

The Way of the Dog: *Truman* through the Cosmopolitan Lens

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Cesc Gay's career as writer-director has been one of the most consistent in 21st Century Spanish cinema, as much in industrial as in thematic and formal terms. After the experiment of *Hotel Room* (1998), a film in English co-directed with Argentinian Daniel Gimelberg, and, alongside his work for television and, recently, the theatre, Gay released his next six feature films at exact intervals of three years: *Krámpack* (2000), *En la ciudad* (*In the City*, 2003), *Ficció* (*Fiction*, 2006), *V.O.S.* (2009), *Una pistola en cada mano* (*A Gun in Each Hand*, 2012) and *Truman* (2015). These films tell stories of middle-class characters, mostly set in the city of Barcelona. Produced by Messidor Films in the first three cases and Imposible Films in the last three, the movies have shared a stable group of collaborators, including Marta Esteban, executive producer of both companies and producer of all the films, co-writer Tomàs Aragay, director of photography Andreu Rebés, editor Frank Gutiérrez, and composers Joan Díaz and Jordi Prats. Actors like Eduard Fernández, Javier Cámara, Leonor Watling and Ágata Roca also have a way of turning up in the stories. Well made in a transparent classical style and with steadily strong performances, but too often ignored at the box office, the films have constructed a recognizable world populated by familiar characters that often share chronic difficulties to communicate their feelings and occupy mostly urban spaces that are as central as the human figures.

Truman is Gay's most successful film to date, both in terms of box-office returns and public recognition, as will be seen below. With Fernández and Roca in secondary roles, Cámara plays one of the protagonists alongside Ricardo Darín, the most popular Argentinian actor of his generation, who had already featured in *Una pistola en cada*

mano.¹ *Truman* is an Argentinian-Spanish co-production set mostly in Madrid, a first for Gay but not for Darín. [Image 1. *Truman*]

In the long list of Argentinian-Spanish co-productions that have proliferated in the last twenty years or so, Darín is the most familiar icon. The face of some of the most internationally successful Argentinian films of recent years, including *El mismo amor, la misma lluvia* (Juan José Campanella, 1999), *Nueve reinas* (Fabián Bielinsky, 2000), *El hijo de la novia* (Juan José Campanella, 2001), *XXY* (Lucía Puenzo, 2007), *El secreto de sus ojos* (Juan José Campanella, 2009), *Un cuento chino* (Sebastián Borensztein, 2011), and *Relatos salvajes* (Damián Szifron, 2014), among others, he has appeared in around twenty co-productions between Argentinian and Spanish companies, many of them films with stories set in Argentina, but increasingly also in Spain. For critics like Dona Kercher and Clara Garavelli, Darín has become a star of Spanish cinema.² As such, he is now, according to Marvin D'Lugo, a cultural object that destabilizes national boundaries and contributes to the construction of imaginary transnational communities with shared cultural values.³ In the context of Spanish-Argentinian cinematic history, Darín is by no means the only such cultural object in recent decades, with actors like Héctor Alterio, Cecilia Roth, Federico Luppi, Leonardo Sbaraglia, Juan Diego Botto, Darío Grandinetti and others showing a similar capacity to move to and fro between the two national industries. Darín's, however, is a special case. According to *Truman*'s producer Marta Esteban, he is the only contemporary actor in Spain whose name alone can attract significant numbers of spectators to the cinema regardless of the film he is in, a brand name that is comparable only to that of certain directors, like Pedro Almodóvar.⁴ Moreover, considering that, unlike Alterio, Roth, Luppi or Diego Botto, he never drops his Argentinian accent and identity, he has fully incorporated a transborder dimension as a crucial part of both his success in Spain and his international success:

rather than play characters of different nationalities, he is always Argentinian—although a Spanish citizen since 2006—and in stories set in Spain, he is, literally, an Argentinian in Spain.⁵ As Garavelli explains, his special place in the Spanish-speaking film industry is part of a collective Hispanic imaginary at times of intense mobilities between both countries. For this author, the socio-political context of the early years of the 21st Century with a constant migration of Argentinians to Spain, as well as a shared past of social, political, cultural and economic relations, underpins his success as a star in Spain,⁶ an embodiment of the most recent period of a fraught colonial and post-colonial history. As Darín's star power became consolidated and expanded, it accrued more complex meanings related to the creation of the intricate transnational identities that characterize both contemporary culture and contemporary cinema. This transnational dimension is a central ingredient in *Truman*, and one that crucially contributes to the psycho-cultural background of the world of the film.

In the film, Darín's potential to break transoceanic barriers is framed within a specific geographical space, which both defines his part in the story and is transformed by his presence. *Truman* ostensibly tells the story of what may be the last encounter of close friends Julián (Darín) and Tomás (Cámara), when the latter, who lives in Montreal, comes to Madrid to visit his friend, who is dying of cancer and has decided to stop his medical treatment. The movie situates this male melodrama of contained but strong emotions in Las Salesas, a small area of Madrid that is constructed as a cosmopolitan space at the intersection of the global and the local. In this article I would like to discuss the cultural meanings generated by placing this transnational star in this particular location—I want to look both at and past Darín, at the urban landscape behind him. I will use cosmopolitan theory as a framework for the analysis of the symbolic-ideological space that the film creates out of the real places in which the action is set

and out of the various journeys inscribed in the cinematic identities of its main authorial voices. In more general terms, I will place this construction of space as part of a contemporary Hispanic American imaginary which, originating in industrial practices, financial motivations, and a vaguely defined common cultural space, attempts to supersede colonial history and replace it by contemporary social realities related to transnationalism, migrations, and various other types of mobilities, both physical and virtual, across the Atlantic Ocean, with Darín at their symbolic center.

