Foundational Myths and National Identity in European Transnational Post-Westerns

Jesús Ángel González

The concept of *transnational post-Westerns* stems from Neil Campbell's definition of post-Westerns as films "coming after and going beyond the traditional Western [genre] while engaging with and commenting on its deeply haunting assumptions and values" (*Post-Westerns* 31). Campbell relates his use of the prefix *post* to words such as *postcolonialism* or *postmodernism*, in the sense that they come after but also oppose, deconstruct, and try to go beyond their antecedents; but he also references *posthumous* since Westerns have often been proclaimed dead, but they refuse to lie quietly in their graves. Thus, post-Western films use the features of the genre to interact with them in complex dialogical ways, and they take the audience "into a space of reflection, a critical dialogue with the form and content, its assumptions and histories" (31). In this way, "post-Westerns constantly and deliberately remind us of the persistent presence of the Western genre, its traces and traditions within the unraveling of new, challenging forms and settings" (309). The examples that Campbell provides range from *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1954) to *No Country for Old Men* (2007), going through other films like *The Misfits* (1961) or *Lone Star* (1996).[1]

Although Westerns started out as a national genre, it is well known that they have become a transnational phenomenon, which has been received and interpreted differently in diverse national contexts. Peter J. Bloom, for example, has studied the reception of American

Westerns in colonial Algeria and suggested that they were often "interpreted against the grain of civil authority" and "appropriated beyond the film's narrative intention" (Bloom 205, 209). Similarly, Susan Kollin has studied in detail the transnational intersections between the Middle East and the American West, pointing out how the American West "was often depicted as a New World Orient" (*Captivating Westerns* 8), and, conversely, how the West has travelled east in different formats: on the one hand, the Wild West rhetoric has been used in US military interventions and in the American films and novels about these actions in a Middle East reconceptualized as "Indian country," and, on the other, the Western has circulated transnationally, "capturing the attention of populations in Iran, Libya, and Egypt, where popular fiction and film have all recently reconfigured the possibilities of the form" and appropriated it for their own purposes (18). In fact, Cynthia J. Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Riper have provided a number of examples of "international Westerns" from almost every corner of the world, including Germany, Denmark, Australia, the Soviet Union, and Japan.

Once Westerns nearly disappeared from mainstream cinema, it was to be expected that post-Westerns exploiting their heritage appeared throughout the world, applying their assumptions and values to specific national environments. Kollin, for instance, mentions one example of a literary transnational post-Western (Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, 2003, adapted in 2007 to the screen) where the frequent references to Westerns invite the reader to establish a dialogue with the original genre, showing the contrast between the world depicted in the films seen by the protagonists and the realities in Kabul in the 1980s (xvi–xvii). One very interesting aspect of post-Westerns produced outside the United States is that they adapt typically American assumptions and values to other regional and national environments and thus not only question the features of the original genre but also scrutinize their own regional and

national identities and conflicts. A very imaginative example of transnational post-Westerns is *Dust* (Milcho Manchevski, 2001), which literally transports a gunslinger from the American Wild West to another frontier, the European Wild East of the Balkans at the beginning of the twentieth century, where he needs to take sides in the rebellion of the Balkan indigenous population against the Ottoman empire. This displacement allows the director to deal with Balkan (Macedonian, Greek, Albanian, Turkish) identities, showing that *Balkanism*, the stereotype of Balkan peoples as Oriental savages, is a fabrication, the result of many different stories disseminated by outsiders with little knowledge of the region or historical basis.

Although Miller and Van Riper use the term "international Westerns" for films such as *Dust* or *The Kite Runner*, I believe that these films should instead be considered post-Westerns, and that they are part of a larger group of post-Westerns produced in different parts of the world that should be called *transnational* rather than *international*. The notion of the transnational in film studies has been developed in the last two decades as a response to the limitations of the concept of national cinemas in a context of increasing globalization. Authors such as Andrew Higson, Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, and Chris Berry have analyzed the different dimensions and implications of the concept of transnationalism in film production, distribution, exhibition, and reception. Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell have defined transnational films and cinemas as those "that transcend national boundaries and/or fashion their narrative and aesthetic strategies with reference to more than one national or cultural tradition or community" (432), and this is a definition easily applicable to the films under discussion here. It is also important to note that our use of the word *transnational* does not exclude the *national* element, since these films draw from transnational sources (the American Western genre) to enquire about specific national identities and conflicts: "the openness of a transnational approach" allows us "to take into

account geopolitical, cultural, and financial aspects of each production in order to situate the films amongst and between dominant national traditions" and consider these films as "both local and global products" (Wessels 3).

In previous studies (González "Transnational Post-Westerns"), I have argued that most transnational post-Westerns share the following features:

- clear references to the Western genre that take the spectator into a space of dialogue and reflection with the assumptions and values of the genre but in a contemporary situation and a new context;
- the choice of a specific landscape and region in the new environment reminiscent in different ways of the American West;
- the use of that landscape with a political intention (to probe into the national identity, foundational myths, and contemporary contradictions of the country where these films are set and produced);
- the analysis of the difficulties of integration of racial, ethnic, or social minorities, the "contemporary Others" equivalent to Native Americans in Westerns;
- the exploration of the contradictions derived from the application of traditional models of masculinity (paradigmatic of the original genre) to contemporary national situations; and, finally,
- the study of the contrast between death and regeneration: the use of the conventions of a "dead" genre to explore the regenerative possibilities of a particular landscape and context.

Maria Pramaggiore has identified "questions of race and national identity" as the crucial elements of Westerns that "nonessentialist Westerns" attempted to erode and dissolve (159), and it is the latter feature of Westerns and post-Westerns (closely connected to the contrast with the ethnically different) that I am going to address in this paper: national identity and foundational myths. As Thomas Schatz expressed it, "the significance and impact of the Western as *America's foundation ritual* have been articulated most clearly and effectively in the cinema," projecting "a formalized vision of the nation's infinite possibilities and limitless vistas . . . serving to 'naturalize' the policies of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny" (46–47; emphasis added). The Western has thus been linked to European national epics (from *The Iliad* or *The Aeneid* to *La chanson de Roland* or *El Cantar del Mío Cid*) that have helped solidify a national identity connected to specific national values (Sarf 10). These national epics are believed to capture and express the essence of a particular nation and typically tell a story about the origin of a nation, a part of its history that is considered a fundamental event in the development of its identity. These epics help to establish a national myth that serves as an important national symbol and affirms a set of national values. National myths are often legends or fictionalized narratives that have been elevated to a mythological level so as to be considered true to the nation. As Benedict Anderson highlighted, these myths are inspiring narratives, stemming from human imagination, in which we tell ourselves who we are or want to be, and in that sense he talks about nations as "imagined communities," which he also calls "print communities," since they were produced by an imagination fueled by newspapers and fictional novels.

However, as Arash Abizadeh has stressed, these myths often present serious historical and political problems: in some cases they are clearly fictional stories that do not "make historical truth claims" and therefore nobody takes them to be literally true; he calls these myths

"myth-as-story," and uses the Biblical stories about the Hebrew people as an example. However, in other cases they seriously manipulate history by omitting important historical details ("myth-as-omission"), by deliberately telling lies ("myth-as-lies"), or by adding details for which there is no evidence ("myth-as-embellishment") (296–97). An example presented by Abizadeh is the myth about the creation of Canada which tells the story of two European groups of settlers (the French and the English) who founded a confederated bilingual state, but ignores completely the story of the Aboriginal peoples living in that land, a "myth-as-omission" that has very important political consequences for the oppressed population. As Abizadeh phrases it, "if one abandons truth as a criterion for evaluating the historical narratives that help to sociologically legitimate sociopolitical arrangements, then how might dominated individuals or groups challenge the prevailing status quo?" (294). If we apply Abizadeh's terminology, Western films typically oscillate between "myth-as-omission," since for the most part they ignore the Native Americans' stories, and "myth-as-embellishment" or even outright "myth-as-lies" since some of them manipulate history in order to create an immaculate national myth of conquest and expansion based on the American Dream and manifest destiny.

