, that decade saw an increase in science fiction elements in both espionage film and television and ushered in the trend of "mad scientists [seeking] revenge and world domination using every imaginative device and gimmick scriptwriters could invent" (91). Britton argues that science fiction became an important part of espionage, an inherently political genre, in the 1960s to convey "cautionary tales of misuses of science in the atomic age" (91). *TWWW* premiered in 1965, known as "the year of the spy," as spy-themed television shows "popped up in prime time on every night of the week" (Britton 116). Imitators and parodies of James Bond were abundant across numerous mediums in the 1960s (Britton 106–119). Like many '60s TV shows, *TWWW* is an example of spy-fi, or "entertainment fusing fantastic villains and weaponry with stories of heroic agents saving the world week after week" (Britton 118). It was not the first television series to combine the

Western and spy genres. At least two earlier series, *Cowboy G-Men* (1952) and *Mackenzie's Raiders* (1958–1959), also center around government agents in the Old West. However, *TWWW* took significant inspiration from the James Bond films, which began coming out in 1962.

Important writers who helped establish the ground for modern espionage fiction include Arthur Conan Doyle, John Buchan, and Dornford Yates (Britton). However, Ian Fleming was “the writer to change everything,” setting the stage for the most notable twentieth-century spy trends with his James Bond novels beginning in the early 1950s (Britton 94). These novels were adapted into films beginning in 1962 with *Dr. No*. This film, in addition to its successors *From Russia with Love* (1963), *Goldfinger* (1964), *Thunderball* (1965), and *You Only Live Twice* (1967), all potentially influenced *The Wild Wild West* series, which ended in the first half of 1969. The most obvious influences are the gadgets and the characterization of the heroes and villains. With Dr. Loveless as the prime example, *TWWW* often featured maniacal, exaggerated villains bent on countrywide or worldwide domination and who were often scientists with fantastical or anachronistic technology at their disposal, such as the villains that Bond faced, including the titular Dr. No. Jim and Artemus are characterized, similar to Bond, as endlessly skilled, knowledgeable, and resourceful spies who have few, if any, weaknesses. Both characters, especially Jim, are also portrayed as promiscuous, or at least with emphasis on their use of sex appeal in their work—Jim seduces women who work for Loveless in “Wizard Shook the Earth” and “Terror Stalked the Town,” while Artemus seduces a wealthy casino owner to convince her to buy bonds for the government in “Whirring Death.” And, of course, there are numerous gadgets inspired by those in the Bond films but with a Western spin, such as the device-laden carriage in “Wizard Shook the Earth” or Jim’s various devices he conceals in the heel of his boot (“Raven”), both of which are borrowed from *Goldfinger*.

The “Veneer” Theme

Many authors describe the tradition of the Western genre that is based in a celebration of American identity and discovery, which exaggerates the triumphs and downplays or ignores the less heroic aspects of Westward expansion. Hayward contends that the celebratory images associated with the Western genre “constitute a massive cover-up of how the west was colonized in the name of capitalism” (413). According to Johnson et al., “in its most traditional format, the western is a mythic blend that romanticizes settler colonialism” (5). Philip French argues that the Western has “traditionally been devoted to upholding the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant supremacy” (94), and that the Western is traditionally about “America rewriting and reinterpreting her own past, however honestly or dishonestly it may be done” (24). The formulaic nature of the Western has traditionally been for the purpose of reaffirming the myth of the glorified Old West, allowing audiences to engage in a predictable, ideologically reassuring ritual (Hayward 413; Cawelti 100). Western films did become more complex and critical of society as time went on (Hayward 417–420; Wright 119). But William T. Pilkington and Don Graham agree that, especially in its earlier phases, the Western film genre offered “exaggerated, distorted, and romanticized” images of history as a “consoling interpretation of America’s past” (3). Paul Varner claims that Manifest Destiny, “the idea that whites were destined by God to inhabit and civilize the frontier,” was the foundation of classic Westerns (142) before the genre became more nuanced and critical of this perspective, significantly in the 1960s (154).

TWWW expresses some of this moral ambiguity. Supposing that the U.S. government, Jim and Artemus’s employer, represents society, advancement, and order, then society indeed appears unfavorable and dishonest on occasion. In “Wizard Shook the Earth,” Jim approaches the governor of California to warn him about Loveless’s plan to blow up the state; the governor,

surrounded by doting younger women, initially dismisses Jim's worries to the agent's visible disdain. In "Green Terror," the Native American chief of Bright Star shames the U.S. government's inadequate attempts to support the tribe during a recent famine.

However, an even more significant stance towards society can be posited through the creation of Loveless himself. Kneubuhl created the character of Miguelito Loveless after discovering actor Michael Dunn in a magazine article about the performer, who had a musical nightclub act in New York with fellow actor and musician Phoebe Dorin (Kesler 30). Kneubuhl and Garrison sought out uncommon elements to incorporate into the series, so Dunn's exceptional musical talent coupled with his height of three feet and ten inches stood out. Kneubuhl then developed the character of Loveless, deciding that he would descend from a Hispanic mother and a white father. Kneubuhl claimed that Loveless harbors bitterness towards the government for taking away land that belonged to his mother and bitterness towards God for making him so small (qtd. in Kesler, 30).

Kneubuhl wrote many episodes of *TWWW* during seasons one and two, including five of the ten episodes featuring Dr. Loveless. Although Kneubuhl left the show during season two, disenchanted after Garrison's sudden and tragic death in 1966 (Kesler 98), he laid the groundwork for Loveless's character that was carried on by subsequent writers. Kneubuhl, the son of a Samoan mother and a German American father, was a prolific writer for both theater and television. He often incorporated themes of split identities or the experiences of misfits into his work, including his scripts for *TWWW* (Orr 346). Stanley Orr observes that, "a lifelong outsider, Kneubuhl not only dramatized various forms of alienation and dislocation but did so by countering the dramatic conventions and frame narratives of the television shows to which he contributed" (346). Furthermore, Kneubuhl claimed that series creator "Michael [Garrison] was

not only a dedicated homosexual; he was an impassioned, dedicated homosexual” (qtd. in Kesler, 79), a secret that CBS was intent on keeping under wraps. Presuming this is true, Kneubuhl and Garrison likely had similar affinities for the perspectives of the socially stigmatized, which possibly fed into the creation and framing of *Loveless*, a little person who frequently laments his exile from society. *Loveless* has ample space in several episodes to describe his feelings and his plight as a little person, encouraging the audience to sympathize with his outcast status. In “Green Terror,” when Jim questions how *Loveless* could justify killing children, *Loveless* expresses the pain he’s experienced due to his state as an outcast: “What can children know of crying in the night? What could children know of a whole lifetime of crying?” He is so embittered by his small height that he devises plans to shrink other people (“Raven,” “Miguelito’s Revenge”) so that he will no longer be looked down upon, literally. In “Wizard Shook the Earth,” after crushing a beaker in his hand, causing himself to bleed, he laments, “I’ve lived so long with pain I no longer feel it.” Such a perspective is contrary to many foundational Westerns, which usually sympathize with a more restrictive demographic of white, able-bodied, ostensibly heterosexual, male protagonists.

In the tradition of counter-cinema, Kneubuhl’s creation of *Loveless* “unfixes—renders unstable—stereotypes” and “makes visible what has been normalized or invisibilized” (Hayward 59). *Loveless*’s short stature excludes him from the Western canon of average-heighted heroes, often portrayed by fashionable stars like John Wayne, Gary Cooper, or Henry Fonda, and villains, played menacingly by towering stars like Burt Lancaster or Jack Palance. Sarina Pearson writes that Kneubuhl’s work on *TWW*, especially in his characterization of Dr. *Loveless*, demonstrates his “deep sense of conflict about transcendent masculinity of the cinematic cowboy and the colonial consolidation that westerns represent more generally” (2).

Kneubuhl expresses this through Loveless's profound obsession with Jim West, the consummate hero, characterized by simultaneous admiration and hatred, which he begins expressing in only his second episode, "Terror Stalked the Town."

All this is to say, an important aspect of Loveless's arc involves his relationship with and role in society. Since his appearance grants him a unique perspective on human nature, Loveless views civilized society as a hypocritical farce—that individuals' cruelty towards him and exclusion of him do not match their claims of an advanced civilization that values human rights. Loveless expresses this rejecting viewpoint of societal institutions in "Murderous Spring": he observes that "it's so amusing the way men pride themselves on being civilized," and that the drug he is developing will dissolve the "vener of civilization they prize so highly." Loveless presumably believes that the sophisticated and harmonious image associated with society is just a "vener" and does not match the crueler and more chaotic truth of human nature. Through this dynamic, the Loveless episodes play on a major theme of the Western genre, the opposition between civilization and wilderness. Loveless's goals typically involve hurting humanity on a large scale. Given this antagonism to society, Loveless could be said to represent wilderness in the Western genre's almost ubiquitous wilderness versus civilization opposition, while Jim and Artemus, as representatives of the U.S. government, act on behalf of civilization. However, *TWWW* presents an alternative approach to this opposition. The symbols of wilderness in classic Westerns typically embody figures distant in their knowledge of or association with advancing American society, such as lawless bandits in *Shane* or *Man of the West*, the "uncivilized" Native Americans in *The Searchers*, or perhaps even the frontier itself as in *Western Union* or *The Iron Horse*. Loveless, however, is extremely intelligent and cultured in keeping with the values of the increasingly dominant society of the 1870s. He is a "Renaissance man" (Presnell 22),

accomplished in scientific advancement and proficient in several classical art forms, including painting, music, and sculpting. He is articulate, poetic, and verbose when he communicates. Simultaneously, he rejects and resents society as a whole. He understands people well enough to both infiltrate their institutions and to manipulate them on an individual scale. All of his associations with other people are for the purpose of ulterior benefits in his plans (perhaps with the exception of his frequent accomplice Antoinette). Loveless does understand society and is very familiar with it, unlike many other symbols of wilderness in classic Westerns. It is *because* he understands society that he wants to destroy it. He believes that society puts on a “veneer” of civility, covering up a more savage nature, which he wants to expose and destroy. Loveless’s stance towards society matches Cawelti’s evaluation of the grim, violent reality of the colonization behind the formation of the United States, which often postures itself as a peaceful, democratic, exemplary nation: “To preserve the self-image it has been necessary to disguise the aggressive impulses in these historical realities under the mask of moral purity and social redemption through violence” (112), which has often been accomplished through Western genre texts.

Several of Dr. Loveless’s episodes involve the theme of veneers through settings, props, and other imagery that suggest a glamorous or innocent exterior covering something more sinister. For example, as previously discussed, the Western genre, especially in its earlier days, has perpetuated a polished and reassuring version of the events that took place on the American colonial frontier. This proud and glossy version of American history too often ignores the bloodier and more gruesome aspects of Westward expansion. A prime example of this message in *TWWW* through the veneer theme is in “Whirring Death,” in which Artemus visits a wealthy casino owner named Bessie to convince her to donate bonds to the government. Her home is

adorned with crystal, marble, classical art, and smiling guests. A friend of Bessie draws attention to a gift that has been anonymously sent to the wealthy woman—a snow globe, which matches her home's aesthetic. However, the friend points out that the figure inside the globe represents the Donner party, shortly before the globe explodes, as it was sent by Loveless in an attempt to assassinate Bessie. In one sense, the snow globe acts as a veneer hiding a deadly explosive. More symbolically, the image in the visually pleasing decoration represents one of the most infamous and gruesome failures in the history of Westward expansion: the Donner party attempted to bypass the Oregon trail westward through a shortcut, which ended up stranding them and forcing them to cannibalize each other. The hidden message of a gruesome instance in Westward expansion history appears in the glamorous and innocent veneer of a snow globe.



"You like to see it snow in Donner Pass?"

Other thematic veneers are frequent in Loveless's episodes. Loveless fabricates Jim's reality in "Murderous Spring" with the formula he made, so that most of the episode's second act portrays Jim's hallucination. In the same episode, Loveless and Antoinette perform a peaceful lullaby that mingles with the sounds of several crazed individuals under the influence of Loveless's formula killing each other in the next room. In "Terror Stalked the Town," Loveless simulates a bustling Western community by populating a ghost town with lifelike mannequins, taxidermized animals, and phonographs emitting music and enthusiastic voices, perhaps in mockery of the kinds of societies that typically occupy such places; while the setup is disorienting to Jim, it may be Loveless's way of revealing the way he feels in regular communities and how artificial the life around him seems. In "Whirring Death," Artemus discovers Loveless's hostages disturbingly restrained in chains and full-body casts in the back of a toy shop that has a vivid display of fun knickknacks in its storefront. In "Green Terror," Loveless disguises himself as a representative of the "lord of the forest," literally as a knight in shining armor, and as a savior for an indigenous tribe that suffers from a famine that Loveless himself caused.

This veneer theme matches Kneubuhl's multifaceted approaches to storytelling that reflect on multiple identities. Perhaps in resonance with Kneubuhl's literary theme of split identities, double meanings are numerous in the Loveless episodes, even those by other writers. For example, Loveless shows a puzzling inconsistency in his drive to either help and protect children ("Wizard Shook the Earth," "Whirring Death") or mercilessly kill them ("Murderous Spring," "Green Terror"). The governor of California in "Whirring Death" is simultaneously a symbol of progress and corruption: he embodies prosperity and diplomacy, but he shows moral questionability through his unabashed promiscuity. The name Janus, found in "Terror Stalked the

Town” in reference to Loveless’s crony who takes on the identity of Jim to infiltrate the government, stems from the name of a Roman god who is often portrayed with two faces (“Janus”).

Conclusion

The Wild Wild West both reaffirms and subverts its Western backdrop. It can be reasonably argued that the series pulled inspiration from cinematic sources, given not only the television medium’s tendency to borrow from film but also the stated influences of individuals involved with the series. While the series demonstrates generic similarities to the Western filmic canon, especially in its iconography and plot structures, it also rearranges or reconfigures elements of the Western genre. One notable way it does this is through genre hybridity, or by combining the Western with distinctive elements of science fiction and espionage, ultimately establishing itself as a Weird Western. In other ways, *TWWW* deconstructs the Western genre. Deconstruction “exposes the function of the cinematic apparatus as an instrument of illusionist representation and attacks the ideological values inherent in that representation” (Hayward 63). Through meta, parodic, and self-reflexive portrayals, the series identifies itself as “an instrument of illusionist representation.” Through the veneer theme, episodes question the “ideological values” typical of the early Western genre.