The Rise of Latin-American Co-Productions

Luisela Alvaray argues that in co-productions national film cultures become fluid and borders dissolve through the combination of economic alliances and fictional stories.⁷ In the Latin-American film world the launch in 1997 of the Programa Ibermedia boosted these collaborations and contributed to making Spanish- and, to a lesser degree, Portuguese-speaking spectators increasingly familiar with the transnational cultural imaginary mentioned above. As José Manuel Moreno Domínguez argues, Ibermedia is inscribed within the logic of contemporary cultural industries which, on the one hand, display the power to construct new common imaginaries and create links and feelings of belonging, and, on the other, constitute an emergent economic sector of great market value through its capacity to mobilize capital, people and cultural goods. He argues that, in view of Ibero-American countries' alarming dependency on external audiovisual products, mostly from Hollywood, the need to open a Latin-American audiovisual space, one that favored local productions and made their distribution and exhibition easier, had become evident at the end of the last century.⁸ Ibermedia was created in this context, with a noticeable increase in co-productions between participant countries.

Partly as a consequence of this program, co-productions between Latin America and Spain have proliferated in the last twenty years, particularly, although by no means exclusively, those between Argentina and Spain. According to the information gathered by Alvaray, there have been 162 co-productions between the two countries between 2000 and 2014, the number growing all the time. Public institutions and independent producers in both countries have played important roles in the strengthening of these industrial ventures, generating, in Alvaray's words, "a cinematic currency that is at the same time local and transnational".⁹ Within the Argentinian-Spanish context, the national is apparently replaced by a shared space, or rather, a series of shared spaces within the scenarios of individual films—to quote Alvaray again, "a contact zone subject to the labor that produced it and the imagery created within the boundaries of two or more singular national cultures".¹⁰

On the other hand, some voices have been raised alerting about the power relations between countries and national industries produced by Ibermedia and related efforts. Moreno Domínguez mentions the concerns of those who criticize the dominant role of Spain in the program. For Chilean Rodrigo Díaz for instance, Ibermedia may be a potent channel for the Spanish industry to sell its products in the Latin-American country without the desirable reciprocity.¹¹ Similarly, Miriam Ross reminds us that Spain controls the fund: it contributes a much larger portion of the budget than the rest, the offices are in Spain and the majority of staff are Spanish. Besides, co-productions of any country with Spain turn out to be more attractive in industrial terms than with any other country. The result is, for this author, a situation of unequal power relations "in which different cultural contexts come into contact yet modes of dependency and dominance still operate."¹²

In general, given the proliferation of industrial and social agents involved in the production of cinema in Latin America and Spain it is advisable, according to Alvaray, to think of each film's production and distribution history individually, each movie a node where various forces converge that in one way or another destabilize the national paradigm.¹³ *Truman* was initially conceived within Imposible Films like earlier Gay movies but, when the part of Julián became attached to Darín, a co-production with Argentinian capital was felt suitable. At this point, while Imposible remained the major partner, Buenos-Aires based BD Cine, led by director Daniel Burman and scriptwriter-producer Sergio Dubcovsky, joined the project with a relatively small but still sizable part of the investment. In this case the venture was financially and artistically successful: at the time of writing, for an estimated budget of €3,600,000, the film had made €3,500,000 in Spain, €2,100,00 in Argentina and €7,500,000 worldwide (just over \$9,000,000 according to Box Office Mojo, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=truman.htm>). It had won many accolades, including the most important Goya Awards in 2016: best film, best director, best screenplay, best lead actor (Darín) and best supporting actor (Cámara).

Esteban goes on to explain that co-productions between different countries are often problematic, particularly in the case of *auteurist* cinema, because the frequent requirements of the director to work with a regular team often clash with the demands of the different partners and the regulations of the different countries involved. In the case of *Truman*, the editor—Pablo Barbieri—and one of the composers—Nico Cota—were Argentinian, and post-production was also carried out in Buenos Aires. The film was also financed, like most contemporary Spanish films, by an A.I.E. (agrupación de intereses económicos)—a group of private investors that put down capital in return for tax exemptions (and eventually sometimes a share in the benefits)—set up specifically

for *Truman*, and by a long list of official organisms and private companies from both countries, including Spain's ICAA, TVE, TV3, Canal +, Audiovisual S.G.R and the Generalitat government, and Argentina's INCAA, Telefe and Fox +, while a part of BD's share in the production was sold to Argentinian company Kramer & Sigman. As with many other Ibero-American co-productions, the Programa Ibermedia also backed the production. Navigating among all of these players often proves tricky while the banks cash in on the interests of the credits against delayed subsidies. Yet, as Esteban summarizes, the current film industry demands this complexity: some films can simply not be made without the intervention of capital from several countries, and often, as in the case of *Truman*, the results are worthwhile both in artistic and financial terms.¹⁴ At the same time, this proliferation of funding sources is an important part of the transnational web of relations that is established by the film, a pro-filmic scenario that, at least in its case, is closely linked with its cultural meanings.

