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# [ Displacement of the Western: (In)Authentic Locations in *Slow West* (2015) and *Jauja* (2014) ]

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**[Abstract]** *The Western, once the most American film genre relying on authentic American scenery, has become a genre devoid of this quintessential visual articulation of the frontier mythology (Kitses, Carmichael, McMahon, and Csaki). While in classical Westerns it was the American land and nature that allowed for the use of generic conventions such as the pioneering achievement, the Indian story, the outlaw story, with the background theme dichotomy of justice vs. revenge (Carmichael), the Western of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century<sup>1</sup> broadly disregards this traditional space and proposes locations that only seemingly substitute for the American scenery. This paper explores the use of such locations in two contemporary films – Jauja (2014) and Slow West (2015) – and the relevance of these locations in the context of the discussion about post-postmodern anxieties.*

**[Keywords]** *film, the Western, authenticity, post-postmodern, masculinity*

It would be strange to watch John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) or the *Searchers* (1956) without viewing the iconic images of the Monument Valley, or Red Mesa, USA. When watching a Western, one automatically expects to see the authentic American West that is very often manifested by the background country of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, or California. John Wayne would indeed appear less authentic, if not outright displaced, had he been surrounded by Canadian or Australian mountain ranges instead of internationally recognized natural monuments referring to the American experience of living in the frontier community.

This paper explores the use of locations in otherwise almost classic Westerns by looking into two contemporary films of, however, non-American or only partially American production – *Jauja* (2014) and *Slow West* (2015) – films that propose inauthentic locations and revise historical and spatial settings of the genre.<sup>2</sup> I intend to argue that such locations determined by their vastness, blurred boundaries and lack of political and/or social definitions reflect contemporary cultural demand for the universality of model representations with the emphasis on genuine and authentic expression.<sup>3</sup> This argument reflects contemporary discussions about the effects of postmodernity on an individual that have been developed in the works of Gilles Lipovetsky, Robert Samuels, or Alan Kirby, but most notably it refers to Zygmunt Bauman (2007) and his notion of 'liquid modernity' that he uses to characterize post-postmodern Western society. While in 'liquid times,' an individual is compelled to thought-out actions and conscious calculations generated by contemporary urban settings, the two selected films propose alternative settings. The authenticity that the characters in the two discussed films experience is triggered by the land/no-land, place/no-place, in which self-reliance and self-sufficiency are virtues and abilities much suppressed by anxieties generated by the conformity of 'liquid times' as Bauman suggests.

The American landscape was for more than several decades a central location for filming American western films. The classic era of the Western with films like *Shane* (1953), *Stagecoach* (1939), *High Noon* (1952) or the *Searchers* (1956) elaborated the concept of the films' setting – the land and location – to such an extent that the place the films visually represented and depicted became equally supportive of the narrative as the main protagonist. As Deborah Carmichael in her study of the presence of Monument Valley in John Ford's *Stagecoach* explains, the depiction of such locations became something of "a visual prototype for the genre" (212). Views of the original American West representing its most iconic monuments remain crucial for the articulation of the optimism rooted in the American mythology of the frontier the exploration of which defines the whole Western genre (Kitses, *Horizons West* 14). Moreover, despite the fact that prior to the popularization of the views of the American West by John Ford's films the Western was extensively shot in studios (Carmichael 217–218), it was upon viewing the original locations of the region that started complementing characters and narrative to narrative to tie the geography with, ultimately, its history. Carmichael refers to the words of Scott Eyman, John Ford's biographer, to affirm that the Great West as described in Manifest Destiny, is in the classic Western represented as the region where the triumph of man over nature takes place (214). Using locations such as the Colorado Plateau or the area of the Great Plains, the classic Western literally displays the living presence of American natural monuments to refer to the myth and to respond to the issues raised by the frontier while at the same time it uses the land and nature to explore and eventually celebrate heroic masculinity. Authentic images of the West were crucial for the construction of the myth of the frontier and the celebration of the hero who became the archetype for Western heroism that has endured throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (McVeigh 155–162). While

depicting internationally recognizable sites, the traditional narrative of the Western focuses on a strong central male character at odds with the community.