Chapter 2

“One Thing About You, Dr. Loveless—You Do Have Style”: A General Discussion of Style in *The Wild Wild West*, Including Music, Cinematography, and Steampunk Iconography

Style is “the manner of presenting a subject in a creative work,” which, in film studies, “includes a consideration of the filmmakers’ techniques” (Phillips 580). As previously established, television has taken inspiration from filmmaking techniques for decades, since at least the 1950s. During that period, in the words of Ron Rodman, “many television programs began to look more and more like miniature movies” (105). Film styles undoubtedly influenced the production of some television series, including *The Wild Wild West*, whose creators have admitted pulling inspiration from a variety of sources. It is impossible to determine exactly which texts influenced the show that were not overtly named, but Hayward argues that “all texts are necessarily intertextual, that is, they refer to other texts” (264). Considering the show’s premise as well as the television medium’s tendency to borrow cinematic techniques, an analysis of preceding Western films is a fascinating if not enlightening practice. In this chapter, I examine aspects of *TWWW*’s musical score, cinematography, use of color, and steampunk iconography, with some comparisons to significant films in the Western genre.

Music

One aspect of an onscreen text’s style is its musical scoring. Music, like any other aspect of film production, helps immerse viewers in the story, guiding their focus and establishing tone (Gorbman 11). Music often functions the same way in television, to complement the visuals (Rodman 171). Blair Davis emphasizes that musical scoring is an important aspect of films in the Western genre (558). Wright argues that music reinforces the “mythical significance of the Western” (12), through compositions that evoke the grandiose and the triumphant. Many classic

Western films open with grand orchestral scoring, reflecting the adventurous storylines and expansive frontier settings. Some examples are *Dodge City*, *Stagecoach*, *Western Union*, *Red River* (1948), *Shane*, *Fort Apache* (1948), *The Magnificent Seven*, and *How the West Was Won* (1962).

Television began to imitate cinematic audial styles in the mid-1950s once film studios became more involved in the medium (Rodman 6, 107). The merging of the film and TV industries meant that many composers for television had experience in film, applying their filmic scoring techniques to their work in the newer medium (Rodman 133). These experienced composers brought with them “a musical vocabulary steeped in the nineteenth century, post-Romantic Hollywood symphonic style, with chromatic chords and long, sweeping themes played by large orchestras” (Rodman 105). One of these composers, Dimitri Tiomkin, scored such classic Western films as *Giant* (1956), *Red River*, *High Noon*, *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), and *Rio Bravo*. According to Kathryn Marie Kalinak, the Academy Award-winning Tiomkin was one of the original composers to establish the classic Hollywood film score, which developed during the studio system era of the 1930s through the 1960s (62). In demonstration of CBS’s filmic influences while developing *The Wild Wild West*, the network hired Tiomkin to compose the theme for the series, after composing the theme for the earlier CBS Western series *Rawhide*. For the new show, he wrote “The Ballad of Jim West,” a dramatic and somber composition with slow and descending melodies. A version with lyrics describes a cryptic, mythical hero who has conquered “the heart of the wild, wild west.” Series creator Michael Garrison rejected the song, instead hiring a young composer named Richard Markowitz, who had previously composed for television (Kesler 15). Markowitz moved away from the “pseudo-serioso” style of Tiomkin’s piece, which he felt did not fit the show’s concept (qtd. in Kesler,

16). Markowitz instead gave the theme a “spoofy kind of feeling” since the show was “not a traditional Western” (qtd. in Kesler, 18), adorning the theme with upbeat and playful melodies. Specifically, he wanted to make the theme “half traditional Western and half jazz” (qtd. in Burlingame, 95). His choice for the composition proved a better fit for the show’s light-heartedness and generic diversity.

The predominantly brassy quality of *TWWW*’s opening theme song conveys a heroic tone through a melody that is also lighthearted and playful. The French horn, which is prominent in Markowitz’s composition, traditionally has heroic connotations (Rodman 37). Marlin Skiles similarly writes that the French horn has “assertive” and “forceful” connotations, while trumpets sound “heroic” and “strong” (71). S. Andrew Granade notes that the show’s opening song, a “*Magnificent Seven*-style, openly-spaced [*sic*] brass theme over syncopated strings,” exhibits its “western heritage” (15). While the theme is heroic and loyal to the Western genre in these ways, it is also fun and lively given its texture that gradually builds with an assortment of instruments and its upbeat melody. The fun, adventurous, and optimistic score encapsulates the tone of the series, that of sincere adventure and, simultaneously, light-hearted self-awareness.

One aspect of the cinematic musical style that TV borrowed is the use of leitmotifs in scores (Rodman 107). A leitmotif is “a musical figure (a chord, a melodic gesture, a phrase) that, through repetition in a narrative text...becomes identified with a character, an idea, or a situation” (Rodman 110). Granade notes that Western scores especially gravitate towards this method, often featuring distinct melodies that are “connected with an individual or ideal in a leitmotivic approach” (9). Markowitz applied this cinematic technique to *TWWW*, as the series’ main theme doubles as Jim’s leitmotif, while the composer also wrote separate leitmotifs especially for Artemus and Dr. Loveless.

Granade asserts that the traditionally Western-sounding theme distinctly signals the show's hero, Jim West (26). Since the show's creator conceptualized Jim as the main character, the theme represents both the series and the character of Jim. Typically, the grand, orchestral version of the theme only appears during the opening credit sequence. Another version of the theme appears as nondiegetic background music during scenes in episodes, typically while Jim is using a gadget to escape enemies or otherwise accomplish tasks, such as the scene in "Wizard Shook the Earth" where he activates traps in the device-laden carriage. Markowitz said that this version of the theme, which consists of a snare drum, a bass, and sometimes a wind instrument, was intended to be more "fun" while the main series theme was "quasi-serious" (qtd. in Burlingame, 95). The more subtle and focused version of the theme matches Jim's character individually, since he is not ostentatious and has a low-key demeanor. The snare drum also induces a military association, which matches Jim's self-discipline and loyalty to his government.

Artemus's leitmotif on the other hand is a separate melody, one which matches his character individually as well. Markowitz describes Artemus's theme as having "a European feel, polite but quirky" (qtd. in Burlingame, 96), an international association that perhaps matches Artemus's affinity for foreign, mostly European, languages. His theme, like the main theme/Jim's theme, suggests a certain light-heartedness. However, Artie's theme is less obvious in its heroism. Its notes do not consistently ascend or descend but are instead starkly varied, jumping from note to note in an almost surprising pattern. Additionally, his theme is not firmly associated with one instrumental arrangement. It can appear as strings or piano, or can graduate from singular or few instruments into a heavier arrangement. This variation and unpredictability in both the melody and instrumentals match Artemus's character. He continuously reveals a

variety of talents and knowledge so a viewer can never expect with certainty the limits of his disguises, languages, artistic and musical talent, or scientific knowledge. Two examples of the leitmotif appear in “Terror Stalked the Town”: the theme is played with brass while Artemus broods over Jim’s absence, and later with a variety of woodwinds as he makeshifts a tool to infiltrate Loveless’s hideout.

Loveless’s leitmotif first appears in the opening scene of his first episode in the series, “Wizard Shook the Earth.” Throughout Loveless’s appearances on the series, his theme follows, warning the audience of his arrival or enhancing his presence on screen. The theme is characterized by a fast tempo and descending melody, usually played by sharp, intense, high-pitched strings. The harpsichord is also an important instrument in connection to Loveless, as his close accomplice Antoinette plays the instrument to accompany their duets in the villain’s first several episodes in the series. He also uses a harpsichord briefly to control an elevator in his hideout in “Dr. Loveless Died.” The harpsichord is not an obvious contemporary instrument for a Western score and does not appear in many Western scores. However, its association with the Renaissance matches Loveless’s fixation with classical art and his knowledge of and references to artists from the time period. The harpsichord and strings both contribute to the baroque style that accompanies the sophisticated villain. The leitmotif also induces tension and distress, partly through its startling suddenness and fast tempo. Violins, played in a certain manner, heighten fear and unease in film scores. Kalinak argues that the “distinctive shrieking violins” in Bernard Hermann’s score for *Psycho* (1960) that play during the shower murder scene “have now become a convention for terror itself,” reproduced throughout popular culture, including in television (15). Markowitz’s leitmotif for Loveless effectively connotes terror and unease through the composition itself and its choice of instrumentation.

The show sometimes features music that is uncharacteristic of Westerns and that contributes to the advanced technology throughout the show. In “Murderous Spring,” a jagged, angular, slow, electronic synthesizer sound underscores most of the second act. The music augments Jim’s point of view while he is delirious from Loveless’s hallucinogenic drug. The music helps the viewer experience the unfamiliar and uncomfortable circumstances that Jim is undergoing while also evoking the technologically advanced mind behind the abysmal innovation. Granade asserts that the series’ more traditionally Western sounds signal the protagonist Jim while electronic sounds define Loveless (26). Simultaneously, the electronic sounds deviate from the norm of Western scores and build on *TWW*’s distinctive reality. The music’s placement over traditional Western imagery, such as six shooters, a bustling Old Western town, and a wagon pulled by horses, is especially stark in creating cognitive dissonance and in establishing a unique style. “Surreal McCoy” also makes use of electronic sounds, although through the diegetic sounds of Loveless’s transport device.

Cinematography

In imitation of the cinematic style, some television programs began to move away from staging live productions in a theatrical way to “adapting the technical codes of film: the 180-degree rule, the eyeline match, the shot-reverse shot camera technique (made possible by the three-camera technique), the cinematic codes of makeup, lighting, costume, and the fourth wall” (Rodman 107). Given these stylistic similarities between film and television as well as the inherent intertextuality in any text, *TWW* demonstrates some similarities to preceding Western films, particularly in this case regarding imagery. For example, the films *Shane*, *High Noon*, and *Man of the West* include moments when action is shot from the ground level through a horse’s legs, which stands in the foreground to frame the shot. “Wizard Shook the Earth” uses this same

device during its first act. Another technique is a first-person point-of-view shot from the front of a wagon, which appears in *Red River* and *The Magnificent Seven*. A similar shot is used in “Murderous Spring” as Artemus rides into town to meet Jim.



"The Night the Wizard Shook the Earth"



Shane (1953)

TWWW uses composition in thematically appropriate ways, claiming distinctive cinematography and other visuals as its own to define its style and complement its unique stories. Composition is “the arrangement of settings and subjects (usually people and objects) within the frame” (Phillips 565), which often includes visual representations of themes or metaphors about the story or characters. One common compositional technique in Westerns is the association of symmetry with societal institutions. Several Western films use symmetrical composition to frame locations or symbols that represent society. For example, the interior of the church in *High Noon*, Abraham Lincoln’s office in *How the West Was Won*, and the character of Jett at several points in *Giant* have symmetrical framing. Symmetry, or formal balance, evinces “peace, quiet, [and] equality” (Mascelli 210), and suggests “harmony and an at-rest feeling in a scene” (Beaver 60). This symmetrical imagery in association with symbols of society reinforces those locations and what they represent as consistent and predictable.

Similar imagery appears in *The Phantom Empire*, the previously discussed Weird Western serial from 1935. As Miller and Van Riper (2022) note, the images of the futuristic city of Murania are “precise, orderly, calm, and sterile” (56), which distinctly contrast with more Western imagery in other parts of the serial (59). Robert Warshow argues that the wide landscapes in Westerns represent the “freedom to roam” (438), and other authors agree that the landscape is important to the Western genre (French 106; Wright 189). The antagonist and ruler of Murania, Queen Tika, is often framed symmetrically. Symmetry may represent an overreaching, dominating order that threatens the protagonists’ freedom or closeness to wilderness, or may just represent the orderliness of society. Clinical and technological imagery is a stark opposite to the open frontiers and nature that are fundamental to the Western genre. *TWWW* often frames Loveless and his associated imagery, such as the settings over which he has

control, in a symmetrical way as well. Such symmetry implies his dominance of or intent to dominate situations and other people.



Queen Tika in The Phantom Empire (1935); The church interior in High Noon (1952)



Oil baron Jett Rink in Giant (1956)



Loveless's criminal class in "The Night of the Bogus Bandits"



Loveless's circus in "The Night of Miguelito's Revenge"

The series also uses visual contrasts in its composition. Greater contrasts result in greater intensity or dynamic, according to Bruce Block, which garners more excitement and stronger emotional reactions from the audience (10). One way the show uses contrasts is to cultivate intensity and complement its overall high energy. Given his short stature, Loveless is often placed in contrast to his accomplice Voltaire, played by Richard Kiel, who stood at seven feet and two inches. “Terror Stalked the Town” makes notable use of height contrasts in shots with Loveless, Jim, and Voltaire, especially in a long shot of the three walking through the ghost town, arranged in order of height. Such contrast also appears in the scene of Jim and Loveless’s first meeting, in “Wizard Shook the Earth,” when the agent sees Loveless effortlessly defeating several large men in hand-to-hand combat. The silent men probably voluntarily lost the fights because they are at the mercy of Loveless and were either told to let him win or wanted to avoid retribution from him. Similarly, Loveless frequently demonstrates his influence over Voltaire, speaking to him as if he were a child, giving him orders, or even reprimanding him, to the taller man’s visible fear, as in “Whirring Death.” The size difference between Loveless and his larger hired men emphasizes the power he does have, not necessarily derived through his own physicality, but through the payment or manipulation of others for his own benefit. Extreme contrasts like this are visual representations of thematic contrasts. The Dr. Loveless episodes in general express binaries of opposing ideas, such as the glamorous versus the macabre, the rich versus the poor, or the organic versus the technological. Additionally, the veneer theme associated with Loveless as established in Chapter 1 relies on imagery that masks an opposing reality. By surrounding himself with those who are so strikingly different, Loveless reinforces the contradictory meanings of his episodes.