A further layer of the complex identity of the movie both as an industrial and a cultural object is added by the first-time presence of Gay and his team in Madrid. As Esteban explains, Gay wanted to offer an outsider's perspective on a city other than his own and Madrid was chosen for the project, a city in which both Darín and Cámara were more at home than the director.¹⁵ Thus, the film may be described as the confluence in Madrid of two mobilities: the first cinematic journey of Gay and his group of collaborators from Barcelona (at a time in history in which such journeys were becoming particularly noticeable) and the more familiar crossing of Darín from Buenos Aires. This confluence again reflects the film's transnational sensibility, a cultural correlative of its industrial transnationalism, and an example of the many faces of the transnational in contemporary cinema, as theorized by Deborah Shaw.¹⁶

Cosmopolitanism as method: Looking from the border

A recent issue of the journal *Alphaville*, entirely devoted to the topic of cosmopolitan cinema, illustrates both the irruption of the concept in film debates and its as yet uncertain status. After identifying a cosmopolitan turn in film studies, the editors attempt to categorize existing approaches to the phenomenon but find a lack of conceptual agreement and a diversity of agendas. For them, this proves the plural idea of cosmopolitan cinema that they advocate and that the contributions to the volume illustrate: the cinema “can provide aesthetic encounters performed in imagined social spaces between the self, the other or the stranger, thus providing fertile ground for contemporary debates on cosmopolitanism.”¹⁷ However, as the title of the Editorial suggests, their effort is more a call for a cosmopolitan cinema than evidence of the currency of the concept in film studies.

In an earlier contribution, sociologist Maria Rovisco pinpoints cosmopolitan cinema as one with a recognizable self-reflexive and multilingual style that situates itself outside the mainstream, a cinema that engages in the denunciation of violations of human dignity.¹⁸ While there is much to praise in this article, especially the centrality of borders in her discussion, the choice of films she singles out for analysis--*In this World* (2002) and *Kandahar* (2001)--indicates the limited scope of her account. For its part, Dudley Andrew’s account of cinema history in five different phases, which go from the cosmopolitan (early cinema) to the global (contemporary cinema), convincing as it is in general terms, illustrates the uncertainty of the moment as to the shape of a phenomenon that we might agree to call cosmopolitan cinema.¹⁹

In this article I propose a different line of enquiry: beyond attempts to locate and describe the concept, either as a representational practice or as an institution, my engagement with cosmopolitanism here attempts to respond to the question posed and

then dropped by Mulvey, Rascaroli and Saldanha: what might a cosmopolitan approach to film studies look like?²⁰ In my view, more than give rise to a particular category of films, cosmopolitanism offers a suitable theoretical framework to analyze the lived experience as well as the social dynamics and cultural imagination of globalization and, within it, of migrations and other mobilities. Robert Fine finds three types of factors that explain the age of globalization: a) intensified mobilities, b) economic globalization, and c) the world risk society, which includes financial, ecological and terrorist risks.²¹ For this author, a cosmopolitan outlook is a useful way to deal with these global issues, not because we live in a cosmopolitan age--far from it--but, rather, because the global age highlights cosmopolitan aspirations. This aspiration to construct a better world offers the analyst an outlook, a particular perspective.²² Fine's line of thought is part of a more general epistemological vocation shared by several writers of the cosmopolitan: cosmopolitanism not just as a moral aspiration or a political agenda but as a method of analysis, following Ulrich Beck's demand of a substitution of methodological cosmopolitanism for methodological nationalism.²³ Gerard Delanty, for instance, describes cosmopolitanism as a framework of interpretation.²⁴

I use cosmopolitanism in the epistemological sense suggested by Beck, Fine, Delanty and others: as a theoretical framework and a particular perspective to discuss the cinema of globalization. To this end, I place the concept of the border at the center of a cosmopolitan debate. In this, I follow not only Rovisco, as mentioned above, but also Chris Rumford, who suggests that, in order to understand the complex phenomena that take place around us as a consequence of globalization, we look from the border, as a vantage point that will allow us a better understanding of the dynamics of our societies.²⁵ From very different ideological perspectives, Walter Mignolo and Mezzadra and Neilson similarly offer the border as a methodological device and an

epistemological viewpoint. Mignolo argues that the only way to overcome colonial practices and frameworks is to adopt a subaltern perspective--not so much looking from the border as looking from the other side of the border--what he refers to as border thinking.²⁶ Mezzadra and Neilson, for their part, consider the border a method because it is a site of struggle and, as such, it crystallizes tensions surrounding the social relations of capital, tensions which occur in many contexts, often far away from the borderlands.²⁷ By similarly placing the border at the center of a cosmopolitan methodology for film analysis, I am proposing then, as part of a cosmopolitan methodology, the deployment of a border perspective to understand contemporary cinema and a border sensibility to decipher the workings of both the institution of cinema and its representational practices and politics.

There is no room in this article to engage with debates pertaining to the discipline of border studies. I would, however, like to highlight a running dichotomy within border theory. The authors I have already mentioned illustrate this dichotomy. For Mezzadra and Neilson, the border is a site of struggle, violent and repressive, and the embodiment of intolerance towards others. For Cooper and Rumford, and other theorists of cosmopolitanism, the border is a prime site for connecting individuals to the world, and a “quilting point,” or, in Maria Rovisco’s formulation, a space for potentially transformative cross-cultural engagements.²⁸ Mezzadra and Neilson describe the latter as the “happier theorists of cosmopolitanism or global democracy”.²⁹ These happier theorists do not necessarily perceive a clear progress towards cosmopolitan values--as a matter of fact, they will often, as in Fine’s argument, underline how distant we are from that goal--but cannot help imagining what a society based on the principles of equal rights and diversity would look like. Still, some authors, like Elijah Anderson, argue that such spaces do exist in contemporary societies, no matter how limited in their size

and scope--spaces where a society based on those values may be glimpsed. He calls these spaces cosmopolitan canopies, real places in cities (but conceivably also elsewhere) where encounters based on those values are produced on a daily and routine basis.³⁰ For Ian Woodward, under these canopies people learn to appreciate each other and develop a degree of comfort in the company of others. These proliferating urban spaces underscore the materiality and ordinariness of cosmopolitan experiences.³¹