Doris Sommer has researched the Latin American national romantic novels from the nineteenth century that helped to create and consolidate national identity and called them "foundational fictions," that is, fictions that helped to establish the national foundations of a country. She follows Anderson's argument about print culture's role in the development of national communities and gives ample evidence suggesting the importance of national romances such as *Amalia* (1851), *María* (1867), and *Doña Bárbara* (1929) in the development of Latin American national identities. She argues that after the wars of Independence in the early 1800s, the Creole class of these new countries needed to legitimize its authority and did so by creating

romances that combined eroticism and nationalism (Eros and Polis), and therefore developed romantic stories that served as allegories for national progress. An interesting aspect of many of these foundational fictions is that, in contrast to European romances (and Westerns, we should add) which considered "miscegenation" as "the road to racial perdition," they present racial mixture as "the way of redemption in Latin America . . . a way of annihilating difference and constructing a deeply horizontal, fraternal dream of national identity" (39). Many decades later, Latin American "imagined communities" have "tacitly accepted the nineteenth-century pot-boilers as founding fictions that cooked up the desire for authoritative government from the apparently raw material of erotic love" (Sommer 51).

It is my contention that transnational post-Western films are related to these "foundational fictions" in the sense that they are also popular fictions that deal with national myths and epics, although they often do the opposite of the romances described by Sommer. Since they have been created at a very different time in history, and since, in contrast to the Latin American fictions purposely created by the dominant classes, they are the result of a less structured process of creation, they often deconstruct and problematize national foundational myths, presenting them as "myth-as-stories" or denouncing them as "myth-as-omission," "myth-as-embellishment," or "myth-as-lies." And what is particularly relevant here is that they do so by making references to another popular foundational text: American Western cinema. In the following pages, I will show how this process works in films created in three different European countries: Ireland, Spain, and France, although I would tentatively suggest that, due to the huge importance of Westerns as a transnational phenomenon, this process has happened in many other countries throughout the world.

Ireland: *Into the West* (1992)

As Martin McLoone has highlighted,

> the influence of American popular culture in Ireland over the years has been so profound that it has penetrated deep into Irish consciousness. The Irish, perhaps more so than other Europeans, have inhabited the imaginative spaces of the USA for so long, and been involved so deeply in the myth of the promised land or the land of opportunity that the American dream is deeply embedded in Irish cultural identity. (188)

The myth of the American dream is an essential part of the ideological implications of American Westerns, but when this genre reached Ireland it became entangled with a national myth, the legend of the Irish West, which is an essential part of Irish cultural nationalism (McLoone 12). As González Casademont has summarized, the West of Ireland has been conceptualized, since the times of the Literary Revival and the Irish-Ireland movement of the late nineteenth century "as a site of cultural purity and Arcadian innocence that offered the possibility of national renewal and personal regeneration" (123), the real, authentic Ireland as opposed to Dublin and "the Pale."

The two films that helped crystalize the traditional representation of the West of Ireland in the realm of cinema are Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934) and John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952). Although *Man of Aran*'s influence on the ideological construction of Irish landscape and the West of Ireland should not be underestimated, for our purposes here the role of *The Quiet Man* is paradigmatic since it "set a template for Ireland's promotion of itself for over half a century" (Crosson 1) and helped to establish the stereotype of the West of Ireland as a "place of bucolic ease where, despite the constant fighting, nobody ever gets hurt" (González Casademont 123), as opposed to the United States of America, which represents stressful urban modernity. So frequent are these contrasts in the film that McLoone tabulates them, signalling "tradition, rural, nature, leisure, heaven" as representative of (the West of) Ireland versus

"modernity, urban, culture, work, hell" as defining elements of the United States (54). Particularly relevant for the relationship of *The Quiet Man* and Westerns is the fact that the film was directed by a man who defined himself as a "director of Westerns" (John Ford), and that we can follow the genre's most paradigmatic actor (John Wayne) on a trip to another land of "untamed wilderness" (Burke 163) in search of his regeneration and redemption. As a matter of fact, *The Quiet Man* was called "a Western made in Ireland" (Burke 163), although I think it might also be considered an early example of Irish transnational post-Westerns, since the references to Westerns are obvious and so is the attempt to define an idea of Irish identity as opposed to the United States. James P. Byrne has detailed its connections with Westerns: at the beginning of the film we can see the archetypical Western hero stepping off the train (a characteristic symbol of the arrival of modernisation in Westerns) to be surrounded by "exotic primitives" speaking in "a linguistic code unknown to him" (33) like Native Americans in Ford's earlier Westerns. In the rest of the film, "through his casting, characterization, and setting—with Wayne and O'Hara playing the Western hero and heroine whose struggle embodies the struggle between civilization and wilderness—Ford creates a tale which uniformly adheres to [Will] Wright's recognition of the structural signifiers of the classical Western plot" (34).[2] Byrne ends up reading the protagonist's efforts to bring "the social benefits of modern civilization" (34) to the West of Ireland in political terms, relating it to the war in Korea against the communist enemy.

Forty years after *The Quiet Man*, *Into the West* (1992) played again with the myths of the American West and the West of Ireland. This is a film directed by Mike Newell based on a script by Jim Sheridan, director of several successful Irish films of the late '80s and '90s, like *My Left Foot* (1989), *The Field* (1990), and *In the Name of the Father* (1993). Although written by

Sheridan a few years before, the script lay unproduced for a number of years before it was picked up by a British/US/Irish consortium and directed by an English director. The film had an American star (Ellen Barkin) cast as an Irish traveller, its main protagonist and co-producer (Gabriel Byrne) was a Dubliner well-known in the United States, and it probably had the American rather than the Irish audience in mind. Therefore, in this case, we are dealing with a film that can be considered transnational not only from the point of view of influences but also from the points of view of production, exhibition, and distribution. It tells the story of two boys (Tito and Ossie) belonging to the "travelling" community who, back in the 1970s, escape "into the West" of Ireland on the back of a magical horse to get away from the ugliness of the Dublin tower blocks where they live.[3] The boys are fascinated by American Westerns (when they go into a video store they dismiss all the Westerns because they have "seen them all cowboy films") and, on their way to the western Irish coast, they believe they are in the American West: they imagine they are "real cowboys" who are going "to the Wild West!", call their horse "Silver," and wonder if they are crossing "the Rio Grande" and "the Rockies." In fact, they are Quixotic characters who, like Don Quixote, see everything through the lens of fiction, so that when they see a group of fox hunters, they mistake them for "the cavalry," or maybe "the posse" who is chasing them. A further reference to Westerns is the use of the white horse as a visual icon (associated with power, freedom, and male identity) which "operates as the common denominator to the exploration of both myths [the American West and the Irish West of legend]" (Bisplinghoff 186); particularly relevant in this regard is the scene where Ossie reproduces a rite of passage typical for young Westerners and manages to tame the wild stallion effortlessly. It is also important to remember that horses are still an essential part of the travelling community, their means of transport, livelihood, and cultural identity, even for itinerants living in blocks of

flats today (Walker).

The film addresses the changing situation of the travelling community and presents the boys' father (Papa Reilly) living in the outskirts of Dublin. Their grandfather, however, lives on the roads, as do other members of the community that Reilly meets later. The kids themselves wonder about their situation, and they do it in terms of the Western genre that frames their attitude towards life: "are we cowboys or Indians?", a question that becomes a prime example of the American West's transnational cultural significance. Tito's first answer to his younger brother is that they are cowboys, but, as Elizabeth Cullingford has stated, "the rest of the film tests and gradually discredits Tito's assumption that the travellers are the cowboys, and therefore on the winning side" (180). Although Papa's answer is ambiguous ("there is a bit of a traveller in everybody"), the *mise-en-scène* identifies them clearly with the Indians, when we see their camp or their wild dances around the fire. In fact, the police call them "savages" and in the scene where the boys attempt to go to a hotel we can see that they are despised like Native Americans in traditional Westerns: "the travellers are white Others who have been 'blackened' by a previous group of white Others, the Irish" (Cullingford 183). As Gabriel Byrne points out, "the way we treat the travellers in Ireland is hypocritical. We say we're a free society in which all are equal, but we practice apartheid. They are the blacks, the Indians of Ireland" (Clarity 20).

