

UC Santa Barbara

Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title

Transnational Post-Westerns in Irish Cinema

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4112x2v4>

Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 7(1)

Author

González, Jesús Ángel

Publication Date

2016

DOI

10.5070/T871026207

Copyright Information

Copyright 2016 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Transnational Post-Westerns in Irish Cinema

JESÚS ÁNGEL GONZÁLEZ

Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed the emergence of two film categories that have made us reconsider the traditional vision of film genres and taxonomies. The first—transnational cinema—may be taken for granted by the readers of a journal like the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, devoted to the interdisciplinary study of American cultures in a transnational context, but, as we will see, it is still in need of an accurate definition and categorization. The second—post-Western films—has also been widely used since the 1970s, although it is still a rather vague term.¹ The purpose of this article is to review these two concepts in order to propose a new category that combines them both: the transnational post-Western. After an analysis of these two terms, the article deals with a specific case study: transnational post-Westerns in Irish cinema. A review of the cultural implications of the West in Ireland follows, with examples from James Joyce's *Dubliners* and John Ford's film *The Quiet Man*. Finally, two Irish films (*Into the West* and *Mickybo and Me*) are analyzed. These films, like other transnational post-Westerns, make explicit references to American Westerns, establish a dialogue with the original film genre, question its values and assumptions, and, at the same time, probe into the national identities and conflicts of both Ireland and the United States.

The Transnational and Post-Westerns

The term *post-Western* was first applied to cinema by Philip French in the 1970s and has been employed by a variety of critics since then to refer to different cultural products.² Writers such as Richard Slotkin, John G. Cawelti, Susan Kollin, Krista Comer, and Neil Campbell have applied it successfully to the field of Western studies, although they do not necessarily seem to agree on its features or on the films or books that could be included in the category.³ Of course the root of the word is crucial: What

exactly do we mean by *Western*? Most film studies scholars systematically seem to address Westerns as a genre, whereas historians and literary critics seem to consider them from a regional rather than a generic point of view.⁴ But if the root of post-Westerns—*West*—is fundamental, we cannot ignore the prefix *post-* either: Is it intra- or extradiegetic? Does it mean that the action of the films takes place after the closing of the frontier? After either of the World Wars? Or simply “the West today” (as in French’s original definition)? Or does it apply to films produced after World War II,⁵ or after the so-called “death of the Western genre” brought about by the failure of Michael Cimino’s 1980 *Heaven’s Gate*?⁶ The lack of definition of the term has meant that it has been used a bit vaguely for any recent Western film, or modern “Westerns with a twist,” including remakes such as *3:10 to Yuma* (dir. James Mangold, 2007) or *True Grit* (dir. Ethan Coen and Joel Coen, 2010).

Neil Campbell’s *Post-Westerns* (2013) is the most ambitious and thorough contribution towards the definition and application of the category. He uses the term for films produced after World War II, which are “coming after and going beyond the traditional Western [genre] while engaging with and commenting on its deeply haunting assumptions and values.”⁷ Following Stuart Hall, he relates his use of the prefix *post-* to words like *postcolonialism*, *poststructuralism*, or *postmodernism*, both in a chronological sense and in the sense of opposing their antecedents, deconstructing them, and trying to go beyond them. Thus, post-Western films take the classic structures and themes of the genre to interact, overlap, and interrelate in complex dialogical ways with them: “post-Westerns constantly and deliberately remind us of the persistent presence of the Western genre, its traces and traditions within the unravelling of new, challenging forms and settings” (309). As I have analyzed elsewhere,⁸ recent post-Westerns like *Frozen River* (dir. Courtney Hunt, 2008) and *Sin Nombre* (dir. Cary Joji Fukunaga, 2009) bring into question key aspects of the genre like gender roles, or the ideological and political implications of the idea of the frontier (closely linked to the American Dream and American exceptionalism) versus contemporary borders.

If we consider typical genre cycles (formative, classical, and postclassical/parody; or experimental, classical, and formalist) as defined by film critics like Rick Altman and Thomas Schatz,⁹ post-Westerns might be considered a “fourth stage” in generic development. Following the metaphor of “biological development,” transnational post-Westerns give the genre the chance of a new life in another place and time. In this sense, Campbell also suggests that post-Westerns are “ghost Westerns,” Westerns that refuse to lie quietly in their tombs.¹⁰ And this is important because as a film genre Westerns have been proclaimed dead repeatedly since their very origins in 1911.¹¹ However, Westerns refuse to remain dead and keep on resuscitating in renewed forms, questioning American values, identities, and myths as they have been doing from their inception. Campbell in fact stresses that “the post- in post-Western has a self-conscious reference to and echo of the word *posthumous* and therefore of the specific meaning of something—in this case a film genre—that

continues to live on beyond its apparent death or exhaustion, generating a spectral inheritance within the present.”¹² He mentions several instances of the dead living beyond their death and graves that need to be unearthed in some of the films he discusses, like *Bad Day at Black Rock* (dir. John Sturges, 1955) or *Lone Star* (dir. John Sayles, 1996).

In his book, Campbell deals mainly with American films, from *The Lusty Men* (dir. Nicholas Ray, 1952) to *The Misfits* (dir. John Huston, 1961), and on to more recent films like *No Country for Old Men* (dir. Ethan Coen and Joel Coen, 2007). Although Westerns started out as a quintessentially American genre, they soon became a transnational phenomenon, the most famous manifestation of which is probably the Spaghetti Western. Cynthia J. Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Riper provide a variety of examples of “international Westerns” from almost every corner of the world, including Germany, Denmark, Australia, the Soviet Union, and Japan.¹³ Once Westerns disappeared (with a few notable exceptions) from mainstream cinema, it was only natural that post-Westerns exploiting their heritage appeared throughout the world, applying their assumptions and values to specific national environments. Susan Kollin mentions one interesting example: Khaled Hosseini’s novel *The Kite Runner* (2003) and its subsequent adaptation to the screen (dir. Marc Forster, 2007).¹⁴ Both take place mainly in Afghanistan and make frequent references to Westerns: the boy protagonists watch them repeatedly (*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* [*Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, dir. Sergio Leone, 1966] and *The Magnificent Seven* [dir. John Sturges, 1960], among other films), talk about them, and play cowboys and Indians in the streets of Kabul, reproducing what they have just seen on the screen. However, applying the post-Western category to *The Kite Runner* does not just mean that one can find these obvious references but also that these references hint at the existence of a fruitful dialogue with the original genre, as well as interesting comments on the genre’s “haunting assumptions and values.” Thus, like many Westerns, *The Kite Runner* examines the concepts of masculinity and violence (loyalty, courage, and violence as essential qualities of men), as well as racial conflicts and discrimination (Hazaras versus Pashtuns, since the boys belong to different ethnic groups), border-crossing, new frontiers (Afghanistan during the Cold War, with Ronald Reagan as both Western actor and US president at the time), and the story of immigrants to the United States. Analyzing *The Kite Runner* as a post-Western from a transnational perspective, then, enriches our understanding of both the novel/film and the implications of the Western genre in general, specifically applied to an Afghan-American context.