The confluence of cosmopolitan and border studies around the concept and the materiality of the border calls attention to the spatial dimension of both globalization and the cosmopolitan perspective--the cosmopolitan as space. Borders and borderlands, global cities, mobilities and cosmopolitan canopies are some of the material dimensions of cosmopolitanism, the context of the encounters between people that Woodward and others place at the center of cosmopolitan theory and practice. Film theorists, for their part, have also recently endeavored to highlight the importance of space in the study of cinema.³² Film is, as Mark Shiel argues, a spatial system above everything else. For him, spatiality is what makes film different and what gives it a special potential to illuminate lived spaces, particularly in cities and urban societies, but also in such contemporary spaces as the locations of global economy, informal settlements and excluded ghettos.³³ In a later book about Los Angeles and the cinema, he explores the capacity of movies but also of the cinema industry to explore "the real L.A." through stories of harmony and conflict.³⁴

Space becomes, therefore, a meeting point of globalization, cosmopolitan and border theory, and cinema as a narrative and cultural medium. Both *Truman*'s emphasis on a simultaneously local and global approach to the construction of space *and* the consideration of transnational relationships between the Argentinian and Spanish film industries as instances of transnational mobilities can therefore be framed within the

general study of cinematic and cosmopolitan space. *Truman* invites us to imagine Madrid as a cosmopolitan city crossed by mostly invisible but nonetheless operative borders. Yet its vision of urban borders separates itself from conceptualizations of the border as a site of oppression and discrimination, as in Mike Davis's description of Los Angeles as a "third-border city," where the border as site of oppression never abandons migrants from the south who come to live in the city, and Camilla Fojas's description of the same city as a social environment that destroys and divides souls.³⁵ Rather, in Gay's film, we see Madrid as an instance of Anderson's cosmopolitan canopy, even though characters are only vaguely, if at all, aware of the cosmopolitan encounters in which they engage. The cultural work, or what Cooper and Rumford label "borderwork", of the film is carried out by means of a certain transformation of a real neighborhood of Madrid into a space governed by a global and transnational logic and, as we shall see below, by means of a certain deployment of cosmopolitan values.³⁶ The film chooses a view of border spaces as quilting points and as conducive to cross-cultural engagements, rather than as a sight of struggle, violence, repression and discriminatory practices. In choosing this particular form of border thinking, it occludes many experiences of the urban borders as well as of globalization, and thus naturalizes a particular ideology, one that Doreen Massey describes as "the inevitability of globalization," a discourse that erases its grim inequalities.³⁷ By looking at the confluence between the cinematic persona of Ricardo Darín and "the real Madrid" in *Truman*, I will next try to describe this particular form of what we might call "cultural borderwork."

Global Las Salesas

The area of the Spanish capital where most of the story was shot is, although not openly mentioned in the film, the fashionable neighborhood of Las Salesas, adjacent to the more famous Chueca, the epitome of Madrid's cultural and sexual modernity. More quietly bourgeois than Chueca, Las Salesas is the result of a different type of gentrification. Situated on the corner of the touristic, financial and cultural hub formed by Recoletos, Colón and Génova, one of the most upscale spots in Madrid, the neighborhood derives its name from the old Convento de las Salesas. Today the old convent is the headquarters of Spain's Supreme Court, but the spot is seen as steeped in history, specifically that of the times of 19th-century King Fernando VI, whose tomb is in the convent's church (<http://www.madridvillaycorte.es/iglesiasantabarbara.php>). This historical pedigree is seamlessly combined in webpages with the area's fashionable and ultramodern character. Often mentioned in conjunction with Chueca (<http://espanafascinante.com/lugares/que-ver-en-las-salesas-madrid-que-ver-en-chueca-madrid-historia-de-las-salesas-madrid-historia-de-chueca-madrid/>), it is formed by a network of narrow streets, many of them pedestrianized, starting at the northernmost end of Recoletos and extending alongside the thoroughfare formed by Bárbara de Braganza and Fernando VI streets [Image 2. Map of Las Salesas and Chueca in the heart of downtown Madrid]. The narrow streets boast recently renovated modernist buildings, including the Gaudiesque Palacio Longoria, little fashionable shops, the headquarters of alternative clothes designers, and upmarket restaurants and hotels. Trendy cafés, cocktail bars and jazz clubs attract a combination of intellectuals, wealthy locals and the odd visitor. Yet, given its proximity to the tourist and shopping areas of Colón-Goya-Serrano and the relative vicinity of the crowded Puerta del Sol and Gran Vía, Las Salesas feels, by contrast, like a peaceful area. Here the pedestrian-*flâneur* can harbor the illusion that life in the postmetropolis can be as slow and quiet as it used to

be in the time of Fernando VI, well before the impact of globalization, but with full access to the best and some of the most exclusive comforts and amenities of the present day [Images 3-4. Tradition and modernity in gentrified Las Salesas].

This set of connotations and cultural assets may well be what attracted Gay and his creative team to the area, given the type of urban spaces that they had focused on in their earlier Barcelona films. It is “the quietest Madrid”, in the words of blogger María Crespo,³⁸ a description that encapsulates the filmmakers’ cinematic fantasies of urban life, both in Barcelona and now in Madrid. At the same time, like the Rabal in Barcelona, where some of Gay’s films take place, like Chueca, and like the better known and much busier Barrio de las Letras and Barrio Salamanca in Madrid, the area represents the Spanish version of contemporary gentrification, the result of the marriage of the aggressive marketing strategies of late capitalism and the activation of Bourdieu and Passeron’s cultural capital, as represented by the exclusive designers operating from its small shops and the Michelin-star restaurants.³⁹ It is significant that Pedro Almodóvar’s *Julieta*, a film of the following year, was also partly shot in the very apartment in which Julián lives in Gay’s film, on Calle Fernando VI 19.⁴⁰ Given incipient neighborhood mobilization against gentrification from Salesas to Lavapiés in later months, interest in this area may be seen as a form of conflation between the cinema industry and the forces of gentrification.⁴¹

In *Truman* we catch glimpses of various other, more impersonal, parts of the Spanish capital, including the airport, the cemetery and a small house in a more suburban area, but Las Salesas, where Julián lives, and where Tomás comes to meet him, constitutes the heart of the film’s space. Julián, Tomás and Paula (Dolores Fonzi) are, to a very great extent, defined by the spaces they inhabit, while those spaces are also cinematically constructed as extensions of the characters, in a

foreground/background dynamic that is central to understand how the film works.