But the film considers not only the situation of the travellers, but also the national identity of Ireland as opposed to the American mirror provided by the intertextual references. In fact, the question the boys ask ("are we cowboys or Indians?") can also be posed about "a previous group of white Others," the Irish themselves, and linked with a sentence from the Allan Parker film *The Commitments* (1991): "Do you not get it, lads? The Irish are the blacks of Europe." As Orr has stated, "the Travellers function in the film as custodians of an indigenous Irish culture threatened

historically by British imperialism, and, more contemporarily, by global capitalism" (5). The Travellers act as a metaphor of a vanishing Irish tradition, as represented in their dances around the fire, Papa's Celtic-pattern tattoo, and, more importantly, in Grandfather Reilly's story about the origins of the magical horse. The horse is named *Tír Na nÓg*, after the traditional Celtic legend of Finn and the Fianna. The horse is supposed to be the same magical horse that had carried Finn's son Oisin westwards over the waves to a mythical island across the ocean (called precisely Tír Na nÓg) where Oisin found the "Land of Eternal Youth." In one of the final scenes of the film the similarly-named Ossie is also carried west into the western ocean; the horse cannot ride over the waves, and Ossie nearly drowns, but he is magically saved by a female figure that he identifies with his dead mother.

Another important aspect related to Irish identity, and highlighted by John Cleary already in 1995, is that the title of the film is making a reference not only to the Irish West and the American West, but also to the process of "westernization" of the Irish economy, the "political 'West' . . . "represented by the visually drab, spiritually dessicated Dublin, where the Travellers have traded in their earlier ruggedly nomadic independence for a sedentary dependency on the state" (190). There is a suggestion then that the West also indicates Western civilization as a whole, the Western capitalism of pre-Celtic Tiger Ireland that has pushed the travelling community (and, metonymically, Ireland itself) into poverty, loss of identity, and dependency. Let us not forget that, as Ruth Barton has pointed out, in Jim Sheridan's work the family "functions on a symbolic level as marker of the nation" (124), and that the broken family may be a reflection of a country that, "with its swift accession to modernity, has lost more than it gained" (127). As a solution for the anxieties of modernity, "the lost children of the nation/family are offered a choice of structuring myths: specifically, those of the heroic legends of the Irish past as

guaranteed by the spirit/mother, and the cinematic western" (Barton 128).

We can see then how, like other transnational post-Westerns, *Into the West* questions Irish identity and looks into national foundational myths, in this case a "myth-as-story" in Abizadeh's terms. It is also interesting to note that, in one of the versions of the Celtic legend, Oisin meets St. Patrick in Tir Na nÓg, therefore establishing a connection with the religious element that is also essential to define national Irish identity. Religion is also addressed in the film by means of a figure of the Virgin Mary (bearing a sign that says "God Bless the Travellers") that is associated both with the boys' dead mother (tellingly also called Mary) and with the magical horse (that leads them there before taking them to the mother's grave). As Orr has pointed out, the boys' quest takes the form of a "pilgrimage": the magical horse, connecting Celtic and Christian traditions, takes them to two "stations" before the final salvific scenes. Cleary relates the presence of the "Great Mother" or "spirit mother" to "a lack or hollowness . . . at the heart of Irish modernity" and to the "cluster of social anxieties" in "contemporary Irish society" (185).

What is important to notice for our purposes here is that *Into the West* appropriates the generic features and myths of the American Western to turn them around, to revise them, and reassert the possibility of an indigenous Irish voice. Orr has studied the film from a postcolonial perspective and has stressed how "Tito and Ossie fully enact the reverse journey common to postcolonial narratives: they have 'hijacked' the outward-bound narrative of the American Western only to accomplish a homecoming, a voyage into the 'spiritual reality' of the Irish west" (19). Following Jean-Luc Godard, we could say then that transnational post-Westerns subversively use the Western genre framework as a "Trojan horse" (Besnard-Scott), appropriating its formal and thematic features in order to "hijack" the Western's "grand

narrative" and to revise the (im)possibility of their use in a new time and place. In fact, from a formal point of view, the film also contrasts a realistic "semi-documentary presentation of poverty, overcrowded tenements, and abandoned children" around Dublin with a "highly formalistic treatment of Irish myth and legend" (Orr) and in the final scenes recruits the practices of a movement that has become characteristic of postcolonial narratives: the use of magical realism.

Another typical issue addressed by post-Westerns (as identified by Campbell) is the search for a home, the contradiction of searching for *roots* while travelling western *routes*. This search is also one of the main topics of *Into the West*: the boys go west looking for a real home, as opposed to the towers in Dublin; the police want to give them a "proper home," but that "home" would be a place where "they don't let you out," which one of the boys clearly identifies as "a jail." Their only possible home and identity, as the father finally finds out, is on the road: their *roots* lie on the *routes*. A related point is the presence of a broken family in an all-male environment: the boys' mother had died during Ossie's birth, and it is only when the horse leads them to the mother's grave in the middle of the barren landscape of the Irish West that Papa is finally able to come to terms with her death and his recovered role of father and traveller. In fact, the film establishes a clear connection between the horse and the boys' mother (Cleary states categorically that "the horse is in fact the returned spirit of the boys' dead mother" [188]), particularly in the two final scenes: Ossie's rescue from the ocean (helped by a female figure) and a magical ritual of Papa setting fire to his wife's cart, where the boys can see the vanishing image of the horse. Although Orr has criticized the gender politics of the film and its "phallocentric perspective which ultimately limits its anti-colonial critique," the film can also be read as a critique of the patriarchal values represented both by the boys' father and the American

Western, since the Celtic West is clearly gendered as feminine. In fact, as Ging states, "Tito and Ossie leave their father to reconnect with the old culture of their mother and, in doing so, ensure that they will not become men like him" (90). Cleary has criticized the film's "ambivalence and irresolution," explaining that it "lacks belief in its own Utopian impulse and ultimately does not know to which West, if any, its real loyalties lie" (197–198). Barton also agrees that "its potential subversiveness is greatly lessened by its own validation of the myth-making process" (133). While Cleary's statement about the ambivalence of the film seems undeniable, nevertheless *Into the West* seems to be offering an alternative identity for the Irish "imagined community" in the combination of these two contrasting but complementary Western myths, in the nostalgic desire for a more "female" Irish West connected to its Celtic roots and the "hi-jacking" or appropriation of the American West's male "Utopian impulse."

Spain: *Curro Jiménez* (1976–1979), *800 Balas* (2002), and *No habrá paz para los malvados* (2011)

The arguably first Spanish transnational post-Western appeared not in the cinema, but on television. *Curro Jiménez* (1976–1979) is one of the most original adaptations of features of the Western genre to the Spanish geographical, historical, and cultural context. It is set in the Andalusian Ronda Mountains at the time of the Spanish War of Independence against France (1808–1814), and it borrows from the genre most of its iconography (horses, wild spaces, firearms), stock characters (bandits, sidekicks, ranchers, lawmen), and plots: "*Curro Jiménez was a western that came from Sergio Leone and Sergio Corbucci's Italian Eurowesterns, or more directly from the maliciously called chorizo westerns that had been produced in Spain since the end of the 1960s*" (Mendíbil).[4] The director of the first episodes and the one who established the basic look and features of the series as a whole was Joaquín Romero Marchent, who had made

several Spaghetti Westerns in Spain and incorporated many of the conventions of the genre, adapting them to the new spatial and temporal settings. Its protagonist, Curro Jiménez, is a former bargeman forced to live as an outlaw, and he is part of a worldwide tradition that includes Western bandits like Jesse James or Billy the Kid, but also "social bandits" like Pancho Villa, Robin Hood, or anarchists like Buenaventura Durruti in Spain (Hobsbawm). In fact, another film director who was also in charge of some episodes of *Curro Jiménez*, Mario Camus, had made a related film, *La cólera del viento* (1970),[5] which critics like Christopher Frayling consider a Spaghetti Western even though it is clearly set in Spain in the 1920s, a temporal and spatial setting that makes it an early example of a Spanish transnational post-Western. It tells the story of an anarchist movement in Andalusia and the arrival of two hitmen who are hired by the rich landowners to suppress the revolution. In fact, although the film was cut heavily by producers and censors (the film was made under Franco's dictatorial regime), it still retains a very obvious political message and a radical reflection about Spanish history and politics. One of the hitmen takes sides with the revolutionaries, who are allowed to shout messages such as "We want a classless society—no more exploiters, no more exploited . . . we will destroy them all if need be, to rebuild a more beautiful world," which makes one wonder how the Francoist censors let the film get away with those lines. Probably, as Chelsea Wessels points out, the censors' oversight can be credited to "the perception of the western as primarily an entertainment genre, rather than a space of protest or resistance," and the fact that the film was marketed as a Western disguised its political message and protected "the narrative from too much scrutiny" (Wessels 9).