Concerning the Western as a genre, critics often stressed its openness, meaning the diversity of its forms that allowed for the deployment of the genre in different cultural environments.<sup>4</sup> One of Hollywood's most vibrant traditions the Western transcended its original location and, as a set of conventions, has been adopted by other national cinemas all around the world from Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954), a Japanese celebration of the genre itself, to *The Good, the Bad, the Weird* (2008) – a Korean remake of Sergio Leone's epic spaghetti Western *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). As Jim Kitses explains, the Western is grounded in issues of American identity on both the national and individual levels, but its classic structure, stereotypes, and conflicts revolve around the essential binary opposition of wilderness and civilization, “a dialectical scheme with archetypal agents that make the transcendence possible” (*Horizons West* 13). While the individual connects with freedom, honor, self-knowledge, or integrity, nature is often the projection of experience, purity, savagery, but also pragmatism. Enriched by nature's characteristics, making self-sufficiency and self-reliance his dogmas, the main protagonist in the Western is confronted with institutions, restrictions, and social responsibilities that the community produces (Kitses, *Horizons West* 12).

*Jauja* and *Slow West* are also examples of this very contemporary transcendence of the genre. It is notably *Slow West* that seemingly provides a comparable setting to the hero to mimic historically and spatially American locations; however, as will be described, it is only a seeming attempt. In the case of *Jauja*, the notably different location is more prominent. Although it is never openly stated in the film, the reference to Peru or Peruvian landscape is quite strong, as the title of the film also suggests. However, despite this straightforward reference, the way the landscape is visually depicted and used to support the characterization of the hero makes its reference to any politically and geographically determined country less critical. It is the vastness and universality of the space that makes both films unique contributions to the contemporary Western as they are no longer bound to a specific region.

## [1] Slow West

*Slow West* is a romantic ballad produced in 2015, starring Michael Fassbender as Silas, the main male character – a lone hero, a wanderer, or an escapee who left a band of criminals to pursue his own personal interests and perhaps a more lawful way of life as he decides to accompany a young Scottish boy, Jay Cavendish, to help him in the search for his lost lover Rosa. The setting of the film is 19<sup>th</sup>-century frontier America, and the central theme is justice and revenge that encourages the traditional polarization of the characters into good and evil. It is, classically, the story of an outlaw, a reformed criminal, whose actions reclaim his reputation, and his self-reliance and self-sufficiency are eventually rewarded by what is commonly regarded as the highest prize – a woman. The story thus follows a very traditional narrative path to provide secure closure in the form of a restored status quo, where the hero demonstrates his moral authority and power and eventually becomes a husband and father.

The film narrative, however, features several surprising twists to shift the emphasis from the seemingly main character to the real hero (from Jay Cavendish to Silas). The transition can be read as a Jungian journey of a boy, who, by encountering obstacles, helpers, and other agents

grows into a man; the audience first learns about the purpose of the journey and the motivations of the young Jay, and only later on when Jay encounters his ‘second King’,<sup>5</sup> the supportive, authoritative, but still reluctant Silas, the narrative places all emphasis onto him to make him the real hero of the story. Silas is a lone character with no real purpose in his life, so when he encounters the young, innocent and well-mannered Jay, who demonstrates extraordinary determination to reach his goal, Silas joins him to gradually embrace that moral authority Jay possesses. The narrative makes the encounter inevitable for Silas’s journey to betterment, as he receives numerous opportunities to prove his loyalty to Jay and demonstrates his genuine interest in advancing his moral authority, and continues to help the boy at his own expense (e.g. when Silas saves the young Jay after he had left him to pursue his goal alone, but was tricked and robbed by a stranger). Together with his physical strength that helps both the men overcome real obstacles and survive several bandit attacks, Silas manifests a combination of qualities that prove not only efficient for survival but also crucial to eventually determine his location (find his place on earth). As Kitses defines, it is the agency and action, his transcendental character, that make the Western hero the defender of family and community (“All That” 27). The tragic death of Jay, Silas’s successful journey marked by his transformation, and the final reward in the figure of Rose – the girl Jay had been looking for – as well as the children that he seems to ‘pick up’ along the journey and suggest they all have become a family, all this advances the preoccupation of the narrative with the demonstration, if not outright celebration, of the prevailing post-feminist model masculinity<sup>6</sup> aimed at contemporary Western men.