Given that *Las Salesas* epitomizes the filmmakers' attitude to space and that, as suggested above, Ricardo Darín's transnational persona is at the center of the film's meanings, it is worth exploring the result of the meeting between Darín's Julián, and this small part of what, following Shiel, we might call "the real Madrid."

The film's credit sequence is paradigmatic of its visual and editing style, as well as its narrative pace: it comprises thirty-five shots and lasts approximately five and a half minutes, at an Average Shot Length (ASL) of 9,4 seconds, much slower than contemporary mainstream films but cut in a classical style that distances it just as much from "slow cinema".⁴² This opening sequence also introduces the spectator to the film's main space by way of contrast: it follows Tomás as he leaves his home in the suburb of a Canadian city (later we learn that it is Montreal, although actually shot in Winnipeg), boards a flight to Madrid, and arrives first at the hotel where he is going to stay and then at Julián's apartment, located in the same narrow and picturesque street. The number of shots and duration of the Canada to Madrid sequence is balanced: six shots inside Tomás's house, four of the taxi ride to the airport, one of the Canadian airport, four of the flight, two of Barajas airport, three of the second taxi ride, three of the hotel and six of Tomás walking and then going up the stairs to the flat. The high ASL and the symmetry of the sequence introduces the leisurely pace of the movie and of the characters' lives, as well as a certain interpersonal harmony which, on the one hand, contrasts with the story's focus on death and, on the other, underscores its confidence in its own ideological stance vis-à-vis transnational interpersonal relations.

The sequence is carefully orchestrated to highlight a spatial contrast that will later become emphasized when Julián refers to Tomás's home as "Groenlandia" (Greenland) or "El Polo Norte" (the North Pole) and to his children as "vikingos".

Visually, Canada is snow-bound, flat and two-dimensional, whereas Madrid has depth, color and warmth. The suburban snow-covered houses and landscapes that briefly introduce the movie anticipate the extremely reserved nature of the friends' feelings for one another and, like most Gay heroes, their penchant for long silences. In the film's discourse, Canada lacks what Madrid has in abundance: a past, not only that of the characters' long-standing friendship but also, more centrally for this analysis, that of its built environment [Images 5-6. The new and the old: From Canada to Madrid]. Half way through the narrative, the two friends travel to Amsterdam, to visit Julián's son Nico (Oriol Pla), an interlude that lasts approximately seventeen minutes, but does not offer such a pointed contrast as the initial one. The Dutch capital is recognizable in many of the shots of the sequence, but not as radically different from Madrid. Rather, this sequence points to a continuity between the two cities, at least in the way in which they are used in the movie: the streets, cafés and canals of Amsterdam are as relaxed and welcoming as those of Madrid and similarly color-coded.

In purely spatial terms, *Truman* constructs a single space out of the three cities that it features, as well as the airports and airplanes that communicate them to one another. Narrative construction and editing suggest that the journeys between them are frictionless, painless, anxiety-free and almost invisible--like catching a bus and getting off two stops down the line. Montreal/Winnipeg has a contrastive function, both visually and culturally, but it is still part of the same space, maybe situated on the margins of the narrative but one that is inhabited by the same characters (including, in the immediate future after the film's end, Truman). The spatial strategy followed by the film is paradoxical: on the one hand, it restricts most of its action to a very small portion of Spain's capital; on the other, it integrates the other two cities (and the gaps between them) within this localized space. The local and the transnational meet seamlessly in the

film's visual rhetoric and in the spatial discourse constructed around it. In metaphorical terms, *Truman's* Las Salesas encompasses a much larger territory than its geographical limits, because it contains characters for whom borders, as argued by Cooper and Rumford and Rovisco, are only opportunities for encounters with others, and never obstacles to mobility. While Tomás, Julián and the others display this attitude wherever they go, Las Salesas remains the psycho-social and emotional center of a much larger transnational space: a transoceanic cosmopolitan canopy that appears to reproduce in cultural terms Ibermedia's pan-Ibero-American industrial practices and, at the same time, a weighted cultural space that reveals and, through the Amsterdam link, reinforces the unequal power relations and modes of dependency and dominance noted by Miriam Ross.

The cosmopolitan perspective allows us to perceive the complexity of cultural constructions such as *Truman's* Las Salesas. On the one hand, Madrid remains the spatial center of the Argentinian-Spanish cultural exchange. On the other, the city becomes, almost imperceptibly, part of a much larger transnational space: the most representative citizen of this city is an Argentinian theater actor, played by an Argentinian film actor, and not just any actor, but the most popular and transnational actor of his generation, and the most marketable "Spanish" actor. Next to him, also living in Madrid and just as representative of the city, is his Argentinian cousin, Paula. Conversely, Spanish Tomás is visiting the city from his home in Canada (Groenlandia, El Polo Norte), while Julián and Spanish ex-wife Gloria's (Elvira Mínguez) son, Nico, is studying in Amsterdam, has a Parisian girlfriend Sophie (Lucie Desclozeaux), and is planning to move to Buenos Aires when he completes his degree. None of this is emphasized in any particular way, and the transnational travels that we either witness or learn about are presented as not worth underlining. We are not asked to consider the

impact of these journeys, yet the fact that they are introduced so casually forces us to notice. As a result, the world of Las Salesas and its cinematic extension to Amsterdam and Canada in *Truman* become a fictional counterpart of Anderson's canopies.