Curro Jiménez shares with *La cólera del viento* the references to Westerns and the use of bandits in a Southern Spanish setting, but the tone and the political message are very different. As Gómez López-Quiñones has argued, *Curro Jiménez* in fact promotes values closely linked

with its period of production, the Spanish Transition (roughly the period between Franco's death in 1975 and the approval of the democratic Constitution in 1978, although some historians extend this period up to 1986). These values are, among others, the need for social justice, a certain neoliberal hedonistic spirit (which has been associated with the "fiesta" and the "movida"), the caution against political excesses, the promotion of Spanish nationalism, and the support of dialogue as a way to resolve conflicts (Gómez López-Quiñones 39–47). We have to remember that the series was made by the only television network available at the time in Spain—controlled by the government—which may help to explain the transmission of those "institutional" values. As a matter of fact, in one of the episodes Curro states that "*only if we all collaborate will we be able to improve the situation of this country*" (Gómez López-Quiñones 38), a call to dialogue that clearly reminds us of the spirit of consensus among different political forces that brought about the "foundational pacts" that crystallized in the 1978 Spanish Constitution (Díaz Gijón 106). As Paul Julian Smith explains, *Curro Jiménez* "schooled Spaniards in the rights and responsibilities of democracy during the transition" (21).

One of the probable reasons for the huge success of *Curro Jiménez* is that the series established a connection in the audience's subconscious with the Spanish foundational myth, or, in the words of Joseba Gabilondo, with "the Spanish national primal scene" (85). As Gabilondo argues, "the narrative of Spanish nationalism was founded on the discourse of the War of Independence (1808–14): a postcolonial narrative appropriated from Latin American discourses of independence, according to which a supposedly 'colonized' Spain liberated itself from an imperialist France" (85). This is also the argument of Raymond Carr, one of the most renowned Hispanists: "modern Spanish nationalism of a type comparable to nascent nationalism in other European countries was created by the fact of resistance to Napoleon" (105). Gabilondo opposes

this "orientalist" discourse (accepted in Spain and the rest of Europe during the nineteenth century and regularly used by the Franco regime) with "its manifold celebrations of Spanish difference and exceptionalism" to the "occidentalist" discourse which locates Spanish identity in the Roman Empire and in the imperial expansion in the Americas—a discourse which has become standard in democratic Spain, particularly since it joined the European Union (85). He establishes Spanish nationalist discourse precisely in this clash between occidentalism and orientalism, and locates the "primal scene" of this clash in Prosper Merimée's *Carmen* (1845), which shows the confrontation between the Basque Don José and the Gipsy/Andalusian Carmen. While Gabilondo's arguments seem irreproachable, he is probably underestimating the importance of eight centuries of *Reconquista* and the Christian fight against Islam in the development of the occidentalist discourse. Besides, for our purposes here I think that from a spatial point of view it is relevant that the settings for both the orientalist and occidentalist discourses (as we can see in both *Curro Jiménez* and *La cólera del viento*) are fundamentally situated in the South of Spain, where some of the most important episodes of the *Reconquista* and the War of Independence took place. If American exceptionalism found its roots in the American West, the typical features of Spanish exceptionalism (bullfights, flamenco, heat, and passion) are firmly located in the South of the peninsula. If the American West was the setting of the genre where the foundation myth of the United States was re-enacted, the Spanish South seems to be the Iberian counterpart of the American West, the best possible setting to explore the contradictions of Spain's own foundation myth, the "clash between orientalism and occidentalism" (Gabilondo 85). In fact, places like Tarifa, Marbella, or Gibraltar are not only the border between Spain and Morocco, Europe and Africa, "first" and "third" world, but also the location of the traditional frontier between Christianity and Islam during the War of *Reconquista*,

as attested by the names of the towns in the *frontera* (frontier) area between Cádiz and Málaga (Jerez de la Frontera, Vejer de la Frontera, among others). *Curro Jiménez* deals with Spain's "imagined community" and creates a "foundational fiction" that re-enacts in this southern frontier setting the clash between the orientalist discourse of the "foundational violence" of the War of Independence (Gómez López-Quiñones 32) with the occidentalist discourse of the "foundational pacts" (Díaz Gijón 106) of the Spanish transition on the road to European democracy.

This southern location is also chosen by several Spanish transnational post-Western films that inherit the spirit of *Curro Jiménez* and make explicit its relationship with American Westerns by using the semi-abandoned Almería film sets where Spaghetti Westerns were shot in the 1960s and 1970s in order to articulate a discourse about Spanish identity and foundational myths. *800 balas* (*800 bullets*, 2002) is probably the most representative example. Directed by Álex de la Iglesia, the film tells the story of a former stuntman, Julián, who claims he once was a stand-in for Clint Eastwood, and is played by Sancho Gracia, the actor who had played Curro Jiménez 25 years earlier, but now is presented as "*old, wasted, drunk, fat and a liar*" (Buse et al. 149). Julián now makes a living by performing in shows for minuscule audiences on the decaying sets built for Spaghetti Westerns, "a perfect reminder of the West's existence as a complex, travelling concept, a rhizomatic formation criss-crossing continents, being constantly reconfigured and used in all manner of ways" (Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West* 114). Julián's story appears in the context of an Oedipic tale: his grandson finds out about his father's death and his grandfather's movie-making exploits, and escapes from an emasculating mother to try to understand his own roots (Buse et al.). In fact, like *Into the West*, this is a Quixotic story of a man who, instead of reading too much, has acted too much, believes his Western stories, and

applies Western codes to real life. Although he never mentions *Curro Jiménez*, the associations are obvious for Spanish audiences; for example, in a scene where he replays the title sequence of the series (Curro and his group of bandits happily riding on their horses), not in the Ronda Mountains in the nineteenth century but in the streets of contemporary Almería.

Álex de la Iglesia has been called a "*popular auteur*" whose cinema "shares with Almodóvar's an exuberant use of popular genres and a disdain for the dominant conventions of realism" (Buse et al. 11). Although *800 balas* is a rather unusual film in the context of De la Iglesia's *oeuvre*, because of the combination of "Spielbergian" sentimentality, Oedipal drama, and a certain realistic approach (Buse et al. 37), this film shares with the rest of his filmography an intertextual, metafictional approach, which De la Iglesia summarizes as "hablar del cine dentro del cine (to talk about cinema from within cinema)" (qtd. in Buse et al. 152). *800 balas* begins with a typical Western stagecoach chase which is later revealed to be the tragic shooting of a scene where one of the stuntmen (Julián's son) dies, and it ends with Julián's real death in a codified Western shoot-out which is broadcast live on Spanish TV. The film emphasizes a hidden part of Spanish film history (the often-overlooked involvement of Spanish actors, stuntmen and technicians in the making of Spaghetti Westerns[6]), but it becomes more interesting because of its reflection about the globalized nature of these productions, as shown by the visit of German and Japanese tourists to the Western sets transformed into theme parks. Thus, it is a good example of a *glocal* (both local and global) film, with what Mette Hjort terms a "marked" transnationality, in which the "authors" of the film "intentionally direct the attention of the viewers towards various transnational properties that encourage thinking about transnationality" (14).