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. An intriguing recent example is *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (*Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da*, dir. Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2011), a Turkish film that echoes Sergio Leone’s *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968) not only in the title but also very noticeably in its approach to mise-en-

scène, rhythm, and use of the Anatolian barren landscapes as reminiscent of the American West. With these references in mind, the spectator can easily establish analogies and contrasts between cinematic spaces, national identities, and generic codes. If Westerns reenact the American founding ritual, *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* questions the foundation myth of modern Turkey, the creation of a secular republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk after the demise of the Ottoman Empire, and the subsequent process of westernization of a predominantly rural and Islamic country. Cardinal points are necessarily modified, since the setting of the film is actually in Anatolia, the East of the country, and this region is confronted with the European part of the country and the modernization process represented by Istanbul (its geographic West but symbolic East from the perspective of the Western genre). The film, like many Westerns, contrasts two approaches to violence and justice: the wilder one represented by the natives of the area, and the official legal system represented by westernized characters like the prosecutor and the doctor. The main focus of the film is on the latter, a “civilized” man who has moved to Anatolia and, as in many Westerns, undergoes a process of transformation to end up finding himself and his own moral code (a reluctance to reveal the truth to avoid further injuries) in this barren landscape. This transformation is underlined by a process of grave searching, digging, and unburying (reminiscent of some of the “posthumous post-Westerns” mentioned by Campbell), which becomes a metaphor for the search for the roots of the country and the moral roots of the characters themselves. The film is also a prime example of the Deleuzian “time-image” moments, which, by slowing the rhythm of the film, give the audience time to reflect and think critically, creating “pensive spectators” (in Raymond Bellour’s terms),¹⁵ a technique that Campbell has also associated with post-Westerns like *Bad Day at Black Rock* and *The Misfits*.¹⁶

Although Miller and Van Riper use the term “international Westerns” for films such as *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, it is my contention that this should be considered a post-Western like the group described by Campbell, and that this film is part of a much larger group of post-Westerns produced in different parts of the world that should be conceptualized as *transnational*, rather than *international*. The notion of the transnational in film studies has developed in the last two decades as a response to the limitations of the concept of national cinemas in the context of increasing globalization. Authors such as Andrew Higson, Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, Chris Berry, and Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim have analyzed the different dimensions and implications of the concept of transnationalism in film production, distribution, exhibition, and reception, while many others have used the label so extensively that it has become a sort of buzzword among film studies scholars.¹⁷

However, as Mette Hjort has pointed out, “the term ‘transnational’ does little to advance our thinking about important issues if it can mean anything and everything that the occasion would appear to demand”¹⁸; in a similar vein, Deborah Shaw remarks that “the term ‘transnational cinema’ is lacking in specific meaning in that discrete concepts have been conflated: it does not define an aesthetic approach, a movement

of filmmakers, any specific national grouping, and neither does it separate out areas of study.”¹⁹ This is the reason why both authors have attempted a detailed categorization of transnational cinema. Hjort has focused her efforts on film production and has offered a “typology that links the concept of transnationalism to different models of cinematic production, each motivated by specific concerns and designed to achieve particular effects.”²⁰ She distinguishes between “strong and weak forms of transnationality” and “marked and unmarked transnationality” (13), and proposes categories such as “epiphanic transnationalism, affinitive transnationalism, [and] milieu-building transnationalism” (16). Shaw attempts a more comprehensive categorization of transnational cinema “in an attempt to distinguish between industrial practices, working practices, aesthetics, themes and approaches, audience reception, ethical questions, and critical reception.”²¹ Her categories include “transnational modes of production, distribution and exhibition, transnational modes of narration, cinema of globalisation, films with multiple locations, exilic and diasporic filmmaking, film and cultural exchange, transnational influences, [and] transnational critical approaches,” among others (52).

While the films discussed here will certainly display a weaker and less marked “form of transnationality” (in Hjort’s terms) than a film like *Babel* (dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), transnational almost under every possible category, and they may not qualify as transnational in terms of production, exhibition, or distribution, it is my contention that they should certainly be considered transnational from the point of view of “transnational influences” and “transnational critical approaches,” two categories that “assume intertextuality in that every film made has been consciously or unconsciously shaped by pre-existing cultural products from all over the world” (58). And they certainly fit within the definition provided by Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, for whom transnational films and cinemas are 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.”²² It is also important to note that my use of *transnational* here does not exclude the *national* component, since these post-Westerns draw from transnational sources (the American Western genre) to probe into national identity and conflicts. As Deborah Shaw points out, many films are both national and transnational, but we can “rescue the concept of ‘transnational cinema’ if we break it down into specific categories and apply them carefully in any analysis of film cultures,”²³ which I intend to do in the next two paragraphs.

Transnational post-Westerns use features from the Hollywood Western genre and establish a political relationship between space and national identity, by using locations situated in cardinal points different from the West precisely to question the identities and foundation myths of the countries where they are made. A clear example, as mentioned before, is *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, which questions the identity of the new secular Turkey using the Eastern part of the country. We can find similar instances in some Spanish post-Westerns made by directors like Álex de la

Iglesia (*800 Balas* [800 Bullets], 2002) or Enrique Urbizu (*Cachito*, 1996; and *No habrá paz para los malvados* [No Rest for the Wicked], 2011). As I have argued elsewhere,²⁴ these films actually use the Spanish South (instead of the American West) as a frontier territory to question Spanish identity and myths. Specifically, they confront the orientalist discourse of Spanish exceptionalism (created during the nineteenth century in the War of Independence) with the occidentalist discourse, which locates Spanish identity in its European roots and the eight-century-long war of *Reconquista* against the Muslims. By doing so, these films establish a political analogy between the traditional enemy of the Western genre (Native Americans) and the contemporary enemy of the US-led “war on terror” (Muslims), as shown clearly in *No habrá paz para los malvados*. This is also a typical feature of transnational post-Westerns, which frequently deal with the situation of contemporary “Others”: ethnic or racial minorities (Hazaras versus Pashtuns in Afghanistan, gypsies in Spain), or migrants bringing their own versions of the American Dream or potential nightmares to these countries (Muslims in Spain, Afghans in the United States).

Maria Pramaggiore identifies “questions of race and national identity” as the crucial elements of Westerns that “nonessentialist Westerns” attempted to erode and dissolve (and she actually includes one of the films analyzed here, *Into the West*, in her proposed category).²⁵ As we can see, these questions (of race and national identity) also seem crucial in all the transnational post-Westerns observed so far. Finally, transnational post-Westerns also study the inherent problems and contradictions of traditional conceptions of masculinity as shown in American Westerns: men unable to express their feelings but always ready to use violence, loyal to their male friends but unable to establish roots. As we will see in our case study, Irish boys watching American Westerns in the 1970s also found it difficult to reconcile the patriarchal values of American Westerns with their own national environment.