Specifically, it lends its current cultural image as a fashionable area, both upscale and intellectually trendy, to, paraphrasing Alvaray, the shared transnational space created out the imaginary dissolution of boundaries between two national cultures; or, in the terms proposed by Navitski and Poppe, an instance of cosmopolitan transnationalism.⁴³

[Image 7. The transnational cosmopolitan space of Las Salesas with Ricardo Darín at its center]

Yet, the meanings of the cosmopolitan canopy constructed in *Truman* are not exhausted in the fluidity of the Argentinian-Spanish culturally hybrid space. The canopy also works along a different axis: the line that joins and often separates Madrid and Barcelona. During his visit to Madrid, Tomás stays at the Hotel Catalonia, located in the same street as Julián's apartment. Catalonia Hotels is a real chain of hotels, with establishments in various Spanish cities, including several in Madrid. However, there is no Catalonia Hotel in Las Salesas. The front of the hotel was recreated for the film on a building in the corner between Calles Belén and Regueros, in the heart of the neighborhood.⁴⁴ This front appears in several important shots of the film and, as a consequence, becomes a central location of its fictional space. Regardless of the practical reasons for this decision, it is striking that for their first cinematic journey to Madrid, this group of Barcelonans end up "staying" at a Catalonia Hotel, one that does not even exist in the real city. I mentioned before that Gay tends to work with a stable group of actors from one film to the next. *Truman* is no exception. For a film about Madrid, it has a surprisingly high percentage of Catalan actors, including regulars like Eduard Fernández, Ágata Roca and Alex Brendemühl, and newcomers like Oriol Pla,

who plays Julián's son Nico. Perhaps more importantly, the Madrid of *Truman* looks more like Barcelona than Madrid has ever looked before in the cinema. In *Julieta*, a film in which Las Salesas shares spatial centrality with other locations and one in which Madrid as a whole becomes part of an enlarged and carefully constructed Spanish, or even Iberian, space, not only does the apartment at Calle Fernando VI, 19 look very different inside—larger, lighter, trendier—but so do the streets outside: the pavements are wider and livelier, the buildings seem bigger and more elegant, the people in the streets younger and more fashionable. This is recognizably Almodóvar's Madrid and very much part of the construction of a different space, also offering meanings about the city and the country, but different meanings. In *Truman*, the partial conflation of the two capitals evokes, on the one hand, a particular kind of continuity between two global metropolises. On the other hand, at a time of bitter political confrontation and growing social hostility between Catalonia and the rest of Spain, and when cultural and historical differences are routinely being magnified and commonalities downplayed, the conspicuous Catalanness of Madrid in this film can hardly go unnoticed. This rapprochement between the two cities becomes part of the film's discourse—a discourse of seemingly homogeneous and very local urban spaces that, scratching under the surface, become a palimpsest of a multitude of past and present waves of journeys, interconnections and exchanges.

The performance of transnational space

For Woodward and Skrbis, cosmopolitanism is about openness to diversity, an interest in global issues, and a willingness to forgo the local or the national in favor of the global. Yet, these characteristics are less part of the identity of certain people--let's call them cosmopolitans--than a set of cultural practices and outlooks that individuals

mobilize in certain social and cultural contexts, a set of skills which is deployed (or not) depending on the situation. Rather than an identity, cosmopolitanism is a competency; rather than lived it is performed.⁴⁵ In the current cultural climate, cosmopolitanism is a prestigious asset in certain quarters (not in others), and is, therefore, a powerful tool to use as part of the cultural work that individuals but also cultural texts, including films, carry out. Woodward and Skrbis's theories lead us to the following assumption: rather than being cosmopolitan (or not, of half way in between), certain films perform cosmopolitanism--rather like film actors perform characters--for specific purposes in certain cultural and industrial contexts. Thus the constructedness of the cosmopolitan canopy that has been underlined above, like similar instances in other films, becomes part of a performance, that is, a particular cultural intervention through specific strategies—carried out with the repertoire of narrative and cinematic elements at the disposal of the filmmakers—and with specific results.

The transformation of Las Salesas into a cosmopolitan canopy and the positioning of Darín at its center are part of the film's cosmopolitan performance, one that does not simply seek to present the film and its characters as cosmopolitans, but to produce, through that performance, cultural work in a particular context. This context is the growing industrial practice of Argentinian-Spanish co-productions, and, additionally, the strategy adopted by a Catalan filmmaking team to make a stronger impact in the Spanish market by exploiting what might be called their Catalan cinematic identity and transposing it to Madrid. The movie becomes part of a metanarrative of stories that involve Argentinian and Spanish characters--usually in co-productions with capital and actors from both countries--, that take place in one of the two countries and more often than not feature transnational mobilities across the ocean. Like the rest of these movies, *Truman* contains a particular form of performance of cosmopolitanism

that must be understood within the industrial context of these co-productions and the cultural imaginaries that they produce. Specifically, the metaphorical meeting of Gay and Darín in Las Salesas facilitates the fluidity between national film cultures and, as Alvaray suggests, questions national borders both in economic and narrative terms, as well as, inevitably, becoming one more instance of a fraught history of power relations.