What is, nevertheless, specific about this Western, is how it regards its locations; not just real filming locations, but also those idealized locations that are supposed to represent the American landscape and support the idea of the American wilderness in contrast to the frontier community. When it comes to the setting itself, it is interesting to observe that the historical setting prevails over the geographical one. Except for a few scenes that depict wild nature by presenting scenery, Americanness is mainly demonstrated via characters – from the main character through the band of criminals to the encounter of what has been left from the battlefield with Indian Americans. The only scenic portrayal of the American landscape comes during the very last scene with the depiction of a wooden house, the style of which very strongly resembles the architecture of the frontier community. In this house, or rather, in the fields around the house, the hero accomplishes his goal that is both a social and moral good as he manages to protect his family from bandits and criminals.

Traditionally, in the grand Western, towns, houses, farms, or objects related to life in a community would be deployed by the narrative to suggest a restriction of the hero’s freedom, repression or even impotence (Kitses, “All That” 25). The vastness of the specific landscape of American plains or deserts thus confronted this repression by providing infinite land and the freedom the hero eventually sought and escaped to. The cabin in *Slow West*, however, does not function as a restriction of the hero’s freedom, or impotence, but rather the very opposite; it is the promise of the final location where he encounters and embraces his wife and children. The hero claims the location as the family becomes his final destination.

Regarding the scenery and locations in which this film takes place, the film does not even try to mimic the American landscape. It provides vistas of a country that does not have to be defined geographically because the narrative benefits from its historical designation that is much more significant. The country and the affiliation of the hero to the country no longer matters or does not matter as much as the characterization of the male hero in search of his location

in contemporary society. Silas's character reflects Zygmunt Bauman's characterization of the vagabond whom he historically places to the pre-modern period, accusing him of being a curse to modernity by "being masterless (out of control, out of frame, on the loose)" and a reason behind the grand search for new, state-managed order in the Victorian period ("From Pilgrim" 28). Silas resembles Bauman's vagabond by being unpredictable, having "no set destination" (28) apart from the one the narrative makes him adopt to eventually fulfill the convention of strong closures. But the fact that the real filming location of the *Slow West* was New Zealand, and that the film makes this different geographical location evident, only adds to the emphasis of Silas's wandering nature, of a life on the move to escape locally based control. Bauman further suggests that postmodernity "reversed the ratio" of the proportion of the displaced, from fewer vagabonds earlier to the contemporary state where there are more vagabonds than those who are "forever settled" because they too "wake up to find the places (in the land, places in society and places in life)" (29). Like the vagabond, Silas has no places to which he could belong, because such places ceased to be accommodating for contemporary Western men (29).

The emphasis that shifts from the authenticity of the location and history, once triggered by the most authentic location of the American West, to the authenticity and intensity of man (self), now triggered by the inauthentic landscape, is evident in this film. Nature or wilderness here has a protective function, and it serves as a habitat for the hero and characters in which they undergo a cleansing process once the community proves fatal or corrupt.<sup>7</sup> When they leave the community, they prosper along the frontier, which is demonstrated primarily by Silas's reformed character. Also, even though in the company of Jay, Silas remains a reluctant Western hero, which is typically represented by the lack of speech, his occasional departures from Jay to stay alone, and agency when he refuses to explain his further actions that take Jay by surprise.

In this setting, one of the most typical qualities of the Western hero is self-reliance. This is a quality that only lone characters can prove, and one that leads to the process of self-acceptance. As Den Uyl points out, self-reliance is not an action performed as a result of isolation from others, but in the Western, it is an action willing to be separated from others. If there is no other way to remain faithful to oneself, the hero must be separated from the community (47). The hero is alone because there are no real companions for him; thus, he is driven by the pursuit of self-acceptance. *Slow West* uses its ingenuine geographical location and landscape to emphasize this pursuit by providing ground for the character to fully demonstrate his authenticity in relation to what can be understood as universal. Wilderness is a space that is most authentic because it is the most original, genuine space for life, precisely because it is not defined by boundaries established by society. As if this space was a metaphor of the 'going-back-to-the-roots' process because encountering one's real roots means confronting and exercising one's authenticity.