Irish Transnational Post-Westerns

As Martin McLoone has pointed out, “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.”²⁶ 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 (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,”²⁷ as the real, authentic Ireland as opposed to

Dublin and “the Pale.” A well-known literary example of the contrast between Irish East and Irish West was provided by James Joyce in his story “The Dead,” part of *Dubliners* (1914). In this story Gabriel represents the Anglicized, anesthetized East (he is called a “West Briton” by another character and finds England and the continent much more appealing than the Irish western coast), as opposed to his wife Gretta and her former lover Michael Furey, who represent a West full of life and passion. Paradoxically, the West also represents death and the past, since this is the place where Michael died for love and is buried. But as we find out in the story, this is a West that, like American Westerns, refuses to lie buried: in this story, the dead (like Michael) seem to be much more alive than the living (like Gabriel). The enigmatic final paragraph, where Joyce describes snow falling “all over Ireland . . . falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried,”²⁸ seems to be questioning both Gabriel’s identity (“The time had come for him to set out his journey westward” [242]) and the identity of his country, and, by doing that, to bring promises of rebirth.

In his exploration of the similarities and contrasts between the myth of the American West and the Irish West of playwright John M. Synge, Luke Gibbons distinguishes a key difference in the treatment of the individual and the community: “in the former . . . it is the community that needs the individual, the hero; in the latter, the individual needs the community.”²⁹ He illustrates this assertion with examples from the American Western *Shane* (dir. George Stevens, 1953) and Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907). In contrast, there are two other elements that the traditional representation of the Irish West shares with its American counterpart. On the one hand, McLoone has pointed out that the Irish West “exists as a kind of ideal regenerative environment for the troubled and worried mind of modernity”³⁰; and, on the other, there is an association in both spaces with violence, since the people inhabiting these spaces have a strong “hostility to law and order, and the forces of centralization.”³¹ Another interesting element that McLoone highlights and that seems relevant from a post-Western perspective is that the Irish West is a “haunted landscape.” The open, romantic fields of Connacht or Connemara are empty because of the Great Famine, because of the death and forced emigration of its inhabitants: “it is the memory of this catastrophe and the spectres of those dead . . . which give this landscape a particular resonance.”³²

The two films that helped crystallize 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 the Irish landscape and the West of Ireland cannot be underestimated, for my 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”³³ 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,”³⁴ as opposed to the United States, which represents stressful urban modernity. So frequent are these contrasts in the film that

McLoone tabulates them, signaling “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.³⁵ Particularly important 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 characteristic actor (John Wayne) on a trip to another land of “untamed wilderness”³⁶ in search of his regeneration and redemption. Although, following some auteur theorists (like Peter Wollen³⁷), it could be argued that this is the mark of the auteur rather than the mark of the Western, these are in fact typical traits of many Westerns. As Cawelti has shown, most Western authors “portray the West as a distinctive moral and symbolic landscape with strong implications of regeneration or redemption for those protagonists who can respond to its challenge by recovering basic human and American values.”³⁸

As a matter of fact, *The Quiet Man* was called “a Western made in Ireland,”³⁹ although I think it might 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, as opposed to American, identity. James P. Byrne has detailed the connections of *The Quiet Man* with Westerns in general and in particular with Ford’s *Rio Grande* (1950), a film made one year before with the same cast and for the same studio, which left important “genetic traces” in *The Quiet Man*.⁴⁰ At the beginning of the film, we can see the archetypal Western hero stepping off the train (a characteristic symbol of the arrival of modernization 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 Wright’s recognition of the structural signifiers of the classical Western plot.”⁴¹ Byrne ends up reading the protagonist’s efforts to bring “the social benefits of modern civilization” to the West of Ireland in political terms, relating it to the war in Korea against the communist enemy.⁴²

Although the film apparently reinforces the traditional stereotype of the West of Ireland (rural, bucolic, playfully violent) in contrast with America, several authors, starting with Luke Gibbons in his seminal essay “Romanticism, Realism and Irish Cinema,” have suggested that the film repeatedly raises questions about its own representation.⁴³ McLoone and Barton, for example, have underlined the existence of an ironic, postmodern gaze in some of the most famous scenes of the film (when Wayne’s character contemplates his family ancestral cottage and Maureen O’Hara’s character in an Arcadian setting, as well as in several other framed shots).⁴⁴ While critics like John Hill raise “doubts as to whether the ideological operations of the film are quite as complicated as recent writing has suggested” and highlight the film’s “ideologically restrictive version of ‘Irish’ identity at odds with the complexities of Irish society,”⁴⁵ McLoone links the film with the category of post-Westerns that I am

proposing here when he talks about features like “postmodern irony” and “subversive comedy” in a film that “rather than sustaining a myth . . . attempts to undermine it from the inside.”⁴⁶ Besides, as we will see later, the search for home and identity, a fundamental issue both in Westerns and in *The Quiet Man*, is also one of the key features of post-Westerns as defined by Campbell.

Of course, many other Irish films have dealt with the representation of the Irish West since *The Quiet Man*, and, as McLoone has pointed out, they “considerably revise, interrogate or undermine the dominant romantic and nationalist conceptions of Irish landscape and rural life.”⁴⁷ An example worth mentioning is Neil Jordan’s *The Butcher Boy* (1997), one of the most acclaimed works of the past twenty years and a film very indebted to the Western genre. Indeed the film includes references to Westerns like *The Lone Ranger*, but I would argue that the hypotext of *The Butcher Boy* is broader than the Western, including American popular culture in general, from comic books like *Buck Rogers* to TV series like *The Fugitive*. I will be coming back to the point of American popular culture again, but, at this stage, I would like to highlight the symbolic destruction of the traditional representation of the Irish West that Jordan carries out when showing the drug-induced hallucination of the film’s protagonist and a nuclear explosion that literally blows away the bucolic view of a romanticized and stylized rural Ireland.