Near the end of the film, Tomás and Paula come down the stairs of the Catalonia Hotel. It is early in the morning and it is obvious that they have spent the night together. When Julián sees them, he says: “Tiene sentido.” Ostensibly, he is giving them his blessing. In a different sense, he is verbalizing the influence of the canopy: not so much that the sexual encounter between the Argentinian woman living in Madrid and the Spanish man living in Canada makes sense within their shared history (in which Julián is the link between the two), but that this event is the logical consequence of the cosmopolitan space in which it occurs. By bringing Tomás and Paula together sexually, the film is, beyond narrative incident, performing cosmopolitanism. Las Salesas, with its real-life connotations as the embodiment of a type of global urban modernity, is turned for the occasion into a space of Argentinian and Spanish transnational commonality, one in which national identities are constructed as fluid, adaptable and compatible. This fluidity and compatibility are encapsulated by a sexual encounter that can be seen as a climax of sorts of the cultural performance. By inhabiting Las Salesas in the fictional world of *Truman*, the three characters transform the area into an exemplar of the potential of Argentinian and Spanish to come together as part of a single cultural entity, one that, simultaneously, incorporates a striking confluence between Catalonia and Madrid, and extends to Amsterdam and Canada. A fashionable neighbourhood that combines tradition and modernity as part of a process of gentrification is selected as the space of this confluence. An urban space that gathers

obvious cultural capital is turned into a cosmopolitan space with specific connotations within Argentina and Spain.

Other elements contribute to the reinforcement and credibility of this cultural performance. One is arguably the traditional verisimilitude of the fictional worlds that the filmmakers create in their films, with their emphasis on small things, the slow and serene pace at which events unfold, the transparency of the cinematic style and the naturalism of the performances.⁴⁶ Unlike, for example, Almodóvar's movies, this is a cinema in which contrivance remains hidden rather than highlighted. There is no attempt to conceal the national origin of the characters--Julián and Paula are recognizably Argentinian, Tomás Spanish--, nor the reasons why the former are living in Madrid: Julián came looking for an acting job and Paula summarizes unassumingly: "Es mi culpa, me enganché con un gallego, ¿qué voy a hacer?" ("it's my fault, I hooked up with a Spaniard, what can I do?"). But there is not attempt, either, at delving into the complications and injustices of migration. The apparent spontaneity with which personal histories are revealed but immediately passed over is comparable to the effortless way in which characters move from one city to another, from one country to another, and from one continent to another. Even Julián's references to the distance and the coldness of Canada are part of a routine banter between both friends that makes it all sound ordinary. Similarly, Paula may have considered returning to Buenos Aires when she split up with her daughter's father, and Nico is thinking of moving to the capital of Argentina in the near future. Just as there is nothing particularly exceptional about the characters' travels, there is nothing exceptional either in the Catalanness of Madrid. This is all part of the film's cosmopolitan performance, one that consists in constructing an idealized hybrid of urban and national identities without emphasizing it and, thus, defusing its cosmopolitan pedigree even as it flaunts it.

Troilo, the real dog playing Truman, gives the most convincing performance of the unexceptional yet powerful effects of the canopy. The spectator gradually becomes more and more aware of his narrative centrality, both as a repository of the mutual feelings that Julián and Tomás find it extremely difficult to verbalize or externalize and as the embodiment of the filmic space. Most obviously, in finally traveling with Tomás to Canada, he carries the meanings of Las Salesas with him to his new abode. Less obtrusively, we may observe that he is the first character to notice that Paula has spent the night with Tomás when he stops by her parked car outside the hotel. Julián needs a few minutes before he takes the sexual encounter in his stride but for Truman, there is nothing remarkable in it. As an unprejudiced inhabitant of the cosmopolitan canopy of Las Salesas, his instinct tells him that these things can happen, not so much the sex as what we could call the complex forms of transnational desire. Needless to say, there is nothing exceptional in a dog ignoring national identities. In Truman the filmmakers find the ideal vehicle for the movie's cosmopolitan performance, a performance that erases itself most convincingly [Image 8. Troilo/Truman, the most consummate performer of the cosmopolitan canopy].

To conclude, Woodward and Skrbis argue that performances of cosmopolitanism take place in certain contexts and for particular purposes. It has been established that the context of this textual performance of cosmopolitanism is twofold: on the one hand, the reinforcement of the industrial context in which Hispano-Argentinian co-productions have flourished in the last decades, and, on the other, the celebration of the complex and fraught cultural imaginary of Argentinian-Spanish relationships, fed by colonial history and successive waves of migration in both directions. Darín is used as the most potent cinematic symbol of these mobilities. By

placing him at the center of Madrid's modernity and cosmopolitanism, the film underlines the power of this utopian transnational space, one in which national difference, rather than produce separation, fosters the potential for confluence—at least in the text's cosmopolitan performance. The filmmakers make Las Salesas look both unique and very similar to the urban scenarios of their earlier movies; they turn it into a cosmopolitan canopy with a specific Hispano-Argentinian content with Darín as facilitator, and, simultaneously, they construct a Barcelona-Madrid hybrid, without detracting from the neighborhood's specificities and its urban prestige; and they insufflate the transregional and transnational space thus created with their realistic cinematic style, as if the complex hybrid resulting from it was the most natural place in the world, as if everybody were as unimpressed by cosmopolitan encounters as Truman. This powerful performance seamlessly conflates the globalizing capitalistic logic of an increasingly intricate and interdependent Latin-American audiovisual space, the masking of a long history of power relations between the two continents, and the creation of a cinematic transoceanic node that destabilizes national paradigms. As a result of this, the cosmopolitanism performed by the film constructs a space of shared transnational identity that conveniently confirms the industrial feasibility of the co-productions and their cultural valence, as well as the power of cinema to create cultural imaginaries that might one day change the world.