Knight and McKnight suggest that Westerns heavily rely upon generic formulas, but they too provide the opportunity to study current and historical perspectives on the role of nature in nation-building (2010). What *Slow West*, however, is proposing via the emphasis on nature and wilderness in its narrative, is that perhaps the concept of national location, in this case, Americanness, or Westernness, does not have to be defined by its geographical location. With the emphasis on man, his specific geographical location loses importance in the context of recent post-postmodern debate. The critical designation of the space seems to be a wilderness, far from "the urban space that has become physically close but socially and economically distant" (Bauman, *Liquid Times* 73). In other words, Silas seems to represent contemporary men affected by the ingenuity of space. Once, as Bauman, Lipovetsky or Kirby propose, postmodern

men began to be affected by anxieties generated by the intensity of the post-postmodern world, inflicted by extraterritorial realities experienced in the urban setting “achieved through, manifested in and sustained by means of virtual connectedness” (Bauman, *Liquid Times* 73), the truly original and authentic space without socially established boundaries becomes their alternative. Also, as Bauman proposes, vast area poses no restrictions on the limits of segregation; therefore, no spatial segregation is needed, and lines thus disappear (*Liquid Times* 73). And this is how *Slow West* treats its geographical setting, in reference to the coded aesthetics that promises freedom, openness, redemption, and reinvention but stripped of the American pathos to offer universal model masculinity that embraces post-feminist characterization.

## [2] Jauja

*Jauja* is a film that is even more universalistic in the proposal of the masculine model, yet more straightforward in its disregard of physical space or geographical region. *Jauja*, an art-house Western as many reviewers labeled it, was produced in 2014 and was presented as an auteur film by Lisandro Alonso. The central theme that the story develops is the search of a lost (kidnapped) daughter following a similar narrative development as the famous *Searchers* (Ford 1956). The surface structure of the film suggests the justice and revenge theme as Gunnar Diensen, the main male character (played by Viggo Mortensen) pursues the alleged abductor of his daughter. The film is also partially preoccupied with topics such as pioneer achievement demonstrated by the status of Gunnar Diensen, a Danish explorer, whose clear intentions to establish a company in this country were the primary motivation for his exploratory voyages into this part of the world. However, further business intentions are not revealed in the film as the father abandons the known territory to pursue the lost daughter into “the land of unknowingness” (Atkinson 52). The story also seems to touch on the topic of the Indigenous story, which in the grand Western is carried out by the deployment of Native American characters commonly represented in a rigidly binary fashion.<sup>8</sup> What is, however, significant for this film too, is the way it treats its locations. Despite the straightforward hint given in its title, the location seems even less clear than the location in *Slow West*. The epigraph introducing *Jauja* at the Cannes festival also proposes a very blurred concept of its setting: “[...] *Jauja* was a mythological land of abundance and happiness... People were undoubtedly exaggerating, as they usually do. The only thing that is known for certain is that all who tried to find this earthly paradise got lost on the way” (*Festival*).

Similarly to *Slow West*, *Jauja*'s historical setting is the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though the specific historical period remains unclear, the clothing and historical setting suggest a similar location, so, too, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century country, but the country itself is never openly identified. From the language that is used in the film – most of the time it is Spanish, but also Danish and English – and from the depiction of the natives the audience can assume it is one of the South American countries (and as the title of the film suggests it is very probably Peru). Also, as we learn from several interviews with Lisandro Alonso, the original intention was to place an English explorer in the South American setting to refer to Anglo-Argentinian history, but this initial attempt was abandoned for a Danish character, and specifically for Viggo Mortensen, as the Danes had no colonial aspirations in this region (Atkinson 52). Therefore, the reference to a dreamlike, and historically, geographically and politically unidentified country is evident as Alonso decides for a historically inaccurate combination to fictionalize the story even more. The choice of language

in the film also suggests the attempt for a dreamlike quality of the film. The use of an “exotic language” such as Danish, in a South American setting indeed contributes to the confusing identification of the setting.