However, the transnationalism of De la Iglesia's films is quite peculiar, as Rodríguez

Ortega points out: “a type of cinematic effort that, while aesthetically and generically transnational, remains deeply rooted in a variety of national cultural markers that are not easily understandable for foreign audiences” (53). *800 balas* actually shows “highly specific geographic and cultural allusions” which leave “international audiences out of the conversation” (Amago 44), and one of those cultural allusions is precisely the use of Sancho Gracia as Quixotic stuntman and defeated Curro-like hero. As Amago also points out, “this disjuncture between global genre forms and local cultural references” creates “a symbolic tension that reflects the general contours of the plot, as its various characters fight over the representation of Spanish space and national identity” (44). In fact, according to Amago, this political discourse is an essential part of the film, since “*800 balas* is all about the process of interpreting Spanish national identities and landscapes through media” (44), and

> the tension between specificity and nonspecificity, Spanishness and “Westernness,” draws attention to the politicized procedures of interpreting the signs and symbols of Spanish national identity, history, culture and economics in the global era. Using the historical reality of Western productions in Spain as its starting point, *800 balas* functions ultimately as an onscreen thesis about what “Spain” is, what it means, how it is used and who gets to decide. (Amago 45)

The tension Amago talks about is related to Julián’s daughter-in-law’s efforts to transform the nearly derelict sets into a Disneyland-type theme park, taking advantage of the only thing that gives Spain the trump card against its northern European competitors: its southern location, or, as one of the characters stresses, “*sell them sun. A blazing sun. A Spanish sun.*” *800 balas* is dealing then with Spanish exceptionalism, the “Spain is different” slogan connected with the orientalist discourse that Franco’s dictatorship used, and his democratic successors are still using, to promote Spain as a tourist destination. In contrast to an alternative economic model that would promote film production, or the establishment of a national industry (*Curro Jiménez* actually became internationally successful, particularly in Eastern European communist countries), we

see the neoliberal capitalists trying to package and sell Spain as "the historical (past) stand-in for the American West and as a sunny destination (present) for global vacationers" (Amago 40). Julián and his group of Quixotic stuntmen are nostalgic losers who cling to a fictive past whose existence is always doubted,[7] but in the end they cannot resist the new times, related in the film to the integration in the European Union and the Spanish economic boom (based on construction and tourism) that later led the country to recession: "the anarchic working man's utopia constructed and defended by Julián and his crew is ultimately deemed unsustainable in an era of postmodern capitalism" (Amago 43).

One last element worth mentioning is the appearance of Moroccan immigrants in the film. In Julián's last efforts to revive the Western film sets to their former life, Julián and his "merry band of stuntmen" (Amago 42) ride up a mountain and stop to contemplate the view, but contrary to our expectations, what we see is a view of ocean-like plastic greenhouse structures that provide fruit and vegetables for the whole of Europe thanks to the Spanish sun and cheap immigrant labor. In fact, Julián has gone on what he calls an "audition" to get Moroccan extras for the parts of Indians. Buse, Triana Toribio, and Willis have explained the appearance of these North African immigrants as a connection between the new immigrant workforce and the "earlier workforce" of cinema workers in foreign co-productions in Spanish soil: "In its casting of extras from the local area, then, *800 balas* parallels quite self-consciously the working opportunities of Spanish 'actors' in the shadow of American stars in the co-productions of the 1960s and 1970s" (157).

However, the identification of the Islamic population with the Native Americans of traditional Westerns deserves some more comment and is also dealt with in other transnational post-Westerns, like *No habrá paz para los malvados* (*No rest for the wicked*, 2011). This is a

film directed and co-scripted by Enrique Urbizu, a film director with a background very similar to Álex de la Iglesia. Both were born in the 1960s in the Basque country, and both have made most of their films in the context of Spanish national cinema.[8] Urbizu's interest in the Western genre can be traced back to a short film made in 1992 called *Show in the Saloon* about the Almería film sets. This is a five-minute documentary using only diegetic sound where we can see fragments of the cowboy stunt shows taking place in the "Mini-Hollywood" theme park as well as the tourists' involvement with the shows and the reality behind the spectacle: real Andalusian cowboys playing imaginary American cowboys. One of its most interesting aspects is that the theme park scenes are framed by a prologue and an epilogue showing images of Moroccan immigrants coming all the way from France, inside their cars, and waiting at the Almería port in order to board the ferries to Africa. Although there is no explicit diegetic connection, the associations and contrasts between Western fictions and the unveiling of the representation process, old Western frontiers and new physical borders, Indians as former fictional enemies and Arabs as real contemporary Others, come readily to mind. Urbizu has also stressed the transnational implications of the location at the frontier of Southern Europe, "*in a really weird corner of Europe, with Moroccans who are French waiting to go back to their country, with tourists hung up on the Western American myth who want to see Andalusians playing Spaghetti Western cowboys*" (Angulo et al. 209). As I have argued before, one of the features of contemporary post-Westerns (like *Frozen River*, 2008, or *No Country for Old Men*, 2007) is that they replace the setting of the American frontier with contemporary borders, interstitial "third places" of mixture, violence, and transformation, lawless territories where the heroes and (frequently) heroines need to resort to their own moral conscience as in traditional Western frontier settings (González "New Frontiers for Post-Western Cinema"). *Show in the Saloon*

opposes the simulacrum of the old Western frontier to the reality of the contemporary border in this "post-tourist" setting (Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West* 118), where Urbizu questions Spanish identity and plays out the contrast between occidentalism and orientalism: the short starts with several flags, one of which is the European one. The northern European tourists come to see the simulacrum of a simulacrum of an American genre, but also have come to see Spanish exceptionalism, and fail to notice the migrants next door. As Urbizu has commented, "*they have told us we are Europe and look what we are like*" [AA1] (Angulo et al. 211). It seems that Urbizu discovered the potential of this southern European frontier setting in *Show in the Saloon* because he used it later in two other films: *Cachito* (1996) and *La caja 507* (*Box 507*, 2002). *Cachito* is worth mentioning here because it also has Western traces (like a parodic duel in the sun at the end of the movie), it is also set in the South of Spain, and it is probably the first film to use Sancho Gracia as a post-Western, *post-Curro-Jiménez* hero: "*the character's features are designed for the actor to take revenge of Curro Jiménez, so that he could do what his positive heroes couldn't do: harass girls, touch their asses, rub his balls, drink non-stop, swear and miss all the easy shots*" (Angulo et al. 75).

The Western references in *No habrá paz para los malvados*, in turn, are unmistakable from the very beginning: we can see a Western-themed slot machine before we see two cowboy boots that belong to Santos Trinidad, a corrupt policeman with a dark past. A displaced contemporary gunslinger, he has a revolver and a badge, sews up his own injuries, and kills the pain drinking from a bottle of whisky (González "A Genre Auteur?" 69). Urbizu has detailed the many location and *mise-en-scène* decisions he took to emphasize this post-Western quality: buildings that look like a frontier Mexican ranch, shots of the lonely hero set against the