***Into the West* (1992)**

Forty years after *The Quiet Man*, and five before *The Butcher Boy*, *Into the West* (1992) plays 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 1990s, like *My Left Foot* (1989), *The Field* (1990), and *In the Name of the Father* (1993). Although written by Sheridan a few years before,⁴⁸ the script laid unproduced for a number of years before it was picked up by a British/US/Irish consortium and directed by an English director. Considering that the film had an American star (Ellen Barkin) cast as an Irish traveler and that its main protagonist and co-producer (Gabriel Byrne) was a Dubliner well-known in the United States, 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 (Rúaidhrí Conroy) and Ossie (Ciarán Fitzgerald), 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.⁴⁹ The boys are fascinated by American Westerns (when they go into a video store, they dismiss all the Westerns because they have “seen all these cowboys”), 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 see everything through the lens of the Western genre, 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].”⁵⁰ 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 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.⁵¹

The film addresses the changing situation of the Travelling community and presents the boys’ father, Papa Reilly, living in a “halting site” on the outskirts of Dublin, a kind of public accommodation provided by local authorities in an effort to control this semi-nomadic social group. 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?” is 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 the 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.”⁵² 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 in a similar way to Native Americans in traditional Westerns: “the travellers are white Others who have been ‘blackened’ by a previous group of white Others, the Irish” (183). As Gabriel Byrne, actor and producer, 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.”⁵³

The film addresses 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. Let us not forget that, as Barton and Gibbons have pointed out, Irish Americans had already been equated with Native Americans in different contexts, like in a crucial scene in John Ford’s *Fort Apache* (1948), where Colonel Thursday berates a young Irish American officer by claiming “you have been guilty of behavior more consistent with an uncivilized Indian than an officer and a gentleman.”⁵⁴ 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 (maybe a bit overquoted by now) from the Alan Parker film *The Commitments* (1991): “Do you not get it, lads? The Irish are the blacks of Europe.” As Stanley 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.”⁵⁵ The Travellers act as a metaphor for a vanishing Irish tradition, as represented in their dances around the fire, in Papa’s Celtic-pattern tattoo,⁵⁶ 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 Oisín westward over the waves to a mythical island across the ocean (called precisely *Tír na nÓg*), where Oisín found the “Land of Eternal Youth.” In one of the final scenes of the film, Ossie (like a contemporary Oisín) 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 who he identifies with his dead mother.

Another important aspect related to Irish identity, and highlighted by Joe 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 “political ‘West’ . . . represented by the visually drab, spiritually desiccated Dublin, where the Travellers have traded in their earlier ruggedly nomadic independence for a sedentary dependency on the state.”⁵⁷ As in Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World*, the title carries a double or triple meaning, and there is a suggestion 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. The fact that the horse is stolen by a businessman and renamed “National Security” is an ironic indication of the neoliberal modernity threatening an identity based on old traditions. 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,” 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.”⁵⁸ 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” (128).

We can see then how, like other transnational post-Westerns, *Into the West* questions Irish identity and looks into national foundation myths. It is also interesting to note that, in one of the versions of the Celtic legend, Oisín meets St. Patrick in *Tír na nÓg*, therefore establishing a connection with the religious element that is also essential to defining 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”), which 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.⁵⁹ 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.”⁶⁰

What is important is to notice that *Into the West* appropriates the generic features and myths of the American Western to turn them round, revise them, and reassert the possibility of an indigenous Irish voice. Orr has studied the film from a postcolonial perspective and has stressed how “the notion of subversive appropriation and revision is certainly integral to the phenomenon of resistance culture,” and 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.”⁶¹ Following Jean-Luc Godard, we could say then that transnational post-Westerns use subversively the Western genre framework as a “Trojan horse,”⁶² 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”⁶³ 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 traveling western routes: the characters in Nicholas Ray’s *The Lusty Men* (1952), John Huston’s *The Misfits* (1961), or Wim Wenders’s *Don’t Come Knocking* (2005) exemplify this search, which is also typical of Westerns; as Wim Wenders has pointed out, “the western . . . is the only genre that deals primarily with the question: where do I belong? No other film genre deals so much with the issues of ‘home’ and ‘identity.’”⁶⁴ This search is in fact one of the main topics of *Into the West* too: the boys go west looking for a real home, as opposed to the towers; the police want to give them a “proper home,” but the “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, which I consider later in more detail, 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 roles 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’ mother,”⁶⁵ 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. The spectral figure of the dead mother and the presence of the snow-covered grave that helps the characters to recover, establish links both with Campbell’s posthumous element of

post-Westerns (with the dead Celtic past now refusing to lie quietly in its tomb) and with James Joyce's vision of the West of Ireland in the last, suggestive paragraph of "The Dead." Although Orr has criticized the gender politics of the film and its "phallogocentric perspective which ultimately limits its anti-colonial critique,"⁶⁶ 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 (Cleary has related the ocean scenes where the boy is rescued by his mother with "the psychic plenitude of a pre-Oedipal condition").⁶⁷ In fact, as Debbie 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."⁶⁸

As suggested before, the film has not only obvious intertextual references but also a very interesting metafictional component, which reaches its climax in a scene where the boys break into a cinema to watch the Western scenes of *Back to the Future Part III* with the horse accompanying them and watching the film, ironically helping the audience to redefine the concept of postmodern gaze.⁶⁹ The world of cinema provides the boys with a third space (neither Dublin nor the Irish West), where they can escape from patriarchal authority⁷⁰ and take refuge from discrimination, displacement, and loneliness. 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."⁷¹ Barton also agrees that "its potential subversiveness is greatly lessened by its own validation of the myth-making process."⁷² McLoone also dismissed the film in the year 2000 (together with John Sayles's *The Secret of Roan Inish* from 1994) for offering "exceptionally traditional remedies to an old problem and mobiliz[ing] the ancient myths of Ireland for an essentially regressive ideology."⁷³ In 2008, however, he qualified this statement, saying that "both films work as forms of Irish 'magic realism,' their denouements re-establishing narrative equilibrium by rescuing their dysfunctional families through the intercession, not of God and the Divine, but of magic and the supernatural."⁷⁴ While Cleary's statement about the ambivalence of the film seems undeniable, if *Into the West* offers an alternative, it is 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 "hijacking" or appropriation of the American West's male "utopian impulse."

***Mickybo and Me* (2004)**

Mickybo and Me (dir. Terry Loane, 2004) picks up many of the features of *Into the West*: once again, we find a couple of boys (Mickybo [John Joe McNeill] and Jonjo [Niall Wright]) in the Irish 1970s, fascinated by Westerns and embarking on a trip away from their homes.⁷⁵ In this case, the boys are specifically obsessed with one particular Western, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (dir. George Roy Hill, 1969), a film they have seen so many times that they know the dialogue by heart. In fact, not only do

they know the dialogue, but they appropriate the roles of the protagonists, call each other “Butch” and “Sundance,” and reproduce whole scenes and sequences from the film—like the famous escape cliff jump into a river, which is replaced by a much shorter jump into the Irish Sea. In one particular instance, the intertextual reference is so powerful that it actually turns into a metafictional strategy: Mickybo/Butch attempts a bank robbery with Jonjo/Sundance waiting outside, but when he gets into the bank, Mickybo becomes Butch, and we see Paul Newman in an insert from the original footage. This wink from the director (Loane, who based his story on the stage play *Mojo Mickybo* by Owen McCafferty) is a good indication of the degree of fascination of the boys with the Western genre and the Newman/Robert Redford film. In their minds, as a contemporary version of Don Quixote’s folly, they have become Butch and Sundance.