"The Night That Terror Stalked the Town"

Another notable aspect of *TWWW*'s cinematography is camera movement. The film medium introduced movement of the camera and diverse camera angles (Beaver 47). Camera

movement became commonplace in film in the 1930s (Phillips 110). This is a technique that television borrowed, as exemplified by *TWWW*. The technique of camera movement, along with the series' other dynamic techniques, cultivates invigoration and intensity, complementing the adventurous storylines and its experimental nature. Films such as *High Noon*, *Dodge City*, *Vera Cruz* (1954), *Man of the West*, and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966) utilize a mobile camera to augment storytelling, as camera movement allows for "following action and changing image composition" (Beaver 40). Given the tendency for visual contrast to increase intensity, a frequently moving camera with intermittent stops creates its own kind of contrast (Block 137). Furthermore, different kinds of camera movements, such as two-dimensional pans and tilts versus three-dimensional tracking and craning, contrast with each other (Block 137). The numerous stylistic contrasts throughout *TWWW* match its generic amalgamation and experimentation. While the Western genre and science-fiction genre contrast with each other, so do many of the stylistic elements used in the series. In several episodes, notably "Wizard Shook the Earth," "Terror Stalked the Town," "Murderous Spring," "Raven," "Bogus Bandits," and "Miguelito's Revenge," the camera routinely moves around the space of the sets with a variety of

maneuvers, like tracking, craning, and handheld camera, continuously altering the composition within shots.

Loveless's introductory episode, "Wizard Shook the Earth," frequently uses crane shots that ascend and descend, perhaps to emphasize the variation in height between Loveless and the other characters. The crane shot "is not analogous to any perception in normal experience, since we rarely see the world from the privileged position that a towering crane move allows" (Katz 287). This "privileged position" mirrors Loveless's lofty goals and advanced knowledge, as well as his inflated self-image and self-righteousness that cause him to prioritize himself above others. Additionally, the high angles in "Murderous Spring," foregrounded by tree branches or columns while showing Jim in his crazed state, suggest a stalker in the distance, presumably Loveless, who has an exaggeratedly elevated point-of-view, and who is spying on Jim to see his response to the drug.

Tracking shots are also frequent in the series, moving towards or away from subjects or following subjects as they move. Such camerawork gives viewers a clear sense of the three-dimensional space of the sets, as the camera physically rearranges itself in different spots and angles, almost as if an active participant in the scene. The camera also frequently tracks inside Loveless's given workspace, typically sidewise to showcase his many scientific instruments, often crowding the foreground and framing characters as they move and speak. The inclusion of foreground elements helps to establish the viewers' sense of depth and the space in which the scene takes place (Katz 304). This arrangement also reinforces the busyness and excess of Loveless's mind, appearing in several episodes, including "Wizard Shook the Earth," "Terror Stalked the Town," "Raven," and "Green Terror." Crowded and complex imagery often surround Loveless, ranging in style from futuristic to organic to classical art to the macabre, mirroring the

nuance of his mind and the confusion of moral end goals, as visual cinematic techniques like composition can convey the “personality or state of mind of characters” (Dyer 117).

Another type of moving shot found in the series is the arc shot. An arc shot is “a moving camera shot in which the camera moves in a circular or semicircular pattern in relation to the object or character being photographed,” which “provides a varied perspective of the photographed scene” (Beaver 19). Occasionally, the camera arcs around the set, emphasizing certain elements onscreen and familiarizing the audience with the three-dimensional space of the set, such as the shot in “Miguelito’s Revenge” when Loveless approaches his kidnapping victims collectively for the first time: the camera showcases them all by arcing behind their multicolored cages that are arranged in a semicircle.

Some episodes portray Jim’s perspective by using a handheld camera. In “Murderous Spring,” the camerawork is shaky and out of focus when Jim hallucinates shooting Artemus, mirroring his disorientation and distress. “Terror Stalked the Town” and “Surreal McCoy” include similar scenes in which Jim awakens disoriented. In both scenes, a handheld camera with shaky, stumbling movement communicates that the viewer is seeing Jim’s perspective as he tries to get his bearings and discern his surroundings.

“Surreal McCoy,” however, features a relatively stationary camera but in conjunction with a wide-angle lens and extreme camera angles. The choice to shoot the episode this way may be in reference to past films, given the intertextual nature of all texts; “shots or combinations of shots might refer back to earlier films (by way of homage to earlier directors)” (Hayward 190). Some Western films keep the camera stationary while using wide-angle lenses, resulting in static tableaux that resemble paintings, matching the legendary or mythical feeling of their stories, as in *Shane* and *How the West Was Won*. The story of “Surreal McCoy” revolves around paintings, so

its imitation of the layout of a landscape painting through stationary, wide long shots makes sense. However, its distorted and extreme imagery, through the wide angle or ultra-high or -low camera angles, matches the bizarre and fantastical premise of interdimensional travel. The wide-angle shots induce an uncomfortable feeling, as such shots have often been used in film to “suggest that something is not right” (Phillips 89). For example, the hallway scenes are shot with a wide-angle lens from the low angle of the floor, and a bird’s-eye-view shot, itself an unusual shot that can be “disorienting” or “distracting” (Phillips 103), looks down almost directly from the ceiling in Jim’s fight scene with Loveless’s goons. “Murderous Spring” also makes frequent use of the wide-angle lens, usually in closeups of characters, fittingly in conjunction with a plot about a hallucinatory drug that distorts a user’s reality. Mark Presnell says that the wide-angle closeups in “Murderous Spring” emphasize the psychological nature of the episode (46). Similarly, “Terror Stalked the Town” uses uncomfortably tight wide angles on Loveless’s face as he performs surgery on Janus.

The Loveless episodes, notably “Wizard Shook the Earth,” “Murderous Spring,” and “Surreal McCoy,” *“The Night of the Surreal McCoy”* make frequent use of low angles to frame the villain. Just as several Western films significantly use low angles to augment their respective stories, including *Red River*, *High Noon*, *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943), *The Magnificent Seven*, and *A Fistful of Dollars*, the low angles on



Loveless serve their own specific purpose. The low-angle shot makes its subject look “larger-than-life” while giving “power to the subject, making it appear to dominate objects beneath it” (Van Sijll 162). Low angles can “inspire awe” and create a “forceful perspective,” and are therefore useful for framing “important personages” (Mascelli 41). The low angles, in addition to the crane shots, evoke Loveless’s lofty goals and match his feelings of grandeur about himself.

In its lighting scheme, *TWWW* often uses sharp, distinctive shadows. Since the show often makes use of action and mystery tropes in its stories, the strong shadows, especially in the first season, may stem from a film noir inspiration (Lewis 209). Even some episodes in color maintain dramatic and stylized shadows and lighting, especially “Raven,” “Dr. Loveless Died,” and “Miguelito’s Revenge.” In “Raven,” triangular and circular shadows fall on the inner walls of the dollhouse, and in “Miguelito’s Revenge,” subjects are steeped in darkness resembling a void at multiple points. One obvious inspiration that *TWWW* gleaned from the Western film genre, however, is the use of strong, silhouetted shadows. Many Western films, such as *Western Union*, *Red River*, *High Noon*, *Vera Cruz*, *Man of the West*, *Rio Bravo*, *How the West Was Won*, and *A Fistful of Dollars*, feature this device, which typically involves a shot of a character, usually donning the distinctively shaped cowboy hat, with a perfectly matching solid black shadow against the wall behind him. In terms of lighting, “Miguelito’s Revenge” takes advantage of its colorized medium through red and green lighting. Some possible filmic influences for this stylized lighting are *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949) and *Dr. No* (1962).

Color

While the first season was in black and white, *TWWW* made striking use of color in its second, third, and fourth seasons. The network may have valued bright colors for the purpose of attracting viewers during a time when black-and-white television was still commonplace and

color programs and TV sets were an emerging novelty. Despite this larger context, *TWWW* does make use of thematically appropriate color schemes or colors that complement the characters. Before examining the series' use of color, however, a brief summary of the use of color in the famous Western films that predate the series may be enlightening regarding the colors used in the show. Many classic Western films use color in naturalistic and harmonious ways. Even the more saturated films derive the bulk of their color brightness and variation from nature, such as a bright blue sky or bright green vegetation. Films such as *Western Union*, *Man of the West*, *Rio Bravo*, *The Magnificent Seven*, and *How the West Was Won* use a relatively realistic color palette with scattered pops of bright, artificial colors, like saturated reds or yellows. However, some Western films use bright, artificial color palettes. *Dodge City*, for example, includes colorfully vivid costumes, and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* features unnaturally vibrant colors and lighting that are stylized from plain sources like sunlight and cavalry uniforms.

TWWW's use of color varies from episode to episode. Some episodes use a primarily naturalistic and harmonious color palette with a limited amount of artificial color. For example, "Raven" features mostly a variation of reserved browns, beiges, greens, and gold, while the wall of Loveless's lab is adorned with a striking combination of light and dark blue. Some episodes' color palettes are significantly more saturated and varied overall. This manifests in one way through brightly colored sets and set decoration. "Surreal McCoy" includes notably bright colors in its set design, as the walls of various rooms of the mansion set range in color from teal to scarlet to gold. "Bogus Bandits" contrasts its mostly rich but reserved color palette with occasional pops of bright colors, like a light blue hallway wall or the flashy fuchsia and pink outfits of Loveless's accomplice, Belladonna. In "Dr. Loveless Died," the interiors of the villain's coffin as well as the elevator in his hideout are a velvety lavender. Interior decorations

in the same episode take on colors like crimson, gold, blue, and mint green over a palette of neutral tones, while one scene includes a grenade that emits a vibrant yellow poison gas, possibly an inspiration gleaned from a moment in *Thunderball*. Some individual episodes follow a color scheme that emphasizes a few key colors. For example, in both “Bogus Bandits” and “Miguelito’s Revenge,” a dichotomy of greens and reds predominates the color palettes.

The series’ use of diverse and perhaps even discordant colors, in color schemes that vary across episodes, evokes its roots of genre hybridity and its creators’ tendency to pull inspiration from numerous sources. William Johnson coined the term “kaleidoscopic films” in reference to movies that primarily use artificial colors to “stress variety and versatility” (19), terms which match *TWWW*’s synthesis well. Furthermore, the series’ frequent use of bright hues may be because highly saturated colors are distinctly unnatural (Branigan 172). This choice could translate as a visual representation of the veneer theme as established in Chapter 1, which suggests that appearances are not always genuine, or that a cheery exterior may be an artifice for a grimmer reality.

Another way the series makes use of bright colors is through costumes, especially those of the two main characters. The meanings of certain colors change depending on context (Phillips 74; Allen 143; Branigan 179), so analysis of color use should be based on an individual text. Since brighter colors draw more attention from viewers (Block 111; Mascelli 219), it is safe to assume that Jim and Artemus are dressed in much brighter colors than most of the people surrounding them because they are the main characters. However, the specific colors they each wear match their established dynamic and their individual characterization.

The colors that actors wear onscreen can reveal information about their characters’ personalities (Phillips 76; Kalmus 28). In color theory, colors placed opposite of each other on a

color wheel are considered complementary (Block 107). In some episodes, including “Surreal McCoy” and “Dr. Loveless Died,” Jim wears blue while Artemus wears yellow. In the additive color wheel, blue and yellow are complementary colors (Block 103). This color scheme comments on the dynamic between the two main characters, suggesting that, although the two men are very different from each other, they enhance each other and work together well as a team. Otherwise, one can typically expect to see the two wearing some combination of contrasting cool and warm colors. The dichotomy of cool and warm colors in a text often symbolizes differences or oppositions within its narrative (Branigan 175). In Jim and Artemus’s case, it expresses the differences in their personalities. Jim wears either blue or green, both cool colors, which are associated with “reason, control, [and] relaxation” (Phillips 75) and with “rest, ease, [and] coolness” (Kalmus 26). Meanwhile, Artemus often wears a warm color, especially yellow, and sometimes red. Warm colors are associated with the “lively” and “assertive” (Phillips 75), as well as “excitement” and “activity” (Kalmus 26). These descriptors are fitting because, while Jim is consistent and predictable with his abilities and cool demeanor, Artemus shines when he is either inventing new gadgets or embodying different personas, and he has a generally livelier disposition than Jim.

On an individual basis, the colors that Jim and Artemus wear match their characteristics. Natalie B. Kalmus associates yellow with a wide assortment of meanings, including “riches” and even “deceit” (26), which match Artemus’s sophisticated, indulgent lifestyle and his talent for lying, often for his job. Green, which Jim wears in several episodes, is suggestive of the “outdoors, freedom...[and] vigor” (Kalmus 27), suitable qualities for a Western protagonist. Jim most often wears dark blue. William H. Phillips suggests that dark blue in particular could “suggest restrained emotions” (76). Jim’s usual poker face, monotone speaking voice, and casual

demeanor match this interpretation of the use of dark blue. However, several protagonists from films that predate and perhaps influence *TWWW* wear blue, including Wade in *Dodge City*, Shane in *Shane*, Chance in *Rio Bravo*, Joe in *A Fistful of Dollars*, and James Bond in *Dr. No* and *Thunderball*. Jim may typically wear blue because it is associated with heroism and the main protagonists in influential films that predate the show.

Steampunk

Pausing from discussion of filmic influences on *TWWW*, I will take a moment to discuss *TWWW*'s influence on a successive style. Several authors of books about steampunk agree that *The Wild Wild West* was a significant influence on the genre. Granada labels it as a “primogenitor of the steampunk genre thanks to its reliance on steam-powered technology in the midst of futuristic scientific achievement” (14). Brian J. Robb calls *TWWW* “the grandfather of modern movie and TV Steampunk” (98), while Thomas Willeford considers it the earliest example of a text that is “truly Steampunk” (3). Jeff VanderMeer calls it “the best Steampunk series ever to air, even if it appeared well before the development of the literature or subculture” (179–180). And the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction labels the series a potential precursor to steampunk (“Wild, Wild West, The,” par. 2). Given these comments, what is steampunk, and what makes *TWWW* steampunk?