[AA1] Copyeditor query: For some reason, this citation is locked so I cannot make an edit. Perhaps you can as the author? Since there are three co-authors, the citation should read (Angulo et al. 211).{Contributor: I have just deleted the wrong citation}

background, wide-angle shots reminiscent of *High Noon* (1952), or the post-urban, post-apocalyptic locations in the outskirts of the city. All these hints take the audience into that "space of reflection" mentioned by Campbell (*Post-Westerns* 31) and establish a critical dialogue with the assumptions and values of the Western genre. In this case, the emphasis seems to be placed on Santos Trinidad as a "Christian warrior" (Heredero 32) fighting against Islamic terrorism: not only does his name carry Christian connotations, but the title of the film itself (coming from the Bible, Isaiah 48:22) and the cross hanging from his neck reinforce this message of the corrupt policeman as "cowboy crusader." The identification of Islamic terrorists with the enemies of traditional Westerns (the Indians) is not new, of course. George W. Bush (like Ronald Reagan before him) had played the image of the cowboy in a war against terrorism with strong religious overtones. And Urbizu himself had established the connection between the two "dark Others" in *Show in the Saloon*, as evidenced before. What seems to be relevant here is the relationship between these analogies and Spanish politics and foreign policy. The cell of Islamic terrorists that Trinidad stumbles on is preparing a terrorist attack with clear connections with the Madrid attacks of March 11, 2004, which killed almost 200 people: the use of mobile phones as detonators, the house in the outskirts of Madrid to prepare the attack, or the appearance of Atocha train station. This attack was a response by Al Qaeda against Spain's involvement in the coalition against Islamic terror, favored by José María Aznar's government and strongly opposed by leftist parties and a majority of the Spanish population. George W. Bush's statement while looking for support for the war with Iraq reinforced the Western associations of his war against terror: "Contrary to my image as a Texan with two guns at my side, I'm more comfortable with a posse" (Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West* 268).[9] Like *El Cid* (Mann 1961), another Spanish crusader who won his last battle against Muslims after he died, Santos Trinidad is fatally

wounded when he kills the last terrorist and prevents a deadly massacre, a posthumous element that reinforces the post-Western connections in a film full of Western traces. Urbizu uses these associations to deal with the occidentalist discourse of Spanish identity and to subtly warn the audience about the risks of applying "posthumously" the logic and moral assumptions of classical Westerns in contemporary situations.

France: *Les Cowboys* (2015) and *Adieu Gary* (2009)

The French film *Les Cowboys* (2015) also illustrates the risks of applying Western genre values to a context of Islamic terrorism in Europe. Directed by Thomas Bidegain—former scriptwriter of other films dealing with the integration of minorities in France like *Un prophète* (2009) and *Dheepan* (2015)—the film applies the plot of John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) to contemporary France. *The Searchers* may be one of the most influential Westerns of all time, particularly if we think about the 1970s when it was called the "Super-Cult Movie of the New Hollywood," the film that "all recent American cinema derives from" (Byron 45). Bidegain has mentioned specifically two films influenced by *The Searchers*, *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976) and *Hardcore* (Paul Schrader, 1979), as inspirations to tell this story of a father looking for his daughter, apparently kidnapped in 1994 by a Muslim boyfriend; in his search, the father shows his blatant racism and hatred for the "dark Others" that ends up including the girl herself. He becomes so obsessed by his search that he is unable to show any empathy in this contemporary lawless frontier, the dark back rooms of poverty and Muslim immigration in Europe. As Jonathan Romney has pointed out, *Les Cowboys* includes other overt references to *The Searchers*, like the daughter's red bandana ("a nod to the identifying medal that Ethan gives young Debbie"), and an image of the protagonists framed by a door looking out at a grey sea ("a melancholy Europeanization of Ford's iconic door-framed shots of the endless American

outdoors"). As in other transnational post-Westerns, the references to Westerns are obvious, not only in the most evident title and in the nods to *The Searchers*, but also in the rather disconcerting first sequences: the characters are all dressed as cowboys, and the people play, sing, and dance to country music, but they all speak in French. It is a "disorienting and metaphoric" sequence, "a microcosm of one culture mushrooming in the heart of another" (Catsoulis). In fact, we are in a country-and-western fair in rural France, a good example of the fascination that the American West still holds for people from all over the world, and particularly for French people. The film shows us the father's search and his descent into a spiral of fear, hatred, and death, but also the contrast with his son, who, after the father's death, takes over the quest on his own terms and develops a much more understanding attitude to Islam and toward his own sister—in fact the last section of the films shows his marriage to a Muslim girl and his respect for his sister's decision to join Islam.

The critics have highlighted Bidegain's excellent use of ellipsis to tell a two-decade-long family story but also to focus on the contemporary socio-political background: the situation of Muslim immigrants in France and the development of Islamic terrorism both in France and around the world (a section of the film takes place in Afghanistan, where the horse-riding scenes in open landscapes reinforce the references to Westerns). In fact, Bidegain himself has pointed out the power of Westerns as socio-cultural tools to show what he calls the "state of the nation":

> There is this idea that every western shows the state of the nation. So when you watch a western, you get to know the world of the farmers, or the world of the Indians, or the moment of democracy. Every time, it's a state of the nation. All the good westerns do this. And so I had this idea of showing a certain state of the nation and using this model to talk about us and relate how the situation has progressed. (Talu)

Accordingly in this transnational post-Western, Bidegain shows us the state of the *French* nation regarding a specific issue: the failed integration and subsequent radicalization of Muslim

immigrants, a problem that has been related to French "national identity" (Lichfield), France's "identity crisis" (Gobry), and French exceptionalism: "when it comes to Jihad, there is a French exception" in the way that France deals with its immigrant population (Khrosrokhavar). The French "assimilation model" of dealing with immigration has often been contrasted to British "multiculturalism," and linked to France's history and national identity: it has its roots in the *ancien regime,* it was modified during the Enlightenment and the Revolution, and later implemented by the Third Republic (1870–1940) "through strict separation between individual culture and religion (confined to the private sphere) and the secular state which inculcated in both French and foreign children, via the schools, a common civic culture" (Weil and Crowley 112). The emphasis on secularism is actually included in the definition of the country in the current constitution ("France is an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social Republic") and has created acid "veil wars" between the French authorities and the Muslim communities about young girls' rights to cover their heads in schools. The Republican assimilationist model is based on citizenship: the aim of these policies is to turn immigrants into French citizens with equal rights and duties, but they force them to hide ethnic, cultural, and religious difference.

Bidegain tackles this issue by showing the father's prejudices in the first part of the film: he cannot accept his daughter's conversion and "betrayal." The fact that we find out about the girl's disappearance in the "disorienting" first sequence of the film is also "metaphoric": the father (and all his friends in the country festival) identify with American values and culture, but, as we find out, not with any kind of idealistic American values but rather with the specific values and racist discourse transmitted in traditional Westerns where the Native Americans were presented as savages and their views were erased. When the son takes over the quest, we see the development of worldwide Islamic terrorism through visual references to the terrorist attacks in

New York, Madrid, and London. However, after experiencing firsthand the discourse of Western-like violence in Afghanistan (he shoots his own ex-brother-in-law in self-defence), he learns to accept Islam, ends up marrying a Muslim woman (the dead man's wife), and accepts his sister's decision to live within Islam in Belgium. Once again, the son's evolution is also explained indirectly, by references to Western movie codes: he teaches his own son not to shoot a gun, but to make an Indian bow. Finally, the association between the French assimilationist discourse and the racist message of American Westerns is made explicit in the last section of the film also by visual means: when he visits the yearly country music festival his Muslim wife-to-be shows her horse-riding abilities, but she is rejected by the Western-loving community because she is wearing a hijab. The scarf, torn off by a French woman wearing a cowboy hat, signals her in this scene simultaneously as Muslim and Indian. As in *Into the West* and *No habrá paz para los malvados*, *Les Cowboys* talks about European problems, "imagined communities," and national identity using Western-based metaphors:

> The cowboy/Indian metaphor we're spinning really concerns the father because he sees the world that way—what we used to call the war of civilizations. . . . On the other hand, the son won't see civilizations, he'll see people. . . . So when he's with his own son, he shows him how to make a bow, how to become an Indian too. He opens up to the world. . . . At least, the second generation becomes wiser and opens up to the world. (Talu)

As Judith Godinot pointed out in her review of this film, the cowboy/Indian metaphor still summarizes the current clash of civilizations better than any other allegory: "*cowboys versus Indians, the war of civilization is precisely this.*"

Adieu Gary (2009) also uses Western references to address French national problems and identity, but presents a rather different view of Muslim integration in France. The film is the first feature film directed by Nassim Amaouche, a director who is part of the new generation of Maghrebi-French cinema that has been hailed by the critics as a new "Nouvelle Vague"