A key difference of this film from *Into the West* is the spatial setting: *Mickybo and Me* is set in Northern Ireland at the beginning of “the Troubles.” Following one of the clichés of the Irish as a quarrelsome, violent nation (which we could also see in *The Quiet Man*), the film sets this friendship story in the midst of violence-ripped Northern Ireland. The “wild, wild West” becomes the “wild, wild North,” as an Irish Garda reminds the boys: “We don’t need guns in the South [but] in the North you’ll need plenty.” Mickybo and Jonjo belong to opposing warring communities, and the division between Protestants and Catholics is signaled visually by the crossing of the bridge that separates the neighborhoods and streets of Belfast. The social and economic differences between both communities can be seen in their family environments (Jonjo is the only child of a well-off Protestant family, whereas Mickybo is one of the many children of a nonworking Catholic father we only see at the pub), but the friendship between the boys is apparently stronger than the religious, political, and social divide. The boys see violence and death as a source of excitement, as if they were part of the films that they reenact in their lives: after a terrorist attack that destroys a building, Mickybo tells Jonjo, “You should have seen this place burning. Nearly burned down the whole street. It was pure class.” It is only at the end of the film, when Mickybo’s father is killed by a bomb, that the boys realize the world of Westerns, which they had tried to inhabit, is a fiction and that the sectarian world they live in cannot accept their friendship. Although Jonjo insists on trying to live in their quixotic fictional world (“they couldn’t break our cowboy code of silence”), Mickybo has lost both his father and his innocence: “Yous killed my da, you bastards! Yous fucking killed my da!”

Just like Ossie and Tito had seen everything through the lens of Westerns and found their identity running away “into the West,” Mickybo and Jonjo also look for the solutions to their problems in Westerns: Jonjo is trying to come to terms with his father’s adultery and asks Mickybo if “the teacher lady in the film who taught them all those Bolivian words . . . was also Butch’s wife”; when Mickybo says she was, he starts thinking about the possibility of having “two mums.” Although Jonjo admires his father at the beginning of the film, the events shown in the film make him grow up into

responsible adulthood. Interestingly, the lesson of loyalty learned from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* makes him take sides with his mother and despise his lying, adulterous father. For Mickybo, however, fictional Westerns cannot work: the lesson of loyalty does not apply in the sectarian, violent world of Northern Ireland in the 1970s. As mentioned before, when Mickybo returns “home,” he finds that his father has become the latest victim of sectarian violence. And the dead father tells Mickybo from the grave (in another phantasmagorical grave-visiting scene that reminds us of the posthumous elements of post-Westerns) that he is “the big man now.” As the final scenes unfold, we understand that, for Mickybo, growing into adulthood means accepting his father’s legacy and living by a different code: not the “cowboy code of silence” and divide-crossing “blood brotherhood” but the world of religious hate and division ruling Northern Ireland at the time of “the Troubles.”

Although the boys in this film do not wonder if they are “cowboys or Indians,” Catholics have often been identified with the persecuted minority: the Native Americans. As Cullingford points out, “Britain’s continued presence in the six Counties may explain why minority Northern Catholics frequently identify with the Native American underdogs.”⁷⁶ The Northern boys, however, do not ask the same question because Butch and Sundance are neither “cowboys nor Indians”: “they are outlaws, and, like the Western genre itself, their days are numbered” (182). Following Cullingford’s suggestion, it is interesting to note that both Irish films use the horse as a visual icon, but whereas *Into the West* uses it as a connection with the world of Irish legend and as a rite of passage into manhood, *Mickybo and Me* uses it, first, as a strategy for comic relief, and then, more importantly, as a visual sign that Western codes are outdated and cannot work in a contemporary Northern Ireland. In their escape, the boys ride two beach ponies that are so slow that they find it faster to dismount and run on their feet; on another occasion, a horse that Mickybo is trying to ride refuses to move and ends up relieving himself on the frustrated boy. After these failures to relive the adventures of their horse-riding heroes, he remarks, “No wonder they bloody invented cars.” But what is more relevant here is that this scene is in fact making an explicit reference to two scenes in the original film where Butch uses a bicycle instead of a horse: in the first, he tells Sundance’s girl Etta (Katharine Ross), “Meet the future, the horse is dead,” but in the second, he tosses aside the bike with the words, “The future’s all yours, you lousy bicycle.” *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* is in fact a very peculiar Western, which actually deals with the end of the traditional Western spaces (the protagonists end up leaving the West and going to Bolivia) and the end of the Western itself. As Cullingford has pointed out, the film “highlights the displacement of tradition by modernity; Butch and Sundance are out of date” (182). And so is, in a sense, that film, a postclassical neo-Western that ignores the conventions of the Western to the point that it becomes “a western that’s almost in denial that it’s a western,”⁷⁷ as can be seen in the ironic scenes of Butch taking Etta on a romantic bike ride with the song “Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head” playing in the background. Although they are too young to realize it, the Northern Irish boys are

using role models that are already out of date. Besides, let us not forget that this is also one of the films that the Travellers see in *Into the West*, and that “like Butch and Sundance, the travellers and their horses are anachronisms.”⁷⁸

We have seen then how *Mickybo and Me* deals with the possibility of unconditional friendship in the midst of division, death, and violence. We should also point out that both boys live in broken families: Jonjo’s father is on his way out of an unhappy marriage and incapable of understanding or meeting his son’s needs; Mickybo’s father is an alcoholic, always absent physically or emotionally, who gets killed in the end. These broken families can be connected to *Into the West*’s motherless family, and to a more general trend of parentless families and father/son Oedipal tensions in Irish cinema (from *In the Name of the Father* [1993] to *This Is My Father* [dir. Paul Quinn, 1998]). As McLoone has pointed out, “a recurring motif is the sense that the Irish family is incomplete, with either the mother or the father missing from the drama, with disastrous results in terms of generational conflict.”⁷⁹ He has interpreted this absence not only in social terms as “a crisis of paternity in Ireland” (175) but also as a metaphor “to probe the psychosis of a nation” (223). He follows Luke Gibbons, who defined Ireland as a “First World country, but with a Third World memory”⁸⁰ and uses postcolonial theory to quote Irish singer Sinéad O’Connor when she defines Ireland as the “abused child of history” in her rap track “Famine”: she denies the existence of the Great Famine and presents it as part of a politically motivated destruction of the Irish people by the British Empire. Ging has also talked about “emotionally absent or ineffectual fathers” and how “the fatherless or disaffected young male” of this and other Irish films from the 1990s “seeks to fill the gap with love and fantasy in the form of cinematic and pop cultural fictions.”⁸¹ She provides examples like *The Boy from Mercury* (dir. Martin Duffy, 1996) or *The Butcher Boy*, in which fatherless or motherless young males do not appear to crave traditional masculine values and take refuge in American popular culture, in the form of science fiction, comic books, or Westerns. If, as Barton has said, the family “functions on a symbolic level as a marker of the nation,”⁸² we could establish an analogy between the boys in these films, who find their way out of family trauma through American popular culture, and the country itself, which seems to have found an escape valve out of national traumas caused by emigration and British colonialism in an American popular culture that has left a strong footprint in Irish cinema.