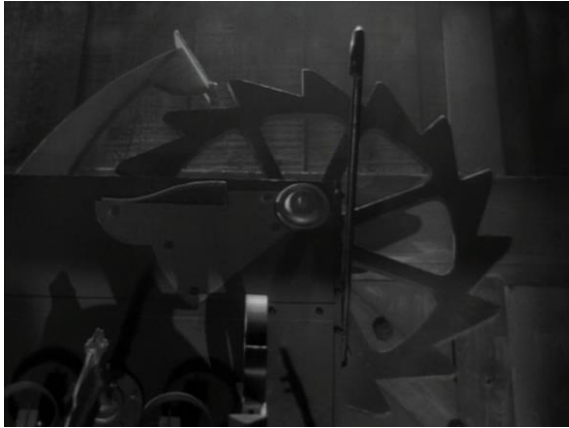
According to Robb, steampunk is “a subgenre of science fiction and fantasy literature, primarily concerned with alternative history, especially an imaginary ‘Victorian era’ when steam power and mechanical clockwork dominated technology” (8). VanderMeer writes that some of the basic elements of steampunk include steam in conjunction with a “metal man,” “baroque stylings,” and a “(pseudo) Victorian setting” (9), all of which appear in the series. Much like *TWWW*, steampunk is “simultaneously retro and forward-looking in nature” (VanderMeer 9).

Steampunk combines “history,” “anachronism,” and “the demands and constraints of antiquated technology” (Willeford 4). *TWWW* demonstrates a combination of these qualities through its historical setting and imaginary technology that either plays on actual technology from the time period, like a trap-laden steam train, or through totally imagined, nonexistent technology, like Loveless’s transport device in “Surreal McCoy.”

A defining characteristic of the steampunk genre is the era in which a steampunk text is made. The term “steampunk” only emerged in 1987 (VanderMeer 8) after developing in literature in the 1970s (44–45). While preeminent authors such as H. G. Wells and Jules Verne are commonly attributed with laying the groundwork for the eventual steampunk genre by placing exotic technology in a Victorian setting, the Victorian setting for them was contemporary, not a past era seen through the lens of the present (VanderMeer 44–45). *TWWW* stands out as an early steampunk text because it aired in the 1960s, at a point when the Victorian era had become the distant past. In general, the technology in *TWWW*, especially the gadgets, help define it as steampunk (Willeford 3; Robb 99). The gadgets specifically stem from a distinctly 1960s source, the James Bond films, contributing a contemporary flair that seems futuristic in the old-fashioned setting (Robb 99).

Technology is generally an important aspect to both *TWWW* and steampunk. Loveless surrounds himself with mysterious but complicated devices covered in blinking lights and wires, such as his transport device in “Surreal McCoy” or the entirety of the communications room in “Bogus Bandits.” Technological imagery that is less futuristic and more mechanical is also characteristic of steampunk. Gears are a common symbol of steampunk, given their eminence in steam-powered technology (Falksen 72). In “Miguelito’s Revenge,” Loveless’s circus cannon is positioned on top of a giant mechanical rig that appears to be a gear. Gears are especially

important in the climax of “Wizard Shook the Earth,” as Jim and Loveless’s final confrontation occurs in a clocktower where the inner workings of the clock, rigged with a bomb, are visible,



A clockwork gear in "The Night the Wizard Shook the Earth"

gears and all, for several shots and from different angles. Presnell notes the general presentation of “alternate history and steampunk elements” in Loveless’s introductory episode, “Wizard Shook the Earth” (23). The lack of any music in this scene, as well as the dominating sound of the bell tolling, reinforces the importance and presence of technology for Loveless’s purposes.

The steampunk aesthetic often includes a fusion of the organic with the mechanical, “as if trying to reconcile two opposing impulses” (VanderMeer 112). Along similar lines, Miller and Van Riper assert that Western steampunk is a “commentary on how technology imposes on nature” (85). The general aesthetic of “Terror Stalked the Town” evokes this concept, as it is rife with juxtaposed organic and scientific iconography: Loveless’s lab is adorned with skeletons, plants, and taxidermized animals alongside blinking, buzzing, electronic devices. More directly, “Miguelito’s Revenge” features an example of a mechanical being designed to resemble an organic being: a steam-powered humanoid robot, controlled with the keyboard of an organ. The same episode includes a moment when agent Jeremy Pike, Jim’s ally, uses a wind-up explosive butterfly as a distraction. Automaton-like creatures that resemble children and animals briefly appear in “Whirring Death” in the storefront of Loveless’s hideout. Another important characteristic of the steampunk aesthetic is combining the aesthetically pleasing with the functional (Willeford 6; VanderMeer 18, 151). In “Surreal McCoy,” Loveless describes his discovery of interdimensional

travel as “the perfect marriage of art and science.” In the same episode, Artemus conceals a knockout drug in a ring he wears.

The stark variation between Old Western/Victorian-era imagery with futuristic imagery adds to the contrast and therefore the dynamic of the series. Miller and Van Riper (2011) note the importance of this contrast:

“The conceptual dissonance created by the juxtaposition of modern capabilities and Victorian appearance reinforces the sense of disorientation that steampunk seeks to create” (87). This conceptual dissonance helped establish the series as a Weird Western text while also ushering in a new genre. In the words of Javna, by combining the Western and espionage genres, “Garrison inadvertently created a third” with *TWW* (40).

Conclusion

The Wild Wild West uses diverse and dynamic visual devices to complement its equally multifaceted stories and generic inspirations. Its musical score is specifically tailored to match its tone and generic foundation, and to contribute to the characterization of Jim, Artemus, and Dr. Loveless. Its cinematography evolves to match the themes of different episodes. The composition is frequently dynamic, as it reflects various dimensions of the accompanying story, and sometimes changes second to second due to camera movement. The camera moves or stays still depending on the demands of a story, and the camera angles adjust depending on the feelings that should be evoked. The color schemes are not unlike influential Western films that



Automatons in "The Night of the Whirring Death"

precede the series, also rearranging episode to episode, serving to complement specific stories and characters. Steampunk enthusiasts credit the series for its pioneering influence on the genre, stemming from its use of juxtaposing themes and iconography. While the series uses familiar cinematic devices, it claims those techniques for its own unique style and adapts them to its own characters and stories.

Chapter 3

Individuals, Actors, and Archetypes—An Analysis of the

Characterization of Jim, Artemus, and Dr. Loveless

The characters of *The Wild Wild West* demonstrate distinctive and consistent qualities individually and in their dynamics with each other. In some ways, each character recalls archetypes from genres that influenced the series. In other ways, each character is a unique individual with his own idiosyncrasies. Characterization reveals itself through a variety of methods. Writing, which encapsulates situations, themes, and dialogue, divulges information about the characters in a story. Since “actions are usually the primary means of revealing characterization” (Phillip 18), the choices that characters make reveal much about their personalities and motivations. Additionally, in onscreen media such as television, the choices that actors make affect the story as much as other elements of filmmaking (Baron 48). The choice of actor can also influence characterization, as the skills and traits of an actor can influence the portrayal and development of their character, especially in a multi-season television series. By examining these variables regarding the characters and actors at hand—James West, played by Robert Conrad; Artemus Gordon, played by Ross Martin; and Miguelito Loveless, played by Michael Dunn—we can get to know those characters quite well.

Jim West

James T. West, or Jim, is the protagonist and hero of *TWWW*, along with Artemus. Since a character’s name can suggest traits about him (Dyer 109), we can quickly infer a few key details about the hero. Jim’s name signals two of his archetypal origins, which also suggest the content of his personality and abilities: James in reference to James Bond and West in reference to the Western hero. He demonstrates several qualities cohering with both the Bond-derived spy

archetype and the Western hero. Conceived as the hero and primary protagonist, he originated as “the series’ James Bond” (Crick 5), which is evident in his skills and other traits. In traditional spy fashion, Jim is resourceful, sneaky, and deceitful. He often fakes out his enemies, keeping a calm demeanor or feigning injury before suddenly striking, catching his enemy off guard. He does this in “Terror Stalked the Town” and in “Whirring Death” after appearing to submit to Loveless before surprise attacking and attempting to run away. In “Bogus Bandits,” while in Loveless’s obstacle course, he exemplifies a common tactic of his: he pretends to be incapacitated by an enemy holding a knife and falls to the ground, lying still before striking the knifeman unawares and taking his weapon. While such dishonesty and surprise tactics may violate the Western hero’s code of the West (Varner 50), they also establish Jim’s spy origins.

Matthew Bellamy considers James Bond “aggressively sexual but automatic and machine-like in his efficiency” (140). Bond’s image collectively embodies “efficiency, violence, heterosexual pleasure, and trustworthiness” (Bellamy 141). These qualities, notably the sexuality, appear in Jim’s characterization. The sexual revolution in the 1960s normalized casual sex, and this dynamic appeared more in spy stories in which characters would not allow themselves to become overly emotionally attached to others (Britton 103). While Jim shows an interest in women outside of professional pursuits, he ultimately does not let his interests interfere with his job. For example, in “Whirring Death,” he initially shows attraction to Loveless’s accomplice Priscilla, but quickly turns threatening towards her once realizing her associations.

Jim also uses his sex appeal to his advantage when performing his job. He may be an example of an *homme fatal*, a derivative of the *femme fatale*. The *femme fatale* is “an archetype for a character whose alluring physical appeal and seductive aura lead men into dangerous, often destructive situations” (Beaver 111). While describing an example of a *femme fatale* character,

Ghada Suleiman Sasa points out that the character uses her sexuality to achieve other ends, simply because that is where her circumstances have led her as a way to function effectively in the world (62), using “the power of sexuality” (64). Jim uses the power of sexuality to function more effectively for his job. Also like Jim, the femme fatale uses “covert and elusive” weapons and utilizes “intelligence and sexual prowess to further her quest for power” (Mainon 2).

This *homme fatal* association also stems from the imitation of Bond, who Dominique Mainon calls an example of an *homme fatal* (5). Russ Thomas likens characters such as Bond to the femme fatale, as he is “a very dangerous man who uses charm to achieve his ends” (par. 12). Such characters resemble the femme fatale because they have “the same sense of narcissism...the same pathological ruthlessness, the same threat of violence and death” (Thomas par. 19). While describing a specific example of a *homme fatal*, Margaret Cohen calls him “a figurative lady killer and literal man killer” who does not distinguish between intimacy and business (115). Jim is physically violent towards men, and he also uses women’s attraction to him to his advantage, as when he seduced Greta in “Wizard Shook the Earth” and Marie in “Terror Stalked the Town,” in both cases to help him escape after he was kidnapped.

Jim’s affinity for seducing others ties into another useful aspect for examining characterization, which is physical appearance: “Appearance reveals character, and it can also *create* character” (Phillips 20). Physical characteristics, such as posture, gestures, and clothing, can reveal a lot about a character (Phillips 20). Richard Dyer agrees that a character’s appearance (109) and clothes (110) reveal information about a character’s personality traits or disposition. One of Jim’s trademarks is his sex appeal. The emphasis on Jim’s sex appeal is evident based on his physical appearance, as Conrad’s good looks were likely a factor in hiring him for the role. According to Robert Alan Crick, Conrad had an advantage in casting for his “rugged good looks”

and “‘romantic hero’ aura” (7). One example that demonstrates the essential function of Jim’s sexuality to his character is in “Terror Stalked the Town”: Marie determines his true identity (between himself and Janus) by kissing the two of them, through which she successfully identifies the agent.

Along the same lines, Jim’s clothes match his character. Jim’s costume (and his frequent lack of a shirt) affirms his legacy as the sex symbol of the series. One conspicuous aspect of his costume that emphasizes the seductive and sexually promiscuous nature of his character is the fit of his pants. Costume designer Jack Muhs was aware of this: “Let’s be honest about it. The tight pants showed off his butt” (qtd. in Kesler 80). Apart from the sex appeal, his tight costume also suggests athletic ability and preparedness for physical confrontations (Crick 11). Cawelti considers a Western hero’s tight pants a symbol of his closeness to nature (Cawelti 72). Muhs felt that the short length of Jim’s bolero jacket was ideal since he frequently reaches for his gun (Kesler 80). In general, the athleticism of Jim’s costume acts as a kind of visual representation of the traditional quality of a Western hero involving his constant preparedness to “spring into action” (D. B. Davis 123).

In addition to the clothes they wear, the objects that a character uses suggest qualities about that character. According to Jennifer Van Sijll, “props provide a dramatic way to express a character’s inner world” (214). In Jim’s case, his symbolic identifiers are primarily weapons. A visual representation of this importance appears in “Murderous Spring,” when he is no longer himself while under the influence of Loveless’s drug. After a hallucinated conversation with Artemus in which the two decide to search for the villain, Jim nearly leaves without his gun, which Artemus points out to him in a tense and emphatic moment. Jim’s attachment to his gun matches Cawelti’s description of the Western hero as fundamentally “a man with a gun,”

symbolizing his masculinity and the violence used to overtake the continent (85–86). However, Jim shows affinity for other, more creative types of weapons as well. In the same episode, while the two agents are kidnapped by Loveless, Jim has the idea to turn the bone of a turkey leg they were given for dinner into a shank to attack a guard and escape. He tells Artie to start eating the turkey leg, to which Artie responds, “You wouldn’t have any giblet gravy in your pocket, would you?” Jim replies, “Ever kill a man with giblet gravy?” suggesting that Jim only carries deadly objects, which giblet gravy is not. Jim also often conceals his weapons. He notably carries a derringer hidden in his sleeve. He conceals a variety of other weapons and gadgets in his jacket, boot heels, or belt buckle, suggesting a secretive and unexpected deadliness about him.

Another way characters express themselves is through their physical movements and facial expressions (Phillips 18). Analysis of the way actors move can reveal details about the feelings and dispositions of their characters (Baron 49). By examining Jim’s physicality, we can notice qualities of his personality. He is generally cool and calm. He has a poker face, showing no or minimal emotional reactions to what others say or what happens around him. His facial expressions are subtle, defined by minimal movement of the facial muscles. He has a similarly unexpressive voice, typically monotonous and low, with rare variation. For example, upon awaking restrained to a table in Loveless’s lab in “Terror Stalked the Town,” Jim betrays no sense of alarm, panic, fear, or any feeling at all, as he calmly and matter-of-factly converses with Loveless about his circumstances. The fact that Janus, Jim’s enemy who received plastic surgery to resemble the agent, also played by Conrad, has such a cheeky and delighted demeanor suggests that Jim’s typical unchanging, detached demeanor is a character choice.