The film, among many other countries, co-produced also by Denmark, demonstrates very strong existential features typical for Scandinavian cinematography, which becomes evident during the second half of the film as the search for the lost daughter turns into explorations into the self. Intensified by this unidentifiable land that is presented onto the viewers as an unknown desert existing outside the realm of civilization, as a land beyond time, the narrative soon turns its sole emphasis onto the lone and isolated character, Gunnar Dinesen, and his struggle to re-define his existence as he is trying to reconcile with his lost daughter.

The way *Jauja* regards its physical setting – space and location – is more unconventional concerning existential influences of Scandinavian cinematography. The vast emptiness that surrounds the hero most of the time transforms in the second half of the film into a genuinely unidentifiable land not only outside the realm of civilization but also outside the realm of one’s understanding of geographical location. However, with this transformation into a limitless (both spatially and temporarily) space, the hero enters a world in which civilization loses its protective function to experience the intensity and authenticity of the self. Similarly to the cowboy, who in the grand Western seeks a transformative experience in the desert-like or mountainous region that surrounds him, Gunnar also enters this absurd space to re-define himself. This space, thus, similarly as in *Slow West*, functions as an instigator, or an arena. Once Gunnar understands that he has lost track of his daughter, he also understands he has lost track of his own location and is further driven only by the pursuit of self-acceptance.

Similarly to *Slow West*, Gunnar is alone because there are no companions for him. The only companion he had, his daughter, has left him and thus the social location that has up to now been that of fatherhood (parenthood) no longer matters. With this unlimited environment and unidentifiable locations that *Jauja* proposes, the film also presents an alternative setting to contemporary urban locations. In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world that is “increasingly shaped and reshaped by global processes,” where “increasingly local politics” (Bauman, *Liquid Times* 83) takes place, *Jauja* proposes the environment without limits, but which, perhaps paradoxically generates greater authenticity than the reality. Bauman echoes the words of Edmond Jabés, when he states that one “do[es] not go to the desert to find identity but to lose it, to lose your personality, to become anonymous... And then something extraordinary happens: you hear silence speak” (“From Pilgrim” 20). Because the desert, or wilderness, is the “primal and bottom-line freedom” characteristic for the absence of bounds (20). So when Gunnar loses the sense of belonging to a location, becoming socially homeless, he is forced to experience the intensity of authenticity of being, to experience freedom without boundaries whether historical, geographical or social.

A particular feature of all of Alonso’s films is that they are extremely quiet. *Jauja* is one of those few films that include dialogue, and when the director was approached to explain why he abandons dialogue in his films, he replied that he did not think humans communicate well (Lambert). The author of the question also concludes his interview by agreeing with Alonso that “in our present age when everyone has to be ‘connected’ all the time, doing more than one thing – the chatter, the noise, can be maddening. Encountering the work of Lisandro Alonso makes me recall the feeling of lying on the floor and listening to a record as a teenager: not texting or talking or answering emails, simply listening” (Lambert). The universe that Alonso proposes creates a direct alternative to the “maddening” realities of contemporary western society.

### [3] Conclusion

The location of both of the stories is defined by the confinement from civilization, even temporarily as in the case of *Slow West*, and the characteristic features of both heroes – reluctance, loneliness, social impotence demonstrated by the at times complete absence of speech – suggest qualities that are, according to Lipovetsky, demonstrations of how postmodernism and its economic intensification of the power of the market and consumerism influence individuals.<sup>10</sup> This intensification, as Lipovetsky elaborates, is a demonstration of the ‘hyper’ era that he suggests is a successor of the postmodern age in which individuals find themselves under the pressure of the need to be flexible, to react, to be permanently prepared to change (Lipovetsky 160). But more than that, individuals are affected by the pleasure associated with change, “the desire to intensify and reintensify the course of daily life” that results in an endless cycle of emotional rejuvenating experiences generated by hyper-consumption (Lipovetsky 164). This focus on consumerism, as Lipovetsky further explains, generates extreme forms of individualism where pathological problems, psychological disturbances, and excessive behavior are the most common demonstrations of the pursuit (or maximization) of interests in most spheres of life (that is education, sexuality, religion, politics, etc.). As Bauman also contributes, it is the fragmentariness and discontinuity of postmodern relationships along with the narrowness of focus and purpose, and shallowness of contact that spur contemporary demand for a truly authentic encounter with life within the realm of individual experience (“From Pilgrim” 34).