In the particular case of *Mickybo and Me*, as Noel Megahey has pointed out, the broken relationship between the boys is a clear signifier for the situation of both communities in the North:

While it may seem harsh and out of place with the light-hearted, harmless fun that precedes it, the film’s ending is crucial to the film’s point, capturing the sad truth that a political climate which thrives on the divisions in the community will not allow such relationships to prosper—

and each atrocity only marks that division further. . . . The film's tough ending underlines the fact [that] *Mickybo and Me* is not just about the loss of innocence of two young boys—it's about the loss of innocence of a whole generation that grew up in Northern Ireland during this period.⁸³

In fact, the ending of the film is a bit more complex, since it includes a contemporary scene of adult Mickybo reading a letter that Jonjo has sent him from Australia, which makes a reference to the peace process. This attempt at a “happy ending” does not really work and is “unable to reverse the sense of trauma (for both characters and spectators alike) involved in the ending of the boys’ relationship.”⁸⁴ As Hill has noted, the film seems to acknowledge its “difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory ending” by cutting back to an earlier shot of the boys jumping in the style of their cowboy heroes in an attempt to “arrest the flow of time and to hold on to a moment of prelapsarian glee” (243). Mickybo and Jonjo can only find their way out of family and national trauma in American Westerns and in the models of unconditional male friendship offered by this film genre. If “these failing families are emblematic of the wider country, which has lost its identity in the giddy march to modernity,”⁸⁵ *Mickybo and Me* invites a metaphorical reading of the two Northern communities befriending each other through an American model, a reading that could be extended to the field of contemporary politics and seen in the light of the American involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process. If the boys of *Into the West* and *Mickybo and Me* are “emblematic of the wider country,” it seems clear that the adaptation of a genre like the Western, which “expresses the conflict between the adolescent’s desire to be an adult and his fear and hesitation about the nature of adulthood,”⁸⁶ is also a reflection of the anxieties of a young country (albeit with a venerable past) before and during the Celtic Tiger period. Even the name of the magical horse of *Into the West*, which symbolizes the “Land of Eternal Youth,” as mentioned before, could be hinting at the anxieties of “growing up” into “civilization” shared by Western heroes, the heroes of these transnational post-Westerns, and by Ireland itself.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both *Into the West* and *Mickybo and Me* appear to be very interesting examples of transnational post-Westerns applied to a specific national context. They both use the codes and references of genre Westerns to address the roots of Irish identity (both in the West and in the North of the country) and specifically national issues, like the situation of the Travelling community, the uneasy relation with the Celtic past, the Celtic Tiger present, and “the Troubles” of Northern Ireland. In these Irish examples analyzed in detail here, as well as in other films produced in contexts as different as Turkey or Spain, I have identified a number of features that can be

regarded as characteristic of transnational post-Westerns: clear references to the Western genre that take the spectator into a space of dialogue and reflection on the assumptions and values of the genre in a contemporary situation and a new context; the choice of a specific landscape and region in the new environment that is reminiscent in different ways of the American West; the use of that landscape with a political intention—namely to probe into the national identity, foundation myths, and contemporary contradictions of the country where these films are set and produced; the difficulties of integrating racial, ethnic, or social minorities—the “contemporary Others” equivalent to Native Americans; the contradictions derived from the application of traditional models of masculinity (paradigmatic of the original genre) to contemporary national situations, particularly in the context of broken families and the search for a literal or figurative home; and, finally, the contrast between death and regeneration, especially the use of the conventions of a “dead” genre to explore the regenerative possibilities of a particular landscape and context. It is my expectation that this analysis may be complemented by other case studies that will explore the transnational reach of American Studies and how the idea of the American West resonates with other cultures outside the United States.

Notes

This article has been written under the auspices of the research group REWEST, funded by the Basque Government. The research carried out for the writing of the article was also funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (FFI 2014-52738-P).

¹ Following standard usage, this article uses *West* with a capital “W” to refer to a particular region (American or Irish), and *Western* and *post-Western* (with a hyphen and capital “W”) to refer to film genres. Not all quoted sources follow this usage, however.

² See Philip French, *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre* (1973; repr., Manchester, UK: Carcanet, 2005).

³ See Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992); John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1999); Susan Kollin, ed., *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory, Space* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Krista Comer, “New West, Urban and Suburban Spaces, Postwest,” in *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American West*, ed. Nicolas S. Witschi (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 244–60; and Neil Campbell, *Post-Westerns: Cinema, Region, West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).

⁴ In fact, the term *post-regional* is used by different critics for this approach, also related to the concept of *critical regionalism*. See Stephen Tatum, "Spectrality and the Postregional Interface," in Kollin, *Postwestern Cultures*, 3–29; and Susan Kollin, "Introduction: Postwestern Studies, Dead or Alive," in Kollin, *Postwestern Cultures*, ix–xix.

⁵ See Campbell, *Post-Westerns*, 3.

⁶ See Cawelti, *Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, 99–126.

⁷ Campbell, *Post-Westerns*, 31.

⁸ See Jesús Ángel González, "New Frontiers for Post-Western Cinema: *Frozen River*, *Sin Nombre*, *Winter's Bone*," *Western American Literature* 50, no. 1 (2015): 51–76.

⁹ See Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 49–62; and Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (New York: Random House, 1981).

¹⁰ Campbell, *Post-Westerns*, 2.

¹¹ Corey K. Creekmur, "The American Western Film," in Witschi, *Companion*, 407.

¹² Campbell, *Post-Westerns*, 37.

¹³ See Cynthia J. Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Riper, eds., *International Westerns: Re-Locating the Frontier* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2014).

¹⁴ Kollin, "Introduction," xvi–xvii.

¹⁵ See Raymond Bellour, "The Pensive Spectator," *Wide Angle* 9, no. 1 (1984): 6–7.

¹⁶ Campbell, *Post-Westerns*, 88, 104.

¹⁷ See Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 63–74; Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006); Chris Berry, "What Is Transnational Cinema? Thinking from the Chinese Situation," *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no. 2 (2010): 111–27; and Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies," *Transnational Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2010): 7–21.

¹⁸ Mette Hjort, "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism," in *World Cinemas: Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Nataša Durovicová and Kathleen Newman (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009), 12.

¹⁹ Deborah Shaw, "Deconstructing and Reconstructing 'Transnational Cinema,'" in *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema: Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin American Film*, ed. Stephanie Dennison (Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2013), 51.

²⁰ Hjort, "On the Plurality," 15.