This performance style is not dissimilar to the infamously low-key performances given by Western stars like Gary Cooper, Clint Eastwood, and John Wayne. In discussing the Western

hero, French posits that Wayne's roles seldom required much "interior complexity" (58), so he rarely expressed much intense or complex feeling in his performances. Tom Ryall argues that stars of Westerns like Wayne have "defined the generic prototypes which tend to dominate thinking about particular genres" (332), a factor which may influence Jim's demeanor. Cawelti agrees that such a "laconic style" is characteristic of various Western film stars who "have vied for the prize as the Western hero who can say the fewest words with the least expression" (89). Jim's level and low-key disposition is consistent with traditional portrayals of the Western hero, who is always relaxed and nonchalant, even in tense or life-threatening situations (D. B. Davis 122; Parks 57; Warshow 436).

Actors "express their characters' abiding personalities and changing inner experiences through the physical and vocal dimensions of their performances" (Baron 53). Jim shows almost no vulnerability and therefore limited emotional range. In one sense, his constant seeming lack of emotion exemplifies this. He never betrays any emotions that may identify him as fearful, anxious, or emotionally invested. In a more active example from "Murderous Spring," Jim's hallucinatory version of Artemus offers Jim support and suggests he go rest, to which Jim responds by snapping at him and rejecting his help. When Jim does show emotion, it is usually anger. He occasionally seems fed up or annoyed with Loveless, especially earlier on in their relationship.

Something else we can glean about Jim through his physicality is that he is an excellent physical fighter. For example, in "Surreal McCoy," he wins a duel against Lightnin' McCoy, the championed fastest gun in the West. In "Bogus Bandits," he effortlessly passes Loveless's surprise obstacle course that tests the agent's reflexes and various abilities. He even beats the towering Voltaire in a hand-to-hand fight in "Wizard Shook the Earth." Such fight scenes are

integral not only to Jim but to the entire series, to the degree that the government's requirements in 1968 that TV shows reduce violence were too difficult for *TWWW* to maintain in its final season (Kesler 212). The series' fundamental attachment to violence matches the tradition of the Western, as French suggests that violence may even be integral to the genre (114). Action stars and action sequences are a common characteristic across the Western genre, as demonstrated by films such as *The Magnificent Seven*, *How the West Was Won*, and *Western Union*. Physical fights are important to individual characters like Davy in *The Iron Horse* and Will Banion in *The Covered Wagon* (1923). Additionally, some of the earliest Western stars, like Buck Jones and Tim McCoy, were stuntmen who began their entertainment careers in rodeos and wild west shows (Hayward 414). Violence and action are important to the Western hero, according to Cawelti, who argues that violence functions as the Western hero's method of combatting his enemy (51). Violence proved to be an integral aspect to *TWWW* overall and especially to the characterization of Jim. This element of his character significantly stems from Robert Conrad, who proved to become a Western action star in his own right.

The presence of action in the series and the importance of action to the character of Jim significantly derive from the starring actor himself. A different choice of actor may well have resulted in a very different conception of the show and character of Jim. Physical and combat prowess are a fundamental trait of Jim's character, and the emphasis on stunts in the series and in Jim's scenes largely comes from Robert Conrad's passion and skill for stunts. Crick agrees that the series owes its reputation for action to Conrad specifically (18). Craig Reid, a fight choreographer for film, labels Conrad "the Jackie Chan of TV" ("*The Wild, Wild West*," par. 43). In Reid's opinion, the show's action and Conrad's "fighting prowess" were so important as to become "the show's trademark" ("*The Wild, Wild West*," par. 44). Reid also clarifies that fight

scenes in which one lead character fights multiple other characters simultaneously (a common occurrence in *TWW*) require a fair amount of skill from the lead actor (“Fighting without Fighting,” 32). Typically, American stars in action films prioritize acting above stunt abilities (as opposed to the stars of kung fu films, who are equally actors and stuntmen) (Reid, “Fighting Without Fighting,” 31). But Conrad preferred doing his own stunts (Kesler 64) and even recruited stuntmen to work on the series (65).

The emphasis on stunt work in Conrad’s reputation surrounding his role as Jim demonstrates his affinity for that aspect of his role and contributed to the ultimate characterization of Jim. Some of the series’ fight scenes are unnecessary to the story and seemingly function just to showcase Conrad’s stunt skills. One obvious example occurs in “Whirring Death,” when Jim enters Crane’s mansion. The silly background music and the way his enemies cartoonishly fall into a pile as he defeats them suggest an awareness of the redundancy of the scene. The scene also implies a sense of ease for Jim in completing such tasks, as if burning through several enemies at once is merely a necessary nuisance for him.

Conrad was heavily involved in the creativity that made the action scenes successful and defined Jim as a fighter. Several people who worked on the show, including writer Ken Kolb, stuntman Jimmy George, and costume designer Jack Muhs, recall that Conrad was passionate about doing stunts and felt proudest of his work in that area (Kesler 72). According to stuntman R.M. Cangey, Conrad, along with stunt coordinator Whitey Hughes, helped block and prepare stunts so that directors did not have to block those scenes (Kesler 72). Conrad worked with the stuntmen to choreograph fight scenes the day of filming (Kesler 72; Cangey 53). He even had input in the editing of the fight scenes. According to assistant editor Bob Blake, Conrad contributed in the cutting room more than stars usually did (Kesler 73).

Before being cast for *TWWW*, Conrad had gained experience with flamenco dancing as well as martial arts, both of which contributed to the way he performed his fight scenes (Reid, “*The Wild, Wild West*”, par. 9). However, he was receptive to new fighting styles and even translated these interests into the way he portrayed Jim. Cangey introduced the actor to boxing, which he enthusiastically learned (Cangey 64) before beginning to incorporate it into his fight choreography for *TWWW* beginning in season two.

Beyond the stunts, Jim’s personality and attitude at least in part come from Robert Conrad’s own disposition. Conrad claims that the factor that convinced CBS to cast him as Jim was not necessarily his audition but rather his behavior as himself, when he complained about the costume they had him wear and made “sarcastic remarks” (qtd. in Reid, “*The Wild, Wild West*,” par. 8). Crick notes some of Conrad’s personality traits that helped shape the character of Jim, including “an energetic, ever-alert, even dangerous quality,” a “businesslike, no-nonsense attitude,” and the ability to alternate easily between seriousness and humor (7). Cangey similarly describes Conrad as having a sense of humor and a playful side (Cangey 32, 197), which the actor utilizes during his more light-hearted and sarcastic moments with Artie or Loveless.

Crick also describes Conrad as “tough-as-nails” and “poker-faced,” with a performance that is “controlled, forceful, and intense” (7), which is not inconsistent with Conrad’s own disposition. Cangey mentions that Conrad had a temper (11, 13, 33). The actor could often be confrontational and even physical with others. According to Cangey, on one occasion Conrad “went crazy” while in a bar, relentlessly attacking a man who had punched him until Conrad’s friends had to physically stop him, resulting in the other man leaving in an ambulance (85–87). Conrad was especially susceptible to the effects of alcohol, which made him act out, including during his off time while starring in *TWWW* (Cangey 87–88, 274–75, 291). Conrad could be

stubborn or difficult to work with on occasion (Kesler 29, 33, 43). These qualities—anger, resoluteness, and physical violence—match Jim’s self-assuredness and predilection towards conflict resolution through physical confrontation. After all, the Western hero, “though he lives intensely, he has...self-assurance, a knowledge that he can handle anything” (D. B. Davis 124).

Artemus Gordon

While Artemus developed and became more distinctive as an individual character over time, he originated as a secondary character and a counterpart to Jim. Artemus was originally a “substitute Q,” in reference to the James Bond character, whose primary role was to provide the hero with his gadgets (Crick 7). During development, he was first conceived as a travelling peddler who would appear to provide Jim with eccentric gadgets, but the network decided it would be more sustainable to make him definitively a regular character, so they made him Jim’s partner instead (Kesler 9). His relatively minor role during the beginning of the series is demonstrated through his scant presence in the first *Loveless* episode and the third episode of the entire series, “Wizard Shook the Earth.” Over time, Artemus became more prominent and more distinctive than Q, who has only a few brief appearances in the 1960s Bond films. Crick believes that, without Artemus as his partner and equal, Jim would be just another “Bond clone” in a repetitive formula (7). Artemus’s promotion to partner adorned the show with shades of “comedy relief, gentle conflict, and camaraderie” (Crick 7).

The inspiration of Q on Artemus complements his coherence with the archetype of the Western hero, who is good with tools and weapons (Parks 57). Unlike most Western heroes however, Artie has a talent for inventing, and he devises gadgets and weapons unusual in the Western setting. Not many Western films feature characters like Artemus that are so closely associated with advanced and strange technology. One rare example is Mortimer in *For a Few*

Dollars More (1965), who uses eccentric custom guns and an acid concoction to open a chest. Otherwise, influences for Artemus's character can be seen in other genres. Some of the earliest texts associated with science fiction and steampunk, the dime novel Edisonades of the nineteenth century, feature a "heroic engineer" as their protagonists (Robb 24). VanderMeer's definition of steampunk involves a scientist among its basic elements (9). Javna argues for the importance of Artemus's role as inventor, stating that he "functioned as the show's window into the future" (40).

Artemus also resembles the character types found in espionage. In striking similarity to Artemus, Harvey Birch in James Fenimore Cooper's 1821 novel *The Spy: A Tale of Neutral Ground* is a "master of disguise," posing as a "traveling merchant, or 'peddler,'" which was "a precursor to later operatives using business covers to give them means and reasons to go behind enemy lines"; he is also "able to play both genders and two races" (Britton 4). Another spy author, John Buchan, wrote a character named Richard Hannay, who is a "master linguist and disguise expert" (Britton 15). These descriptions match Artemus, who is a disguise artist and who can speak a variety of languages. Shades of espionage also emerge through Artemus's resourcefulness. For example, while tracking down Jim in "Terror Stalked the Town," he improvises a way to break through a locked, electrified fence with objects like a glass bottle and a stick.

Artemus, on occasion, also takes on the *homme fatal* role that Jim more prominently had. In "Whirring Death," Artie charms wealthy casino owner Bessie to convince her to donate money to the government, a task which he does not seem to particularly enjoy. This is reminiscent of Lewis's conception of the *femme fatale*, who is "sexually promiscuous (though she does not necessarily enjoy her promiscuity, or at least pleasure is somehow beside the point)"

(215). Simultaneously, his displeasure with the task is amusing to watch and provides some comic relief.

Artemus provides a comedic atmosphere and often puts the audience at ease. While Artemus became distinctly heroic in his own right and manner, he took time to find his footing due to excessive producer changes in the first season (Crick 16). An early function of his character was to act as comic relief. Evidence of the earlier conception of his character appears in the beginning of "Terror Stalked the Town," wherein he flirts with a woman and is promptly rejected before she chooses to go out with Jim instead. Comic relief characters are a well-established attribute of many classic Western films. Some examples of such characters, who are often friends with and give contrast to the more gallant and charismatic heroes, include Rusty in *Dodge City*, Oscar and Pete in *The Phantom Empire*, Mose in *The Searchers*, Quincannon in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, Groot in *Red River*, Carlos in *Rio Bravo*, and Andy Devine's roles in various John Ford movies. Varner discusses the prominence of such characters in classic B Westerns, in which the sidekick "rides beside the cowboy hero and provides companionship and, often, comic distraction from the main action" (192). On *TWW*, Martin did not want to be just a sidekick but wanted his character to have the same prominence and heroism on the show as Conrad's character (Kesler 62; Crick 7). Initially, the two lead actors were somewhat competitive over the spotlight and kept to themselves, but they eventually discovered the importance of their dynamic and became more comfortable together (Reid, "The Wild, Wild West," par. 37). Martin agrees in a 1966 interview that Artemus started out as a "fall guy, a typical, cliched second lead" before becoming more important to the show ("Riding High!" 17). Over time, Artemus developed into a character who provides comic relief by donning the disguise of a silly character without fundamentally becoming a character who solely exists for comic relief, like some prior

filmic Western characters. Crick posits that Artemus serves the important function of providing audiences with “wit and familiarity” and “comfort and warmth” to entice them to keep watching the show (7).

While not solely comic relief, Artie does have unremitting humor. This is not inconsistent with David B. Davis’s description of the Western hero, who has a good sense of humor (124). Whereas Jim’s humor only shows more rarely, Artemus habitually jokes with more people and shows humor in a wider range of situations. For example, when the two agents initially encounter Loveless in “Green Terror” and are greeted by their enemy Antoinette as she serenades them with a lute, Artemus removes his hat and smiles at her, while Jim does not move.

Another colorful characteristic of Artemus is his artistry. He demonstrates his musical knowledge and singing ability while posing as a baritone opera singer in “Whirring Death.” He can also draw well, as evidenced by his sketchbook he keeps while posing as a traveling artist in “Bogus Bandits.” Indeed, art may be so integral to Artie’s being that his sketchbook blocks a bullet from piercing his heart, saving his life. Wordplay even works its way into Artemus’s rare physical offensive attacks: in the same episode, he knocks out an enemy by dropping a sign on him that ironically says “First Aid Department.” Artemus’s name even stems from a classical art-adjacent origin. Gil Ralston, who wrote the series’ pilot and essentially developed Artemus, gleaned inspiration for the character’s name from a book he was reading at the time about Greece that involved a character with a similar name (Kesler 9).

Like Jim, Artemus also expresses himself through his physical appearance, such as his clothes. In general, he wears a wide assortment of clothes, often while in disguise. But even his casual wear is diverse, ranging in color (post season one) from yellow to indigo to red to beige. This is consistent with Cawelti’s evaluation of the Western hero as a dandy, or someone who

admires stylish clothes and has a “highly artificial love of elegance for its own sake” (72). Crick argues that Artie’s “flashy style” is individual to him, matching his characterization as a “theatrical disguise artist” (11). In another sense, he represents danger concealed by glamour. In “Surreal McCoy,” he wears a ring which actually serves a multifunctional purpose: it is a decorative piece of jewelry, but it conceals a drug that Artie uses to disable an enemy.