The journey of both the heroes – Silas, as well as Gunnar Diensen – is defined by the escape of civilization into the wilderness as they lose connection to the geographical location, they become wanderers due to the inability to find places to which they could belong and would prove accommodating. While the setting in *Slow West* is pre-defined as a generic formula, the lack of definition of location in *Jauja* allows for greater explorations into the interaction of an individual with the setting; but both the locations predestine the heroes to long to find their roots and history. Silas’s confrontation with his own past results in the regeneration of moral values and authority that serves as a form of rehabilitation of the Western man in society once he enters the cabin and encounters his wife and children towards the end of the story. Gunnar’s confrontation with the past, or rather with the self, takes place in a cave in the middle of nowhere, in which he happens to confront the future (which is the moment in the narrative when absurdity starts prevailing over realism). In both cases, be it the wild forest or a land/no land signifies the demand to return to the most authentic – original – space, which is a feature that Lipovetsky identifies as a result of the impact of hypermodernism (165). The heroes search for the most original space once the urban setting has become space – physically close but socially and economically distant (Bauman, *Liquid Times* 73).

While *Slow West* is more conventional in the use of wilderness and nature, assuming the victory of men over nature, where nature takes the function of a transformative experience through which the hero manages to restore the status quo and find his location, *Jauja* is much more unconventional. The film leaves the hero stranded in a land/no land, where wilderness becomes a hideout when civilization loses its protective function. This is the arena in which the authenticity of the self is more relevant than the authenticity of the location. These two contemporary Westerns seem to explore archetypal and existential aspects of the frontier, but do not tie this experience to a specific point in American history, hence making it more universal, adjustable to the current demands of the main protagonists.<sup>11</sup> The region of the West once

so omnipresent in the grand Western is in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century also abandoned as the myth of the frontier is no longer viable, simply because it ceased to be an issue ever since the new frontier became Vietnam, the American government, or the family that brought forward a different kind of cowboy.<sup>12</sup> Influenced by movements challenging the position of man in society, the cowboy experiences the return on screen, but with a slightly different destiny than that of the national. The focus is, under the influence of postfeminism, on the destiny of man when the wilderness becomes his escape or hideout from the community (society) – space where authenticity is experienced and exercised. This form of experience in American cinema proves to have a healing effect on the contemporary hero, and if not healing, then definitely cleansing.<sup>13</sup>

## [Notes]

<sup>1</sup> Neo-Western, or post-Western are also terms that describe the continuation of the Western genre in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century. Both refer to the revival and extension of the set of conventions that the classic Western established. However, in this essay, I prefer to use the term 21<sup>st</sup>-century Western to suggest a shift in the emphasis that may also be a result of a broader tendency in American cinema.

<sup>2</sup> The topic of (in)genuine locations in relation to these two specific films – *Slow West* and *Jauja* – caught my attention during a conference focused on Space, Place, and Location, and which allowed me to consider the aspect of the Western genre that I had previously disregarded – its location. It also allowed me to have a closer look at these two specific films that I would not otherwise consider in relation to the study of the American Western, precisely because these films are and are not American at the same time. It is, therefore, the use, or rather disregard, of genuine location, space, land, country, and the focus on its alternative setting concerning these two specific films that is in my interest in this essay. It is also a preliminary exploration of what hopefully becomes a more extensive study of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century American Western films.