- ²¹ Shaw, "Deconstructing," 51.
- ²² Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 432.
- ²³ Shaw, "Deconstructing," 65.
- ²⁴ Jesús Ángel González, "A Genre Auteur? Enrique Urbizu's Post-Western Films," *Hispanic Research Journal* (forthcoming).
- ²⁵ Maria Pramaggiore, *Irish and African American Cinema: Identifying Others and Performing Identities, 1980–2000* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 159.
- ²⁶ Martin McLoone, *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 188.
- ²⁷ Rosa González Casademont, "From the Old to the New World: Cinematic Offers of Spiritually Recuperative Trips to the Emerald Isle," *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, no. 68 (2014): 123.
- ²⁸ James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914; repr., New York: Viking Press, 1982), 242.
- ²⁹ Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork, IE: Cork University Press, 1996), 31.
- ³⁰ Martin McLoone, "Haunted Landscapes and the Irish West," in *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland: Cityscapes, Landscapes, Soundscapes*, by Martin McLoone (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 79.
- ³¹ Gibbons, *Transformations*, 24.
- ³² McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture*, 79.
- ³³ Seán Crosson, "The Quiet Man . . . and Beyond: An Introduction," in *The Quiet Man . . . and Beyond: Reflections on a Classic Film, John Ford and Ireland*, ed. Seán Crosson and Rod Stoneman (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2009), 1.
- ³⁴ González Casademont, "From the Old," 123.
- ³⁵ McLoone, *Irish Film*, 54.
- ³⁶ Liam Burke, "Into the West: The Frontier in Ireland's Celtic Tiger Cinema," in Miller and Van Riper, *International Westerns*, 163.
- ³⁷ Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970).
- ³⁸ Cawelti, *Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, 82.
- ³⁹ Burke, "Into the West," 163.
- ⁴⁰ James P. Byrne, "Ethnic Revenge: A Structural Analysis of the Western Tropes of Twentieth Century Irish-American Assimilation," in Crosson and Stoneman, *Quiet Man*, 31.

⁴¹ Ibid., 34. Byrne uses Will Wright's structuralist study of the Western, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

⁴² Byrne, "Ethnic Revenge," 34.

⁴³ Luke Gibbons, "Romanticism, Realism and Irish Cinema," in *Cinema and Ireland*, by Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons, and John Hill (London: Routledge, 1988), 194–257.

⁴⁴ McLoone, *Irish Film*, 53; and Ruth Barton, *Irish National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2004), 73.

⁴⁵ John Hill, "The Quiet Man: Ford, Mythology and Ireland," in Crosson and Stoneman, *Quiet Man*, 183, 195.

⁴⁶ McLoone, *Irish Film*, 58.

⁴⁷ McLoone, "Haunted Landscapes," 143.

⁴⁸ Ruth Barton, *Jim Sheridan: Framing the Nation* (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2002), 123.

⁴⁹ "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 marginalised 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." Rónán Burtenshaw, "Who Are the Travellers?" *Trinity News*, February 11, 2013, accessed February 25, 2015, <http://trinitynews.ie/who-are-the-travellers/>.

⁵⁰ Gretchen Bisplinghoff, "Travellers and Cowboys: Myths of the Irish West," *VisionQuest: Journeys toward Visual Literacy* (1997): 186.

⁵¹ Mary Rose Walker, *Suicide among the Irish Traveller Community 2000–2006* (Wicklow, IE: Wicklow County Council, 2008), available online at Health Service Executive, https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/Mental_Health_Services/NOSP/Research/suicidetravellercommunity.pdf.

⁵² Elizabeth Cullingford, *Ireland's Others: Ethnicity and Gender in Irish Literature and Popular Culture* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 180.

⁵³ James Clarity, "'Into the West' Taps Irish History," *New York Times*, December 29, 1991, 20.

⁵⁴ See Barton, *Irish National Cinema*, 71; and Luke Gibbons, "From Innisfree to Monument Valley: Irishness and Ritual in John Ford's Westerns," in Crosson and Stoneman, *Quiet Man*, 18.

⁵⁵ Stanley Orr, "Genres and Geographies: Cultural Decolonization in Mike Newell's *Into the West*," *Jouvert* 4, no. 1 (1999), <http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v4i1/orr.htm>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Joe Cleary, “Into Which West? Irish Modernity and the Maternal Supernatural,” in *Literature and the Supernatural: Essays for the Maynooth Bicentenary*, ed. Brian Cosgrove (Dublin: Columba Press, 1995), 155.

⁵⁸ Barton, *Jim Sheridan*, 124, 127.

⁵⁹ Orr, “Genres and Geographies.”

⁶⁰ Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Field Day, 2006), 185. *The Butcher Boy* has Irish musician Sinéad O’Connor play both the Virgin Mary and an archetypal Irish mother in the young protagonist’s visions.

⁶¹ Orr, “Genres and Geographies.”

⁶² Laurence Besnard-Scott, “The Ambivalence of an Imaginary City: Atlantic-Cité in Godard’s USA” (paper presented at the Atlantic Communities International Conference, Vigo, Spain, September 18, 2015).

⁶³ Orr, “Genres and Geographies.”

⁶⁴ Quoted in Campbell, *Post-Westerns*, 240.

⁶⁵ Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*, 188.

⁶⁶ Orr, “Genres and Geographies.”

⁶⁷ Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*, 196.

⁶⁸ Debbie Ging, *Men and Masculinities in Irish Cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 90.

⁶⁹ The choice of this film also seems to be relevant since Marty McFly meets his Irish-born pioneering ancestors in the third part of the franchise, thereby connecting Ireland and the American West in yet another way. Barton has also pointed out the plot similarities between both films and the reinvigorating effect of Tito and Ossie’s night at the cinema: just as in *Back to the Future Part III*, “the children are now prepared to travel back into the past, put the family back together again, defy the law and face the cavalry” (Barton, *Jim Sheridan*, 133). The presence of an Irish population in the West can also be seen in Ron Howard’s *Far and Away* (1992) and Sergio Leone’s *Duck, You Sucker!* (*Giù la testa*, 1971); the latter establishes an interesting connection between the Irish and Mexican revolutions.

⁷⁰ Ging, *Men and Masculinities*, 86.

⁷¹ Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*, 197, 198.

⁷² Barton, *Jim Sheridan*, 133.

⁷³ McLoone, *Irish Film*, 211.

⁷⁴ McLoone, “Haunted Landscapes,” 94.

⁷⁵ Liam Burke calls these two films “modern Irish Westerns” and “Western-inflicted films” (Burke, “Into the West,” 178, 179). In his perceptive analysis, he also includes three other films that show the influence of American popular culture on Irish cinema: *The Butcher Boy* (1997), which I have already mentioned, *My Brothers* (dir. Paul Fraser, 2010), and *The Guard* (dir. John Michael McDonagh, 2011). *The Guard* could actually also be considered a post-Western, particularly if we consider the references to *High Noon* (dir. Fred Zinnemann, 1952) in the last scenes of the film and the Calexico soundtrack. The main intertextual reference is probably *The Quiet Man*, with Don Cheadle as an African American “quiet man.”

⁷⁶ Cullingford, *Ireland’s Others*, 183.