Artemus has questionable morality. While describing his character, Ross Martin calls the agent “an absolute rogue” and “completely amoral” (qtd. in Kesler 11). Professionals in the Western are loyal to their job even at the expense of their own lives (Wright 116), which Artemus demonstrates when he electrocutes himself by jumping into the communications device in “Bogus Bandits.” While he is clearly professional and committed to his job, Artemus betrays occasional glimpses of his other interests. In “Whirring Death,” upon finding Ratch and Crane unsettlingly restrained with chains and full-body casts in a hidden room, his response is an amazed smile with utterances of “fantastic” and “incredible” as he examines the rigs that trap the men, before freeing them. And, obviously, Artemus habitually lies for his job, an act which seems natural for him and even to excite him. For example, in “Surreal McCoy,” the agent seems delighted to unexpectedly meet his enemy Lightnin’ McCoy in a bar, before buddying up to and then drugging him. He can effortlessly pickpocket, which he does completely undetected in the opening scene of “Dr. Loveless Died,” unbeknownst to the audience until he reveals he did so in a later scene. And, in an exaggerated version of Parks’s characterization of the Western hero as someone who works well with people (57), Artemus can easily manipulate others.

Much of Artemus’s nature stems from the actor who portrayed him. Artemus’s more personable qualities come from Ross Martin’s own charm. Martin was quite charismatic and had a commanding presence. As an employer of Martin’s described him during a 1948 radio gig,

Martin could “talk to anyone from professor to hod carrier and each comes away thinking Ross is his special friend” (“You’re the Top with Ross Martin”). One of Artie’s skills is to command the attention of others or cause a distraction, as he does in the casino in “Whirring Death” to draw out Bessie. Indeed, his manner of speaking is so colorful that it almost distracts from the content of the dialogue. This matches Martin’s description of Artie as a “spellbinder” (qtd. in Kesler 11). The character depends on his speaking skills to complete his job. Martin says that Artemus “hates to fight...His aversion to fighting is not from cowardice. It’s because he’s a complete con man. If he can’t talk a man out of it, he’s failed” (qtd. in Kesler 11). Martin’s conception of Artemus may stem from his own propensities, if he matches stuntman Cangey’s description of him as “suave” and “articulate” (Cangey 35), as well as “extremely intelligent” but “in no way a physical person” and lacking in the “street smarts” that Conrad had (75).

Another important consideration regarding Martin’s similarity to his character is the claim that CBS always had Martin in mind for the role in their developing Western series (Kesler 11). He was already established at the network for his appearances in *Mr. Lucky* and *Stump the Stars*, the latter of which allowed him to display his character acting and dialect skills (Crick 7). One of Artemus’s primary skills is the transformation into other people through the use of disguises, accents, and foreign languages. Martin had a similar skill since he was a character actor, which is a “specialized screen actor who usually portrays a particular type of character” that is “often based on an evolved persona derived from the actor’s physical qualities and personal mannerisms” (Beaver 44). Compared to Jim, his facial expressions and the average range of his voice are more extreme and varied, especially in service of his disguises. He shows more obvious reactions to the words and actions of others through his facial expressions and body language. Beyond altering his voice and mannerisms, a conman such as Artemus also

knows how to change his appearance. He is perpetually ridiculously prepared with spare costumes, prosthetics, and fake hair. The character's ability for physically transforming is not entirely contrived, as Martin collaborated with makeup artist Don Schoenfeld to design Artie's disguises: after reading a script, Martin would sketch his idea for the character's appearance, which Schoenfeld would use as a guideline for applying the actor's makeup (Kesler 121). Additionally, Martin grew up speaking several languages, including Russian, Yiddish, and Polish, giving Artie's polylingualism more verisimilitude.

Martin suffered a heart attack during the filming of season four and was absent from filming for several months, while the network found temporary replacements. One of these was Charles Aidman, who plays Secret Service agent Jeremy Pike. Aidman has a more low-key and uniform demeanor than Ross Martin. Martin's absence is strongly felt in *Loveless's* final episode, "Miguelito's Revenge," wherein the invigorated, unpredictable Artemus was not there to counteract Jim's calm and level disposition.

Jim & Artie

Phillips explains that the reputations of stars can impact the way scripts are written, even resulting in the rewriting of a script to better suit a star (24–25). Dyer says that, in portraying a character in a film, the filmmakers can choose to "bring out certain features of the star's image and ignore others" (127). In a similar vein, *TWW* exemplifies a case of television writers basing their scripts on the reputations and abilities of their stars. Ken Kolb even said that he purposely gave Artemus more lines in the scripts he wrote because he thought Ross Martin was a better actor than Conrad (Kesler 86), contributing to their characterizations as the talker and the fighter. Producer Bruce Lansbury clarifies, "Bob Conrad lived and breathed action and didn't care for dialogue. Ross was the actor and Bob was the action man...and you learned that quickly,

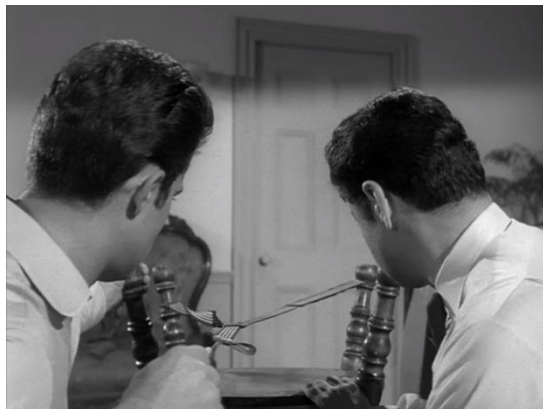
give Ross the juicy parts and Bob the fights. It was the rule of thumb but that's what made the show work" (qtd. in Reid, "*The Wild, Wild West*," par. 37).

This leads to a cardinal feature of the series, which is the relationship between Jim and Artemus. This closeness between the two heroes resembles the common device of male companionship in the Western (Cawelti 90–91) but proved to develop into a distinctive dynamic important for the show's success. Their relationship is extremely important to the tone of the series and a major reason that many fans felt compelled to watch. Kesler asserts that the best episodes of the show involve "balancing the partnership between the heroes" (95). VanderMeer says the two "form one of the more original 'odd couples' in television history" given their respective abilities (180). Conrad agrees that his dynamic with Martin was like "salt and pepper. It was perfect" (TNT).

The characters developed to become two sides of the same coin. Crick agrees that Jim and Artemus's respective abilities complement each other and that the two are necessarily a team: "Arte needed Jim, and Jim needed Arte [*sic*]," even asserting that Jim is "only half as valuable without Artemus Gordon" (9). The men demonstrate their synergy through their respective abilities, in which their individual skills complement or make up for the other. In a joint maneuver in "Bogus Bandits" that demonstrates this dynamic, Jim and Artemus showcase their respective abilities while helping each other take out an enemy patrolling the hallway: Artemus distracts him with a fake story while Jim sneaks from behind and knocks him out. This is consistent with Wright's description of the Western professional plot, which surrounds "a group of heroes, each with a special fighting ability, who combine for the battle" and whose "shared status and skill become the basis for mutual respect and affection" (Wright 86).

Jim depends on Artemus and sees him as level-headed and supportive, as glimpsed through Jim's subconscious conception of his partner. In Jim's hallucination in "Murderous Spring," Artemus banters with him, smiling with an upbeat demeanor in contrast to Jim's downward spiral. Artie can tell that Jim is not okay, offers for him to rest while Artie works, and responds to Jim's angry outburst with patience and a smile. Right before Jim shoots Artemus in the hallucination, Artie responds to Jim's threatened violence by holstering his own gun. Correspondingly, Artemus has a protective and caring attitude towards Jim, shown by his insistence that he takes Jim's place in posing as Loveless's target in the beginning of "Wizard Shook the Earth." The two men often rescue each other throughout the series; Artemus, for example, pursues a kidnapped Jim in several Loveless episodes.

While different in their skillsets, Jim and Artemus are on the same wavelength. They work together well, often instinctually collaborating on unspoken similar ideas. In "Murderous Spring," they have the same idea of how to verbally manipulate Kitten and convince her not to help Loveless. In "Raven," they both immediately understand how to escape the jail cell in which Loveless has trapped them. In "Bogus Bandits," Loveless complains to a kidnapped Jim, "you weary me...by your uncanny talent for appearing at exactly the right place at the wrongest possible time" and turns a gun on him to kill him, seconds before Artie interrupts to save Jim. They often share quick looks of mutual understanding while reacting to a conversation or situation in front of them. They seem to finish each other's thoughts sometimes, quickly alternating dialogue that could be interchangeable between their characters, such as when they are appealing to their superior in "Bogus Bandits" to let them investigate a case. Sometimes, the two even look similar in such moments.



"The Night of the Murderous Spring": Jim and Artemus look similar—both with dark hair and white shirts—in moments of collaboration



Jim and Artemus balance humor and professionalism while working together. This matches Wright's description of the Western professional plot, involving the heroes' collective "enjoyment of the battle...and a common coolness, humor, and wit in the face of danger" (Wright 86); in this plot type, the heroes' interactions involve "affectionate kidding or sarcastic remarks punctuated by demonstrations of sincere concern" (Wright 104). Jim and Artemus demonstrate these qualities through their similar sense of humor. They bicker playfully, and, much like the protagonists of professional Westerns such as *Rio Bravo*, "develop affection, humor, and warmth" due to their "shared respect and ability"; each of them "trusts and depends on the [other] in a relaxed context or joking and trust" (171). Exemplifying the importance of humor in the two men's relationship, Artemus sees through Janus's identical appearance to Jim in "Terror Stalked the Town" because Janus did not understand a reference to the agents' inside joke about Artie's fictional Aunt Maude. In general, the two do seem to enjoy each other's

company. For example, at the end of “Green Terror,” Jim shows Artemus some basic physical combat moves while residing on their train.

Westerns are essentially about the relationships between men (Johnson et al. 8): “the world of the classic western is mainly homosocial and often homoerotic,” wherein male characters take on more domestic duties by necessity (Johnson et al. 6). Artemus is characterized as being the more “domestic” of the two: he counteracts Jim’s aggressiveness with patience in Jim’s hallucination in “Murderous Spring.” And the two agents’ choices of locations to investigate in “Bogus Bandits”—Jim at the saloon and Artemus at the boarding house—may symbolize their respective roles in their dynamic. While each man shows romantic interest in women throughout the series, their ultimate devotion to each other and comfortable life together in the same living quarters evokes the “homoerotic” nature of the classic Western that Johnson et al. describe.

Further cohering with the traditional Western hero, the two agents match various descriptions of Western archetypes. Rita Parks describes a few main types of Western heroes who originate in myth and literature but eventually appear in alternative forms in television (136). In terms of the television-specific types of Western heroes, Parks describes the “pardners” variation, defined by a sidekick who acts as a “complement” and “comic relief” (137). While Artemus’s eventual legacy is as an equal component to Jim, the pardners type recalls the initial tentative conception of his function on the series, of which traces can be seen in his relatively minor role in earlier episodes.

One of the original Western hero types that Parks describes is the soldier, “an employee of the federal government,” whose function is to protect civilization and its advancement from hostile threats (Parks 42). Jim and Artemus match this type, as they are lawmen who are

committed to upholding the law. Several notable Western heroes are also lawmen, such as the sheriffs who lead many Western films, or the cavalry in films like *Fort Apache*, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, or *Rio Grande* (1950). Within this, there is moral ambiguity. Such Western heroes have conflicting values, fighting for “justice and order” (Warshow 439), but “whatever his justification, he is a killer of men” (440). This type matches Jim and Artemus’s role on *TWWW*, whose goal, as government agents, throughout their arc with Loveless is to protect their country from the villain’s attempted destruction of society. However, they must violate socially acceptable codes of conduct to achieve their ends. As previously described, Artemus shows ambiguous morality through frequent lying and manipulation. Jim partakes in physical violence, albeit a “disciplined and moral use of violence” (Cawelti 82), but nevertheless, engaging in a lifestyle unacceptable in “civilized” communities. Jim and Artemus’s status as between civilization and nature materializes through their willful violence and dishonesty, unacceptable within civilized society but in service of that society. This also matches a common conception of the Western hero as someone who lives his life positioned between civilization and wilderness (Hayward 412; Parks 57; Schatz 647; Cawelti 73, 83; Varner 95). For example, Edward in *Western Union* is the best of both worlds: he is physically strong and can withstand the harsh Western landscape, but he is also intelligent and eloquent. Jim and Artemus are similarly sophisticated and cultured but can easily survive in harsh conditions. Along these lines of a social pariah who cannot conform to one way of life, the Western hero prefers to keep moving instead of settling down and integrating into a steady community (Cawelti 91; Varner 58). In the service of their country and in the interest of advancing American society, Jim and Artemus live on a travelling train, an oasis of aristocratic living in a desert frontier landscape.

Wright describes various types of Western stories, typically involving a hero with an “exceptional ability” (48). Jim’s special ability is physical fighting prowess while Artie’s special skills vary, from polylingualism, to scientific knowledge, to manipulating and conning people. Oftentimes, a singular Western hero is both physically and mentally proficient in a variety of ways (Parks 57). For example, Monco in *For a Few Dollars More* is a master gunslinger but is also clever and calculating. While Jim and Artemus are both resourceful and physically capable, each man excels in one regard more than the other, resulting in a split of physical and mental proficiencies between two characters, allowing the two to complement each other.