<sup>3</sup> The term authenticity is used in this essay to refer to originality. In reference to land it is used to describe real locations of American territories that became quintessential for the depiction of the West in American cinema. The term is, however, also used to refer to the authenticity of experience described by Zygmunt Bauman in his essay *From Pilgrim to Tourist* (2011) as the encounter of “primal, bottom-line freedom” (20), which suggests the kind of experience unrestricted by the social norms of modern life. It can be argued that the concept of authenticity in the light of postmodern debate loses its significance, however, it is not the intention of this essay to investigate the concept itself and its position in contemporary postmillennial discussion about cultural products, but the focus is solely on the shift from the emphasis on authentic locations to what is proposed by Gilles Lipovetsky, Zygmunt Bauman and Allan Kirby, among others, the experience of life outside the realm of postmodernity.

<sup>4</sup> Jim Kitses in *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood* outlines how the Western obtained “greater openness and diversity in a multicultural, post-modern era” (3).

<sup>5</sup> The term second king is used to refer to a character who, in Jungian interpretation, takes the place of an absent father and temporarily substitutes for his authority. The main function of the second king is to motivate courage and enhance moral qualities to further action and agency of the boy. Interestingly, in *Slow West*, the boy seems to be Silas, the man in the story, who is highly influenced by the moral qualities of Jay, who never gets the chance to mature into a man.

<sup>6</sup> The model of masculinity influenced mainly by the second wave of feminism, where men are featured as nurturers, associated with family and family-relations. For more on this see e.g., Bruzzi Stella, *Bringing up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Hollywood*. London: BFI, 2006; or Faludi Susan, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Corruption of society is demonstrated explicitly by the reason Rose had to flee Scotland for America as she was involved in the accidental killing of a lord in self-defense from sexual assault. She escapes, but there is a reward announced for her capture. Wild territories along the American frontier thus present a hideout from the corrupted society that no longer protects the innocent and punishes villains, but it is the innocent who get punished and villains who are protected and rewarded.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Slotkin examines the place of Native American characters in the American narrative in psychological terms as a symbol of the American libido, where the libido is the “source of creative, life energy and power in and over the natural wilderness” (560). In many classic but also post-classical Western films the presence and use of Native American characters could be interpreted in these terms, though with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Western, this seems to be less appropriate of an interpretation as the Native American element ceases to be represented within the rigid boundaries of the Other.

<sup>9</sup> Alonso, in an interview in 2015, explained that he favors the dreamlike quality in the film. To have the majority of the dialogue in the film in Danish was, according to Alonso, appealing because “no one speaks the language”. Viggo Mortensen, who also participated in the interview, corrected him by reminding that “five million people do”, to which Alonso replied that they are all in Denmark. The full interview is available in *In These Times*. (Atkinson Michael, “We are Not in Denmark Anymore”, *In These Times* [April 2015]: 52).

<sup>10</sup> For further information, see Gilles Lipovetsky, *Time Against Time, or The Hypermodern Society*. In *Supplanting the Postmodern*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> There is already a body of Western films produced primarily during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century that seem to be preoccupied with the Western hero and his commitments to parenting, or some kind of parent/child relationship, which suggests the emphasis on the representation of the man as a nurturer, and which also demonstrates the engagement of the narrative to deal with the inner struggles of the hero. Some of these films are for example *The Rider* (Zhao 2017), *Hell or High Water* (Mackenzie 2016), *The Revenant* (Inarritu 2015), or *Django Unchained* (Tarantino 2012).

<sup>12</sup> New model representations of the American man that succeeded the cowboy were notable, especially during the Reaganite era when the cult of the body was evident. With films like *Rambo*, the man ostensibly displays his physical qualities that prevail over the intellectual ones. Further decades brought forward many other more or less intellectually struggling men as they tried to defeat internal threats to society, or re-establish their position in the family.

<sup>13</sup> This cleansing effect of nature was best represented in *Brokeback Mountain* (Lee 2005), a film in which nature and wilderness is literally a hideout from social restraints and repression, and space where the American cowboy experiences real-life intensity denied to him by the community. At the same time, the film seems to disregard the importance of the geographical location on the authentic American experience that the cowboy conveys.

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