(Gaertner). These new filmmakers (like Abdellatif Kechiche, Rachid Bouchareb, and Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche) have offered "*a new perspective about French society . . . a point of view so far ignored about the question of immigration and its consequences for the generations born in France*" (Gaertner 15). The Western references are again obvious in the paratext, since the Gary of the title is of course Gary Cooper, and the film actually includes clips from two of Cooper's Western films: *Man of the West* (1958) and *Veracruz* (1954). Gary Cooper has been called the "quintessential American hero" (Meyers 116), but in fact his screen persona changed over the years to include more complex characters like the characters he plays in *Veracruz* (a mercenary) or in *Man of the West* (a reformed outlaw who needs to choose between straight life or going back to crime, a plot line that, as we will see, is the inspiration for *Adieu Gary*'s main story). The Cooper persona as a flawless male role model also plays an important role in an Oedipic subplot: José is the teenager who sees the clips just mentioned, and he has been hooked on Gary Cooper Westerns since his father (nicknamed like the actor) left the family.[10] Finally, the Western traces include the protagonist's arrival by train (in fact a very peculiar "train," an automobile using the obsolete train tracks) and the setting, a cityscape that looks just like a Western ghost town, as Amaouche himself has pointed out: "*a main street that you could swear came from a Western film set*" (Goutte 121). In fact, the setting is not a film set, but the surreal *Cité Blanche du Teil*, a semi-abandoned company town (*cité ouvrière*) built in 1880 in southern France to provide housing for the workers of a cement factory owned by the Lafarge Company.

With these Western references in the background, *Adieu Gary* tells the story of a mixed-race family and the surrounding community living in this *cité ouvrière*. The protagonist, Samir, has just left prison and, like Cooper's character in *Man of the West*, needs to decide if he will return to his drug-dealing crimes or follow his brother's and father's example and look for an

honest job. His white father, Francis (an allegoric name with "*national connotations*" [Goutte 117]), lost his Moroccan-born wife some years before and has now lost his job, as the company has decided to close down the factory; however, out of personal and professional pride he continues going to work to try to repair the machine he was working on when he was laid off. Samir's brother, Icham, has a menial job at a supermarket and would like to recover his Moroccan roots, although he does not speak Arabic and has never set foot in Africa. Thus, the film shows Icham as an example of the difficulty of racial integration, particularly for mixed-race individuals, and shows the psychological displacement of these Arab-French teenagers when they play a videogame where they need to identify with American soldiers whose aim is to kill Arab terrorists. Fareed Ben-Youssef uses Frantz Fanon's seminal work about the impact of European pop culture on "the racially marginalized existing on the periphery of empire" (Fanon 146), to point out how the players of Arab descent "subjectively adopt a white man's attitude" and become "the bearer[s] of the white gaze at its most racist and violent, through the reticule of a rifle, aiming to kill the blurred and aggressive vision of the Other" (Ben-Youssef 83–84). Although Ben-Youssef describes a very bleak racial future for "the French-Arab's vexed subject position in the ghost towns of post-9/11 France" (87), most French reviewers agree that the racial picture presented in this film is much more positive: "*Tolerance, understanding, fraternity, between French and immigrant workers, between men and women, between fathers and sons: in the working world that Nassim Amaouche describes we can still find some essential ingredients of solidarity*" (Mauger 149). In fact, although the film does not hide the problems of miscegenation (Samir has a poster of an Indian chief in his room to show once again the identification between Muslims and Indians), it also presents moments of idyllic republican integration, like a scene (filmed in a perfect circular shot to underline the harmony of the

moment) showing people of French, Spanish, and Arab origin sharing Spanish food to the Arab-sounding music of the ever-present *oud* (Arab lute) played by the Palestinian "Trio Joubran." And the only act of rebellion shown by this group of Maghrebi-French idle unemployed (compared to the extreme violence shown in *banlieu* films like *La Haine*, 1995) is the harmless, playful simulation of a Spanish bullfight in front of a passing French train.

In fact, like most Maghrebi-French filmmakers of this new wave, who "*move beyond the migration framework to present a social rather than ethnic point of view*" (Gaertner 19), Amaouche's focus seems to be more on social than racial or religious issues. Let us not forget that the French Constitution defines the country as "an indivisible, secular, democratic, and *social* Republic" (emphasis added), and that the construction of a social welfare state has been at the core of the French Republic since the 1789 Revolution. In fact, Francis still believes in this French dream of "Liberté, egalité, fraternité," and his stubborn decision to keep going back to the factory is an example of his refusal to accept the end of this national foundational myth. However, the traditional French (and European) idea of the welfare state or social capitalism (exemplified by a *cité ouvrière* with all sorts of social services for the working class, from health care to trade unions) seems to be disappearing under the pressure of a contemporary form of neoliberal capitalism. As Amaouche has pointed out, "*Adieu Gary speaks about the end of a certain age for the working class, and the beginning of another, about a transformation*" ("Adieu Gary"). An example of this decline in workers' rights is Francis's girlfriend's "job" as a guinea pig for medical laboratories, and Icham's and Samir's jobs at the supermarket, where they are forced to wear a mouse hat as a visual symbol of their subjugation. It seems obvious that the French model of the welfare state represented by Francis is in danger of disappearing under the pressure of neoliberal dehumanizing forces.

It is in this sense that the choice of a Western-related setting is particularly relevant, since, as in other post-Westerns, we are dealing with a posthumous setting. Both *Adieu Gary* and *Man of the West* deal with a ghost town: in *Man of the West*, the outlaw gang that the Gary Cooper character gets involved with are planning to rob a bank in a town called Lassoo, but on their arrival, they find that nobody lives there anymore. The only comment by Cooper is "*All of them killed!*", a comment which, by way of montage, is shown in the film before scenes showing the deserted cityscape of *La Cité Blanche du Teil*. In fact, although *Adieu Gary*'s title can be related to the Oedipic subplot mentioned before (Francis, disguised as Gary Cooper, rides into the sunset after helping José to deal with his psychological blockage), the main implication of the title seems to be that the American solution to contemporary problems does not work ("*Goodbye capitalism, goodbye American myth*" [Palou]), but the French solution does not work either: the French ghost town is equally deserted. The foundational French myth of republican solidarity is shaking, and this is shown visually in two scenes: in one of them the town's main drug dealer (handicapped and using a wheelchair) ironically displays a banner with the legend "*Tous unis pour la victoire*" (All united for victory), a symbol of the French Republic in times of war that does not make sense anymore; the second scene shows the establishment of a Mosque in the building where the *Maison du Peuple* ("House of the people," a traditional meeting place for trade unions and workers) used to stand. It seems that the model of secular solidarity of the French welfare state is being replaced by a religious model among the working class, as Amaouche has pointed out: "*In some popular neighborhoods people are more sensitive to religion than to Karl Marx: this is an objective reality*" ("Adieu Gary"). In fact, although Amaouche has publicly expressed his distrust of religion, the vision of Islam presented in this film is much more positive than in *Les Cowboys* or *No habrá paz para los malvados*: women

enjoy a high degree of freedom, sexual and otherwise, and the only "pioneer" who wants to settle back in this ghost town is the young religious leader who wants to establish the mosque in order to provide religious and social services for the population.