Another characteristic of the archetypal Western hero is that he rarely or only minorly changes. Hayward describes the stereotype of the Western hero: “the hero-who-puts-things-right against all odds”; viewers are typically already familiar with the stereotype “so there is no need to elaborate their characterization” (348). Both Jim and Artemus match the definition of a flat character, which is “a relatively uncomplicated character that exhibits few distinct traits and that does not change significantly as the story progresses” (Gocsik et al. 218). This is due at least in part to their roles matching the aspects of the Western hero archetype. Bond is also a “mythical archetypal hero” (Moniot 29), a character who does not change significantly, much like the Western hero. Jon Tuska observes that, in Western films, the protagonist seldom shows significant change between the beginning and end (12). The Western hero shows few flaws, having instead a “clarity of purpose and decisive manner that render him unerring in judgment and therefore able to act with a sureness and speed that are denied those around him” (Parks 57). This signifies that Jim and Artemus’s ostensible lack of flaws and personal setbacks stem from their origins as generic archetypes, who have an eternal and mythical quality. While the audience learns of Loveless’s family history and motivation in “Wizard Shook the Earth,” and while he

continually expresses his thoughts and feelings throughout his ten-episode arc, we never glimpse the true, individualized convictions behind the two agents' actions aside from their external goal to fulfill their jobs, or the stories of their families or upbringings that led them to this path in life. This fulfills the "mysterious" quality of the traditional Western hero (Parks 58).

Jim and Artemus function in the series as vehicles for the story arcs of other characters, who typically have more rounded portrayals and linear narrative paths. In a review of the 2011 film adaptation *The Adventures of Tintin*, Nick Nguyen notes that director Steven Spielberg "uses Tintin not as a character but as the personification of movement itself," mirroring his role in the comics as "a narrative agent who makes stories happen, rather than a journalist who reports them" (111). Similarly, in Jim and Artemus's miscellaneous adventures, they encounter a diverse array of more or less complex characters, while the agents themselves essentially stay the same. A prime example involves Loveless in his introductory episode. In "Wizard Shook the Earth," the audience gets to know this new villain through the lens of the unchanging Jim (and, to a lesser degree, Artemus), as we learn about Loveless's family history and personal motivations that have led him to threaten the lives of thousands of people. We learn about his volatile personality and conflicting ethics that guide his actions. Conversely, we know nothing of Jim or Artemus's past or personal motivations for their actions. After Loveless's introductory episodes, once the audience had gotten to know him and became familiarized with his circumstances, other new characters showcased their story arcs and character evolutions. Priscilla in "Whirring Death" follows a clear trajectory, beginning the episode as a naïve and comically childlike but well-meaning accomplice of Loveless. She is so inexperienced in life and love that she does not recognize Jim's act of kissing her in a romantic way. By the end of the episode, she has demonstrably matured: she realizes Loveless means to harm others, no longer blindly trusting

him, and she decides she likes Jim in a romantic way, and that she likes kissing him, as the final shot of the episode idyllically displays.

Dr. Loveless

Miguelito Quixote Loveless, more commonly referred to with the honorific Dr. Loveless, is a fundamentally paradoxical character. This aspect of his character complements the Western generic context, which often builds on “binary oppositions, dualism, and opposites in confrontation” (Varner 21). Loveless demonstrates such oppositions in a more personalized way. Analysis of his character reveals numerous contradictions and ironies through conflicting lines, personality traits, and even surrounding imagery. The contradictions characteristic of the Loveless tradition originate from John Kneubuhl’s taste for “illogical discontinuities of silliness” (“Audio Interview John Kneubuhl”) and therefore provide some of the comedy found in the series. Kesler agrees that “Loveless was famous for his use of irony” (108), which he often expresses through humorous dialogue and actions. In his first episode, he ironically clarifies that he is “a man of huge curiosity” (“Wizard Shook the Earth”). In “Murderous Spring,” he criticizes Man, “a selfish beast,” for “having no control over his feelings” right before throwing a tantrum because he runs out of candy. In “Green Terror,” he talks about his scheme of making other people childlike and dependent, so that they are “eating out of [his] hand,” as Antoinette feeds him and reprimands him for getting sick. In “Surreal McCoy,” the murderous and conniving doctor derides his accomplice Morgan for betraying him: “A double cross? That’s unethical!”

Such contradictory words and actions establish him as unpredictable and volatile. He becomes angry and defensive whenever his abilities or convictions are doubted but denies that he can be petty. He has overtly murderous inclinations but acts appalled that Jim would think he could bring himself to taxidermize human beings in “Terror Stalked the Town.” His ideologies

often conflict with each other or evolve drastically. He is an exceptional inventor, designing devices that could both significantly help society (lightbulbs, airplanes, penicillin, etc.) or hurt it (violence-inducing hallucinogens, drugs that shrink the user, etc.). In “Wizard Shook the Earth,” he explains that he wants to use the land in California as a place for children to grow and be happy, but he is willing to kill thousands to punish the government for not following his demand. In the later episode “Green Terror,” he seems totally immune from pitying children, dismissing entirely the suffering he might cause them.

In this sea of ironies, Loveless expresses a few distinct dichotomous sets of contradictions. For example, he is very cultured but resents society. He is polite, eloquent, and educated. His appearance and surroundings are aristocratic. He seems averse to nature, suffering from hay fever and complaining of the pine needles poking his feet in “Green Terror,” and he mocks Morgan for his closeness to cows for his profession in “Surreal McCoy.” Loveless instead surrounds himself with luxurious, man-made environs and showcases his intelligence. This is consistent with classical Western villains who, according to Wright, are often quite involved in society or show a connection to societal institutions “through their dress, interests, and background” (141), such as Surrect, the sophisticated antagonist of *Dodge City*. Loveless is artistic, a characteristic in which he takes pride. He calls himself “a hopeless admirer of all that is rare and fine in nature and art” (“Miguelito’s Revenge”). He is musically talented, often singing with his accomplice Antoinette, who accompanies their duets with the harpsichord or lute. He incorporates his creative talents into his schemes, combining them with science, such as sculpting a replica of Jim’s face to surgically apply to Janus, or the special replica paintings through which he can induce interdimensional travel.

However, paradoxically, Loveless resents and even hates society. For example, he puts down politicians and generals, agents of the military and therefore symbols of society, in “*Terror Stalked the Town*.” As noted in Chapter 1, he rejects society’s “veneer of civilization.” He repeatedly attempts to control or kill large populations throughout his episodes. In this way, as the enemy of society and therefore progress, he matches several classic Western filmic villains. Like the outlaw Liberty Valance, he wants to replace law and order with chaos through his sadism and domination of others or through complete destruction of humankind. Like Tetley in *The Ox-Bow Incident*, he takes the law into his own hands, resulting in the wrongful deaths of others. He tries to prevent the progress of society, like the renegade in *The Iron Horse* who attempts to stop the construction of the transcontinental railroad.

While many classic Western villains generally represent an antagonistic example of the enemy of progress, Loveless has a more personalized reason for rejecting society. Pearson asserts that Loveless’s rejection stems from his height and culturally heterogenous background, as “the mixed race, deformed Loveless was the ultimate outsider” (3). His cultural knowledge is not enough for him to integrate comfortably into society: “Loveless had extraordinary talent but the world he lived in never failed to register his difference first” (Pearson 11). Crick believes that the pain of being underestimated motivates the doctor (13). These conditions have led Loveless on a vengeful streak in which he uses society’s own conventions against it.

Another dichotomy of contradictions in Loveless is his childlike versus paternalistic characteristics. Kneubuhl called Loveless “an existential figure of colossal evil and at heart a thoroughly contradictory little boy” (“Audio Interview John Kneubuhl”). In demonstration of his childlike side, he becomes giddy and excited when describing his inventions or plans. He often acts playful while carrying out his schemes against Jim, viewing their interactions as a game. He

frequently seems amused and has a distinctive evil laugh. At the end of “Wizard Shook the Earth,” he taunts Jim, who attempts to disable the villain’s bomb, and cries when Jim succeeds. He also has irrationally extreme outbursts of anger, such as when Voltaire tries to sit on the carousel in “Whirring Death.” His childlike quality is represented in his associated symbolism. In the beginning of “Whirring Death,” he disguises himself as a child to blend in with the young carolers, imagery which he subsequently subverts by smoking a cigar. The same episode prominently features toy imagery, and Loveless’s hideout is a toy shop. He also notably targets the greedy Ratch, who brashly refuses to share his wealth with children in need. At the end of “Bogus Bandits,” Loveless escapes by hiding in a baby carriage pushed by his accomplice. His scheme in “Miguelito’s Revenge” revolves around his applying the lyrics of a nursery rhyme to his enemies.

His own childlike quality probably allows him to recognize and exploit the childlike qualities in others, which he uses to his advantage. Voltaire is useful to Loveless both for his size that allows him to easily overpower others and for his impressionable personality that leaves him subject to Loveless’s orders. Loveless recruits Priscilla and Kitten, both of whom are idealistic and naïve, believing Loveless to be well-meaning.

Contradicting his childlike qualities, Loveless also takes a paternalistic stance towards others. In “Terror Stalked the Town,” he says that he commandeered the ghost town because the people there were destroying themselves. He forces an indigenous tribe to become dependent on him by causing a plague in “Green Terror,” reminiscent of the U.S. government’s self-characterization as the “great white father” in *Fort Apache*. In “Whirring Death” he repeatedly mentions his intention to teach Jim, Artemus, Ratch, and Crane “a lesson” or otherwise punish them for being “bad.” He acts as a parental figure to women in need whom he takes in, especially

Priscilla. He shows repeated interest in turning other people into his size or smaller than him; he tells Jim in “Raven” shortly before shrinking him to be a “good little boy.” And the nursery rhyme “Monday’s Child” in “Miguelito’s Revenge,” which Loveless uses to refer to his victims, calls each person a “child.” Interestingly, it is not uncommon for Western film protagonists to act paternalistic as well, as Wade does in *Dodge City*, the cavalry does toward the Apache in *Fort Apache*, or the protagonists do toward the Mexican villagers in *The Magnificent Seven*.

Loveless also fulfils the role of a villain as often found in traditional Western plots as described by Wright. He potentially occupies one side of several oppositions that guide characterization in the professional plot, including “inside society/outside society, good/bad, strong/weak, wilderness/civilization” (Wright 114). In some episodes, his plans revolve around primarily or solely getting revenge on Jim for disrupting his plans (or for existing). Wright describes the vengeance plot of traditional Westerns, in which the villain targets an individual hero rather than society at large (162), which Loveless does to Jim in “Dr. Loveless Died.” Sometimes Loveless targets Jim in a joint effort to get revenge on the agent while also threatening society or gleaning some larger objective outside of his interpersonal relationship with Jim, as in “Terror Stalked the Town” and “Miguelito’s Revenge.” In the classical plot, heroes and villains fight over land, as they want it for opposite reasons—the heroes so they can expand and improve society through institutions, and villains for their own selfish interests (Wright 140). However, Loveless somewhat subverts this structure, declaring in his introductory episode that he wants to use his rightful land in California to help children.

The contradictions and contrasts in Loveless’s ideology appear as numerous visual contrasts in his surroundings, as associated visuals and settings can express a character’s inner being or conflict (Dyer 112). Some of these contradictions in Loveless’s surroundings include the

organic and naturalistic versus the futuristic and technological (“Wizard Shook the Earth”), the macabre versus the innocent and childlike (“Whirring Death”), and, of course, the veneer theme, in which a pleasant exterior masks an unpleasant deeper meaning, such as planting a bomb in a toy electric train (“Whirring Death”). Another symbolic contrast occurs in “Whirring Death,” when he and Antoinette, while riding on a carousel, happily sing a song with an upbeat melody and distressing lyrics. He also often surrounds himself with larger and more physically dangerous men.

Similarly, Phillips explains that “where characters live or work, the objects that surround them, and how they arrange those objects can also tell us much about the characters” (18). The crowded foregrounds in Loveless’s shots represent the crowded and convoluted state of his mind. The circus theme and setting in “Miguelito’s Revenge,” reminiscent of the circus “freak show,” and Loveless’s self-appointed role as ringleader represent his outcast status and his desire to control his surroundings. Circuses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries prominently included “freakshows,” which often featured little people among other types of physical rarities, essentially because audiences wanted to see people with unusual or deformed bodies (Brottman and Brottman 99–100). Mikita Brottman and David Brottman argue that audiences have found freak show attractions so fascinating because they feature unusual bodies of an “interstitial nature” that “fall outside all long-established cultural categories,” such as a body that is seemingly caught between childhood and adulthood (103). By voyeuristically trapping others in cages and becoming the ringleader of his own “circus,” Loveless turns society’s positioning of him as a freak, and their fascination with his presumed suspension between adulthood and childhood, against them.

According to Phillips, “a character’s cherished possessions suggest something about the owner” (19). Like Jim, Loveless has a weapon that symbolizes his character. He uses a peashooter on occasion, a weapon with a precision viewer that sends out tiny projectiles that cause deadly explosions (“Wizard Shook the Earth”), a prop that represents his own unexpectedly enormous danger and impact.

Loveless has a predilection for death, often surrounding himself with macabre imagery (e.g., his cronies tote him around in a coffin in “Bogus Bandits”; he surrounds himself with skeletons, tombstones, and taxidermized animals in “Terror Stalked the Town”; “Dr. Loveless Died” is about his supposed death and begins in a funeral home). He can be masochistic or even suicidal in pursuit of his goals, such as when he breaks a beaker in his hand, causing it to bleed, or his willful close proximity to the bomb in the clocktower, both in “Wizard Shook the Earth.” Crick notes that Loveless’s self-destructive behavior in his introductory episode, in which his alternative to getting his land is to commit mass murder and suicide, demonstrates the extent of his pride and his desire to dominate others (13).

Another visual technique for expressing character is camera movement, which often matches or emphasizes traits of the character shown (Baron 50). As described in Chapter 2, the use of a crane for rising and high-up angles in Loveless’s episodes, especially his earlier ones, match his character—Crick calls Loveless “the little outcast whose dreams and intellect tower above his physical form” (13). Such lofty camera angles match Loveless’s arrogance. He denies that he has an ego, calling himself “serenely dispassionate,” before comparing himself to the sun: “You might as well accuse the sun of being egocentric because it shines” (“Murderous Spring”). In “Terror Stalked the Town,” he is so confident in his plastic surgery work that he dares Janus to

get close to Artemus while posing as Jim. He confidently compares himself to significant figures like Aristotle and Leonardo da Vinci (“Raven”).