⁷⁷ Marc Lee, review of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*,” *Telegraph*, January 21, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/11359319/Butch-Cassidy-and-the-Sundance-Kid-review.html>.

⁷⁸ Cullingford, *Ireland’s Others*, 182.

⁷⁹ McLoone, *Irish Film*, 168.

⁸⁰ Gibbons, *Transformations*, 3.

⁸¹ Ging, *Men and Masculinities*, 92.

⁸² Barton, *Jim Sheridan*, 124.

⁸³ Noel Megahey, review of *Mickybo and Me*, *Digital Fix*, March 29, 2005, <http://film.thedigitalfix.com/content/id/56644/mickybo-and-me.html>.

⁸⁴ John Hill, *Cinema and Northern Ireland: Film, Culture and Politics* (London: British Film Institute, 2006), 243.

⁸⁵ Burke, “Into the West,” 176.

⁸⁶ Cawelti, *Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, 82.

Selected Bibliography

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.

Barton, Ruth. *Irish National Cinema*. London: Routledge, 2004.

———. *Jim Sheridan: Framing the Nation*. Dublin: Liffey Press, 2002.

Bellour, Raymond. “The Pensive Spectator.” *Wide Angle* 9, no. 1 (1984): 6–7.

Berry, Chris. “What Is Transnational Cinema? Thinking from the Chinese Situation.” *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no. 2 (2010): 111–27.

- Bisplinghoff, Gretchen. "Travellers and Cowboys: Myths of the Irish West." *VisionQuest: Journeys toward Visual Literacy* (1997): 185–89.
- Burke, Liam. "Into the West: The Frontier in Ireland's Celtic Tiger Cinema." In *International Westerns: Re-Locating the Frontier*, ed. Cynthia J. Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Riper, 161–84. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2014.
- Byrne, James P. "Ethnic Revenge: A Structural Analysis of the Western Tropes of Twentieth Century Irish-American Assimilation." In *The Quiet Man . . . and Beyond: Reflections on a Classic Film, John Ford and Ireland*, ed. Seán Crosson and Rod Stoneman, 30–41. Dublin: Liffey Press, 2009.
- Campbell, Neil. *Post-Westerns: Cinema, Region, West*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013.
- Cawelti, John G. *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1999.
- Cleary, Joe. "Into Which West? Irish Modernity and the Maternal Supernatural." In *Literature and the Supernatural: Essays for the Maynooth Bicentenary*, ed. Brian Cosgrove, 147–73. Dublin: Columba Press, 1995.
- . *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland*. Dublin: Field Day, 2006.
- Comer, Krista. "New West, Urban and Suburban Spaces, Postwest." In *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American West*, ed. Nicolas S. Witschi, 244–60. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Creekmur, Corey K. "The American Western Film." In *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American West*, ed. Nicolas S. Witschi, 395–408. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Crosson, Seán. "The Quiet Man . . . and Beyond: An Introduction." In *The Quiet Man . . . and Beyond: Reflections on a Classic Film, John Ford and Ireland*, ed. Seán Crosson and Rod Stoneman, 1–9. Dublin: Liffey Press, 2009.
- Cullingford, Elizabeth. *Ireland's Others: Ethnicity and Gender in Irish Literature and Popular Culture*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.
- Ezra, Elizabeth, and Terry Rowden. *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- French, Philip. *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre*. Manchester, UK: Carcanet, 2005.
- Gibbons, Luke. "From Innisfree to Monument Valley: Irishness and Ritual in John Ford's Westerns." In *The Quiet Man . . . and Beyond: Reflections on a Classic Film, John Ford and Ireland*, ed. Seán Crosson and Rod Stoneman, 13–29. Dublin: Liffey Press, 2009.
- . "Romanticism, Realism and Irish Cinema." In *Cinema and Ireland*, by Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons, and John Hill, 194–257. London: Routledge, 1988.

- . *Transformations in Irish Culture*. Cork, IE: Cork University Press, 1996.
- Ging, Debbie. *Men and Masculinities in Irish Cinema*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- González, Jesús Ángel. "A Genre Auteur? Enrique Urbizu's Post-Western Films." *Hispanic Research Journal* (forthcoming).
- . "New Frontiers for Post-Western Cinema: *Frozen River*, *Sin Nombre*, *Winter's Bone*." *Western American Literature* 50, no. 1 (2015): 51–76.
- González Casademont, Rosa. "From the Old to the New World: Cinematic Offers of Spiritually Recuperative Trips to the Emerald Isle." *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, no. 68 (2014): 119–40.
- Higbee, Will, and Song Hwee Lim. "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies." *Transnational Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2010): 7–21.
- Higson, Andrew. "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema." In *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie, 63–74. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Hill, John. *Cinema and Northern Ireland: Film, Culture and Politics*. London: British Film Institute, 2006.
- . "The Quiet Man: Ford, Mythology and Ireland." In *The Quiet Man . . . and Beyond: Reflections on a Classic Film, John Ford and Ireland*, ed. Seán Crosson and Rod Stoneman, 178–202. Dublin: Liffey Press, 2009.
- Hjort, Mette. "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism." In *World Cinemas: Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Nataša Durovicová and Kathleen Newman, 12–33. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009.
- Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. New York: Viking Press, 1982.
- Kollin, Susan. "Introduction: Postwestern Studies, Dead or Alive." In *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory, Space*, ed. Susan Kollin, ix–xix. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- , ed. *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory, Space*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- Kuhn, Annette, and Guy Westwell. *A Dictionary of Film Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- McLoone, Martin. *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland: Cityscapes, Landscapes, Soundscapes*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008.
- . *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 2000.
- Miller, Cynthia J., and A. Bowdoin Van Riper, eds. *International Westerns: Re-Locating the Frontier*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2014.
- Orr, Stanley. "Genres and Geographies: Cultural Decolonization in Mike Newell's *Into the West*." *Jouvert* 4, no. 1 (1999). <http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v4i1/orr.htm>.

- Pramaggiore, Maria. *Irish and African American Cinema: Identifying Others and Performing Identities, 1980–2000*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Schatz, Thomas. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*. New York: Random House, 1981.
- Shaw, Deborah. “Deconstructing and Reconstructing ‘Transnational Cinema.’” In *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema: Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin American Film*, ed. Stephanie Dennison, 47–66. Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2013.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Atheneum, 1992.
- Tatum, Stephen. “Spectrality and the Postregional Interface.” In *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory, Space*, ed. Susan Kollin, 3–29. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- Walker, Mary Rose. *Suicide among the Irish Traveller Community 2000–2006*. Wicklow, IE: Wicklow County Council, 2008. Available online at Health Service Executive. https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/Mental_Health_Services/NOSP/Research/suicidetravellercommunity.pdf.
- Wollen, Peter. *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. 2nd ed. London: Thames and Hudson, 1970.
- Wright, Will. *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.