Martin Goutte has pointed out how the film uses a "miscegenation" (*métissage*) of genres (the Western and French poetic realism of the 1930s) to reflect the film's focus on ethnic miscegenation, and this stylistic hybridization (typical of transnational post-Westerns, as we could see in *Into the West*) helps to convey a nostalgic, melancholic tone. As Michel Euvrard has pointed out, the characters seem to be "*hung in a sort of void between two utopias,*" the utopia of the lost past and a utopia of future hope. Meanwhile, they do not realize that "*la Cité Blanche that hosts them could be the framework for a contemporary utopia*" (Euvrard 263). This "contemporary utopia" is shown in the semi-happy, poetic ending provided by the film: Francis (with Samir's help) manages to repair the machine he had been working on, and workers of different ethnic groups smile at the combination of the sound of the factory and the church bells, while Muslims start going to the mosque, which has inherited the social features of the *Maison du Peuple* and helps to create a moment of temporary collective cohesion that invites us to look forward to a more hopeful future for the French ideal: "*The transformation of this building into a mosque expresses both a certain sadness and a possible comfort in the face of affirming change, mutations, energy, and life*" ("Adieu Gary"). Despite the obvious problems, Amaouche seems to be presenting an "imagined community" of mixed-race social harmony in this microcosm of French society.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the different films we have analyzed are very revealing examples of transnational post-Westerns dealing with the foundational myths of these three European "imagined

communities": Ireland, Spain, and France. The symbolic power of Westerns as foundational stories reappears in films that highlight the problems and contradictions of their national myths. Like the "foundational fictions" of the nineteenth century, transnational post-Westerns deal with Irish, Spanish, or French national identity, but unlike the novels identified by Doris Sommer, the narrative tool used is not "print" but cinema, and the voices are much more critical, since the films deconstruct and problematize their own national foundational myths. Following the example of *The Quiet Man*, *Into the West* examines the possibilities of renewal and regeneration offered by the myths of the Irish and American Wests. This film shows the consequences of global capitalism for Ireland and the travelling community, and offers a solution to their problems in the fusion of these two contrasting but complementary myths: the Utopian impulse of the "male" American West, and the nostalgic, "female" Irish West connected to Ireland's Celtic roots. In Spain, *Curro Jiménez*, *800 balas*, and *No habrá paz para los malvados* deal in different ways with the two contrasting myths about Spanish identity: the orientalist discourse of Spanish exceptionalism (based on the "foundational violence" of the war of Independence against France), and the occidentalist perspective represented by European integration and the fight against Islam. Instead of a Western setting, these audiovisual stories use the setting of the Spanish South to contrast both perspectives and deal with Spanish exceptionalism. Finally, *Les Cowboys* and *Adieu Gary* deal with the contradictions inside the French Republican "imagined community" of freedom, racial integration, and social values. Both films show the difficulties inherent to the French assimilationist model, and both propose solutions that respect the rights of the Muslims (converts or immigrants) to show their difference and look for more personal ways of integration.

As we have seen, each of these films offers a different perspective about national identity

and foundational myths. They all use Western intertextual references, whether they are specific films like *The Searchers* or *Man of the West*; spatial settings like the ghost towns or the open landscapes of the West of Ireland or the South of Spain; or metafictional allusions to their reception or production. However, what seems more relevant here is the contemporary "local" power of the "global" Western myth because these transnational post-Westerns show that the Western is still a "malleable parable for contemporary political realities" (Bloom). They all use Western-related allegories to talk about the "state of" their particular "nation," (Bidegain) and show that the cowboy-Indian metaphor is still a valid tool in order to deal with contemporary problems like the integration of minorities (Travellers or Muslims), the transition from dictatorship to democracy, or the fight against global terrorism. Thus, transnational post-Westerns appropriate the generic features and myths of the American Western in order to revise them, look into other national foundational myths, and reassert the possibility of an indigenous voice. In contrast with the "foundational fictions" of the Americas, the films we have seen propose solutions based on racial mixture and hybridization and warn us against the dangers of applying the logic and moral assumptions of "myths-as-lies" in contemporary situations. In several transnational post-Westerns we see Quixotic characters who have become "infected" by the strength of the myth of the West and try to resuscitate posthumously the impulse of a genre that is supposed to be dead. American Westerns may be barely alive today, but their symbolic power as tools to analyze national foundational myths is very much alive, and it has crossed borders to become a crucial feature of transnational post-Westerns.

Jesús Ángel González is a professor of English and American Literature at the University of Cantabria, Spain. He holds an MA in Spanish from Pennsylvania State University and a PhD in English from the University of Salamanca, Spain. He has published *La narrativa popular de Dashiell Hammett: Pulps, Cine y Cómics* (Valencia University Press, 2002), co-edited *The Invention of Illusions: International Perspectives on Paul Auster* (Cambridge Scholars, 2011) and written a number of articles on the Detective Novel and American Literature, which have

been published in *Literature/Film Quarterly, Comparative American Studies*, *Critical Engagements*, and *The Journal of Popular Culture*.

Notes

Parts of the section "Ireland: *Into the West* (1992)" have appeared before in *The Journal of Transnational American Studies*.

1. The examples provided by Campbell are enough to show that the development of film genres across time is a complex process that should not be oversimplified. There are films that can be considered post-Westerns already in the 1950s, and enough Westerns have been produced in the 21st century to question once and for all the "death" of the Western, which means that Westerns and post-Westerns have been coexisting for several decades now. As Rick Altman and Steve Neale point out, one has to be careful with the evolutionary approach to Hollywood genre, and consider films individually, since "the period in which a particular film was released does not necessarily determine the nature of its relationship to the myth" of the West (Carter 219).
2. Byrne uses Will Wright's study of the Western, *Sixguns and Society* (1975).
3. "The Traveller community is Ireland's largest indigenous ethnic minority, numbering 40,000 on the island of Ireland and 36,224 in the republic, according to the 2008 All-Ireland Traveller Health Survey (AITHS). They are also one of the most socially marginalized and economically deprived populations in the country, with many living in conditions that are more akin to early 20th century Ireland than the advanced industrial society we inhabit today" (Burtenshaw). In March 2017, they were formally recognized as an ethnic minority by the Irish Government.
4. Author's translation. All quotations originally in languages other than English have been translated by the author and are written in italics.
5. The literal translation is "the rage of the wind," but the film was released in English as *Trinity Sees Red*, a title that deserves an explanation. The film starred Italian actor Terence Hill (Mario Girotti) a few months before he made the highly successful Spaghetti comedy-Western *They Call Me Trinity* (1970). The change of the title tried to cash in on the success of this film, although the relationship between both films is slim.
6. At least two other Spanish films have made use of the Almería Western sets in the twenty-first century. *Vivir es fácil con los ojos cerrados* (*Living is Easy with Eyes Closed*, David Trueba 2013) tells the story of an English teacher travelling to Almería to meet John Lennon, who was shooting *How I Won the War* (Richard Lester, 1967). *A galope tendido* (Julio Suárez, 2000) is a very minor production which is however worth mentioning here because it presents Sancho Gracia in a secondary role as a former stuntman in Spaghetti Westerns two years before *800 balas*.
7. Alfredo Moro Martín has stressed the anachronistic character of Quixotic quests like Julián's (Moro Martín). Don Quixote "*wanted to resuscitate the already-dead practice of knight-errantry*," just like Julián wants to bring Westerns and the film sets back to life. In fact, although we do not have enough space to develop the argument fully here, there is an interesting connection between *Don Quixote* and post-Westerns. Westerns and chivalric romances are popular forms with structural and thematic similarities that "infect" the minds of the readers (Don Quixote) or viewers (Tito, Ossie, Julián), and make them try to live the adventures that they have

read or seen, thereby bringing back to life the "dead" genre and practices. The confusion between reality and fiction, and the idealism that these post-Western characters display, are direct consequences of this "infection."

8. Together with Julio Medem, Juanma Bajo Ulloa, and Daniel Calparsoro, Urbizu and De la Iglesia were called the "New Generation" of Basque directors (Santaolalla 311). However, they have made most of their careers within the context of the Spanish national industry and away from the limited scope of Basque nationalistic cinema.
9. Spain's involvement in this coalition was symbolized by the photograph of Aznar and Bush with their feet on the table smoking a cigar in Bush's Texas ranch.
10. We can see the frequent emphasis of transnational post-Westerns in father-son relationships and masculinities with Oedipal resonances (*Into the West, 800 balas, Adieu Gary*). This genealogical preoccupation could also be related to a "genealogical" generic relationship between Westerns and post-Westerns.

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[AA2] Copyeditor query: I am unsure what this work cited is referring to—is it an episode of *Curro Jiménez*, perhaps? If so, please place in alphabetical order by episode title (so under 'e' for "En…") and format according to MLA 8 guidelines regarding an episode of a television series:
"Episode title." *TV Series title*. Channel, Call sign of channel (if known), City (if known), original date of broadcast.
{Contributor: Done}