The numerous contrasts and variation in traits give Loveless a rich, multifaceted characterization. Compared to Jim and Artemus, Loveless is a more “round” character, as he has ample time to explain his viewpoint and motivations, showing that he is capable of both helping people or hurting people on a mass scale. Round characters are “complex, lifelike, multidimensional, sometimes surprising, and changeable” (Phillips 24). Crick even proposes that Loveless is perhaps the “most three-dimensional TV villain ever” (13). Sometimes, he presents a moral dilemma to the viewer through his almost sympathetic motivations or causes. His rage in response to his outcast status is understandable and is even elaborated upon through another character, the tearful and well-meaning Kitten in “Murderous Spring,” who explains in her own words why she wants to help Loveless. At the end of the same episode, Artemus asks, “Can you blame the poor little one?” Additionally, Loveless occasionally has noble causes that are not hard to root for. In “Wizard Shook the Earth,” he plans to use his land, if the government should return it to him, for the vague but admirable cause of building a utopia for children. In “Whirring Death,” he intends to punish selfish individuals: the wealthy Ratch, who refuses to donate his money to needy children, and Crane, an engineer who knowingly designs faulty bridges that have a tendency to collapse.

Like Robert Conrad and Ross Martin, some of actor Michael Dunn’s own talents and qualities contributed to the development of his character. Dunn brought vitality to Loveless and made him distinct “with his beautiful singing voice, his childlike humor, [and] his disarming manner” (Crick 13). Dunn plays Loveless with intensity and an unnerving vividness, through immersive facial expressions and a fanatical widening of the eyes.

Like Loveless, Dunn was artistically talented. From a young age, he showed musical talent as a piano player and singer (Kelly 38–39). He learned to sculpt from friend and Antoinette actor Phoebe Dorin (Kelly 72). Both Dunn’s musical talent and sculpting appear as Loveless’s skills in the series, significant characteristics to the artistically inclined villain. Those close to Dunn also recall his intelligence. His cousin Sherry Kelly claims he began reading at age three and had an IQ of 178 (32). His close friend and manager John Softness claims that Dunn spoke Italian fluently (Kelly 13). By bringing his own intelligence and refined sensibilities, Dunn embodied Loveless with a cultured realism.

According to Kelly, the actor had supportive and loving surroundings growing up. His parents preferred to treat their son as they would any child and encouraged him to do what he wanted with his life (Kelly 38–39). His parents financially supported him when he pursued a career in entertainment (Kelly 61). Perhaps Dunn portrayed Loveless’s enduring confidence so convincingly because he had his own well of self-esteem. Kelly describes Dunn as extroverted and details his tendency to sing in public, attracting the attention of strangers (49), and he enjoyed entertaining people (46, 68). Richard Kiel, the actor who played Voltaire, recalled about Michael Dunn, “For a little man he actually had a giant ego” (qtd. in Reid, “Richard Kiel,” par. 3).

Regardless, Dunn had his own hurdles to overcome in the entertainment industry, at least in the beginning. Kelly explains that, when starting out in entertainment, Dunn “didn’t just want to play dwarf parts; he wanted real parts, parts that really required the talent he possessed,” but that he initially settled for any part he could get (70). Difficulty in finding roles, especially meaningful ones, has been and still is a commonality for little people actors. Despite the often minor or demeaning roles, little people actors probably have no choice because the entertainment

industry, “their biggest employer,” has a certain idea of them that is hard to overcome (Abramovitch par. 37). This reality of pigeon-holed types of roles, often sensationalized or comedic ones, has been around for a long time: “For as long as show business has existed, little people have been delighting audiences—usually for the wrong reasons” as “oddities,” in “freakshows” (Abramovitch par. 7). While Dunn himself found success in the entertainment industry, the reality of little-people actors whose appearances are valued more than their talent, resulting in their typecasting and exclusion from the ideal side of the industry, are reminiscent of Loveless’s struggle as an outcast.

Jim & Dr. Loveless

Kneubuhl says the villain’s name is Loveless because he is “completely devoid of love” and “he hates everybody” (qtd. in Kesler 30). His true intentions are evidently self-serving. In “Murderous Spring,” he manipulates Kitten by relating to her on the visceral level of societal rejection with no true intention of helping her or anyone. He quickly turns on his accomplice Belladonna in “Bogus Bandits,” threatening her life to save himself, matching Wright’s assertion that “villains cannot trust each other” (145).

Loveless may just be the opposite of Jim and Artemus, who are suggested to be bound by love. In “Murderous Spring,” while describing his plot to devise a drug that makes the user violent and murderous, and to test the drug on Jim, Loveless postulates, “To make a man kill the thing he loves—that requires genius,” with the hopes that “the good and loyal Mr. West will shoot his best friend Mr. Gordon.” Jim and Artemus function as a unit, as two individuals who care for each other, which may contribute to Loveless’s hatred towards them. The extent of Loveless’s interest in Artemus seems to involve seeing the agent’s reaction to what has happened to his partner. For example, he excitedly looks for Artemus’s stunned reaction to Jim’s tininess in

“Raven” and dematerialization in “Surreal McCoy.” Loveless understands Artemus’s deep-running love for and loyalty to Jim but revels in corrupting it.

Conversely, Jim and Loveless are attached to each other in a different way. After witnessing Loveless’s boat sink in a pond at the end of “Murderous Spring,” Jim becomes wistful, is hesitant to leave the pond, and says, “Maybe hate is as strong a bond as love.” Despite their antagonistic relationship, Jim is strangely attached to the villain. He seems sad that Loveless appears to drown, lamenting, “I’ll miss him. That little man with the giant rage against the whole universe.” In “Dr. Loveless Died,” he admits that the doctor was “too ahead of his time” and “a strangely honorable man.”

Loveless and Jim have a distinctive dynamic not unusual to the traditional Western, as Wright’s classical plot typically involves “a strong friendship or respect between the hero and a villain” (48). Jim is wisely terrified of Loveless after their first meeting, as demonstrated by his desperate attempts to escape his clutches as quickly as possible in “Terror Stalked the Town” and “Whirring Death” and by his immediate attempt to shoot him upon hallucinating him in the windowsill in “Murderous Spring.” He quickly learns that Loveless is volatile and dangerously innovative but is still continually surprised by his scientific advancements: in “Murderous Spring” he admits, “where Loveless is concerned, I’m not sure about anything”; in “Raven,” he says, after he has been shrunk to the size of a doll, “That little man can do anything.”

However, over time, Jim begins to understand Loveless’s idiosyncrasies enough to seem amused upon encountering his nemesis in later episodes and can even manipulate him on occasion. In “Bogus Bandits,” for example, Jim makes Loveless question himself: while the villain threatens the agents with a gun, Jim reminds him that it may be one that backfires, like the kind Loveless tested Jim with earlier in the episode. Jim learns that Loveless is arrogant and tells

him so: “You’re always talking about yourself—bragging” (“Murderous Spring”). Jim becomes aware of the villain’s obsession with him that prevents his own immediate death, deriding the villain in “Murderous Spring” with this fact: “you need me,” which Loveless scoffingly denies.

Loveless is distinctly obsessed with the agent, admitting as much in words upon their second meeting in “Terror Stalked the Town”: “You’ve almost become an obsession with me.” He often compares Jim to artwork and shows admiration for his physical appearance and abilities. In the same episode, he tells Jim, “I want to preserve you in art,” prefacing his plan to design a face to surgically implant on Janus, which he sculpts on a bust. As described in Chapter 1, Loveless often watches Jim through a two-way mirror with a frame around it, as if admiring a painting. He becomes defensive of Jim when his accomplice Delilah begins to pull a gun on the agent in “Miguelito’s Revenge,” telling her not to shoot; when she asks why not, he angrily responds: “Why not throw away the third act of *Don Giovanni*? Why not slice the *Mona Lisa* in a half a dozen sections? Chip the Koh-i-Noor diamond into a dozen inferior stones?”

This obsession probably stems from a simultaneous jealousy of Jim’s effortless conformity to mainstream societal values and a hatred for the society that he stands for. Pearson posits that Loveless “directed his fury and anguish at a world that privileged everything the handsome and heroic James West stood for: whiteness, American colonial authority, and effortless physical, sexual and social masculine mastery” (3). Presnell similarly notes that Loveless “carries a deep-rooted resentment of James West, especially regarding his intellect, instincts, and physical abilities” (79). Loveless verbalizes this dynamic to Jim: “You weary me with the sight of your strong, straight body, you weary me with your smug, neatly ordered mind...you weary me with your selfless, antlike devotion to a society that no longer deserves it...you weary me by being, by existing” (“Bogus Bandits”).

One element of Loveless's obsession with Jim, perhaps mirroring his attitude towards society, is his desire to control Jim. He attempts to use his artistic ability to create a replica of Jim that would do his bidding in "Terror Stalked the Town." In "Dr. Loveless Died," he attempts to perform brain surgery on Jim intended to "transform [his] personality." He administers a hallucinogenic drug that makes him uncharacteristically unhinged, dangerous, and unpredictable in "Murderous Spring." As described in Chapter 1 in conjunction with the series' meta-Western stance, Loveless observes and notes Jim's qualities as he fulfills his role as an archetypal hero. As if testing an experiment on a guinea pig, the doctor subjects Jim to an obstacle course tailored to Jim's physical proclivities in "Bogus Bandits," noting to Belladonna (and to the audience) the impressive techniques the agent uses. Shades of a similar moment occur when Jim first attempts to run away in "Terror Stalked the Town."

Loveless frequently feels irritated by Jim. Part of this frustration stems from Jim's nonchalance and lack of reaction to Loveless's plots. Sometimes, when Loveless fanatically describes his inventions and plans to Jim, the agent might as well be a brick wall. In "Raven," Loveless becomes visibly irritated that Jim seems to have little patience for the villain this time around and won't play their "game." When Jim is not exasperated and impatient or cripplingly afraid of Loveless, the two have a playful rapport, reminiscent of the polite and quippy conversations that Bond has with enemies like Goldfinger.

Despite the antagonism, the two men have a certain mutual respect. This is not uncommon for Western protagonists and antagonists, who frequently have mutual respect because they are each other's only equals (Wright 147). For example, Western film protagonists such as Tom from *Red River* and Will Banion from *The Covered Wagon* show respect and restraint when dealing with enemies. Loveless often prevents others from hurting or killing Jim,

preserving the agent's life for Loveless's own ritualistic intents for murder. In "Surreal McCoy," he stops his accomplice from shooting Jim, saying, "My friend deserves a dignified death." And, while Jim's adeptness at noting his enemies' weaknesses disrupts Loveless's plans, the villain still seems delighted or amused that Jim proves to know him so well. Loveless and Jim constantly one-up each other, and neither can ever fully defeat the other, no matter how hard he tries, a fact that they each seem to eventually acknowledge and accept. "Only a fool would try to match reflex and aim with Mr. West," the doctor admits in "Bogus Bandits."

Conclusion

By analyzing techniques of characterization, generic archetypes, and actors themselves, we can thoroughly get to know characters such as Jim West, Artemus Gordon, and Miguelito Loveless. All three characters resemble those from various other genres, such as those in Western films or the '60s Bond films. But each character has his own unique attributes and his own take on the archetypes. Jim and Artemus, while each gleans inspiration from different sources and claims his right as an individual character, function collectively on the series. They are two sides of the same coin, each providing converse but compatible entertainment value to the show. Loveless has some qualities of traditional Western villains, but he has a more personalized and unusual backstory. His arc includes numerous complexities, oppositions, and paradoxes fundamental to his unpredictable and innovative character. Finally, the traits of the actors show some parallels to those of their characters, and often influence the ways those characters are written and develop over time.

Final Conclusion

Research into the Western genre has shown that *TWWW* coheres with Western traditions in many ways, especially through its plot about lawmen and its positioning of civilization as an entity worth protecting from wilderness. However, perhaps in line with the 1960s trend of alternative or antimyth Westerns to challenge the patriotic conceptions upon which the genre was built (Varner 4, 11, 154), the series is self-reflexive, acknowledging the clichés of its foundational genre and even critical of the societal values on which the genre is founded. It has also established itself as a part of the Weird Western canon, combining traditionally Western elements with the seemingly discordant but surprisingly apt attributes of futuristic genres like Bond-style espionage and science fiction. Such genre fusion even led to the more recently founded style of steampunk, for which many enthusiasts can credit *TWWW* as an influence.

The series is an example of television that imitated the styles of film. Examples of its music, cinematography, and color show similarity to influential Western films. However, as style is “the manner by which a motion-picture idea is expressed so that it effectively reveals the idea” (Beaver 256), *TWWW* uses established stylistic techniques to express its own unique themes and character dynamics. Dr. Loveless, for example, is often framed with low-angle or crane shots to reflect his self-image as imposing and superior. Jim and Artemus wear cool and warm colors that express their respective personalities and identify the nature of the dynamic between the two characters. And the series uses the musical device of leitmotifs to build on the characters’ personalities and establish tone and familiarity.

The series’ characters show undeniable similarity to preceding archetypes from various genres. Jim resembles James Bond and Western archetypes while Artemus has roots more in espionage and science fiction, and Loveless coheres with traditional Western villains to an extent but with a more personalized vendetta. Despite these archetypal origins, Jim, Artemus, and

Loveless each became distinctive characters whose individual personalities and abilities resulted from the show's specific needs as well as the traits of their actors. Typecasting, or "selecting an actor for a certain role because of physical or professional qualities that make the actor ideally suited to the play the character," is common in media (Beaver 272). This importance of casting in onscreen storytelling, as well as comments by those who participated in the making of *TWWW*, confirm the importance of actors in characterization. The actors who played the two protagonists and the series' most famous villain established their characters as memorable and exceedingly important to the success of the series.

The Wild Wild West is a multilayered series that demonstrates a variety of influences in genre, style, and characterization, beyond what I have discussed in this thesis. However, the extent of what I was able to discuss just within the frame of ten episodes, and with the primary focus of the Western genre, demonstrates the potential insight that can be gleaned from analyzing a text that may be seen as fun but superficial and frivolous. More thorough analysis through a wider lens, perhaps through more focus on espionage, science fiction, horror, or parody, or through comparisons to other Western television series or literature or to 1960s television in general, presents a Pandora's box of possibilities for insight into the show's other themes and influences. As I have analyzed the series just with my limited scope, I have come to appreciate the consideration and passion that went into its making, and I respect its individuality more than ever.

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