¹ Dona Kercher, "The Brooding Bro Cast Adrift: Ricardo Darín in Recent Spanish-Argentine Co-productions" (paper presented at the Society for Cinema Studies Conference, Chicago, Illinois, March 22-26 2017).

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- ² Clara Garavelli, "Conquering the Conquerors: Ricardo Darín's Rise to Stardom in Spanish Film Culture," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 92.4 (2015), 411-412; Kercher, "The Brooding Bro."
- ³ Marvin D'Lugo, "Across the Hispanic Atlantic: Cinema and Its Symbolic Relocations," *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas*, 5.1&2 (2008), 4.
- ⁴ Marta Esteban, interview with the author, Barcelona, 17 May 2017.
- ⁵ Garavelli, "Conquering the Conquerors," 419.
- ⁶ Garavelli, "Conquering the Conquerors," 412-15.
- ⁷ Luisela Alvaray, "Transnational Networks of Financing and Distribution: International Co-Productions," in Marvin D'Lugo and Ana M. López, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Latin American Cinema* (London & New York: Routledge, 2018), 258.
- ⁸ José Manuel Moreno Domínguez, "Diversidad audiovisual e integración cultural: analizando el programa Ibermedia," *Comunicación y sociedad*, 9 (2008), 97-99.
- ⁹ Alvaray, "Transnational Networks," 261.
- ¹⁰ Alvaray, "Transnational Networks," 261.
- ¹¹ Moreno Domínguez, "Diversidad audiovisual," 111-12.
- ¹² Miriam Ross, *South American Cinematic Culture: Policy, Production, Distribution and Exhibition*, Cambridge Scholars (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2010), 115-16; see also Tamara L. Falicov, "Programa Ibermedia: Co-Production and the Cultural Politics of Constructing an Ibero-American Audiovisual Space," *Spectator* 27.2 (Fall 2007), 24.
- ¹³ Alvaray, "Transnational Networks," 253.
- ¹⁴ Esteban, interview.
- ¹⁵ Esteban, interview.
- ¹⁶ Deborah Shaw, "Deconstructing and Reconstructing 'Transnational Cinema'," in *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema: Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin*

American Film, ed. Stephanie Dennison (Woodbridge & Rochester: Tamesis, 2013), 51-65.

¹⁷ James Mulvey, Laura Rascaroli, and Humberto Saldanha, "For a Cosmopolitan Cinema. Editorial," *Alphaville, Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 14 (Winter 2017), 4.

¹⁸ Maria Rovisco, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Cinema: Understanding the Connection Between Borders, Mobility and Cosmopolitanisms in the Fiction Film," *Mobilities*, 8.1 (2013), 153.

¹⁹ Dudley Andrew, "Time Zones and Jetlag: The Flows and Phases of World Cinema," in Natasa Durovicová and Kathleen Newman, eds., *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives* (New York & London: Routledge, 2010), 59-89.

²⁰ Mulvey, Rascaroli, and Saldanha, "For a Cosmopolitan Cinema," 2.

²¹ Robert Fine, "Cosmopolitanism: A Social Research Agenda," in *Handbook of Contemporary European Social Theory*, ed. Gerard Delanty (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 246.

²² Fine, "Cosmopolitanism," 251-52.

²³ Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19.1-2 (2002), 18,19.

²⁴ Delanty, "Introduction: The Emerging Field of Cosmopolitanism Studies," in *Routledge Handbook*, Delanty, ed., 3.

²⁵ Chris Rumford, "Bordering and Connectivity: Cosmopolitan Opportunities," in *Routledge Handbook*, 249.

²⁶ Walter D. Mignolo, "Border Thinking, Decolonial Cosmopolitanism and Dialogues among Civilizations," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, eds. Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka (London: Ashgate, 2011), 330.

²⁷ Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method* (Durham, NC: Duke U.P., 2013), 280.

²⁸ Anthony Cooper and Chris Rumford, "Cosmopolitan Borders: Bordering as Connectivity," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, 262; Maria Rovisco, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Cinema: Understanding the Connection Between Borders, Mobility and Cosmopolitanism in the Fiction Film," *Mobilities*, 8.1 (2013), 150.

²⁹ Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, 279.

³⁰ Elijah Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 2011), 14.

³¹ Ian Woodward, Ian. 2015. "The Cosmopolitan Possibilities of Encounters with Globality" (lecture delivered at the Global Studies Conference, University of Roehampton, London, 2-4 July 2015).

³² Mark Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, eds. Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford & Malden: Blackwell, 2001), 1-18; John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel. 2011. "Introduction: The Matter of Places," in *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image*, eds. Gorfinkel and Rhodes (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), vii-xxix; Celestino Deleyto, *From Tinseltown to Bordertown: Los Angeles on Film* (Detroit: Wayne State U.P., 2016).

³³ Shiel, "Cinema and the City," 6, 12.

³⁴ Mark Shiel, *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 9-10.

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- ³⁵ Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. City* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 71; Camilla Fojas. "Border Cinema and the Global City (of Angels)." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 31.1 (Spring 2006), 7.
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- ³⁷ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Los Angeles; London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington D.C.: Sage, 2005), 4-6.
- ³⁸ María Crespo, "El Madrid de Cesc Gay," *CondéNast Traveler* (1 December 2015), <http://www.traveler.es/viajes/mundo-traveler/articulos/el-madrid-de-cesc-gay-director-de-cine-truman/7718>
- ³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 1977).
- ⁴⁰ Crespo, "El Madrid."
- ⁴¹ Andrés Gil, "El centro de Madrid se moviliza contra la gentrificación." *eldiario.es*, 03 April 2017, http://www.eldiario.es/madrid/centro-Madrid-moviliza-gentrificacion-turistificacion_0_629237896.html
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- ⁴³ Rielle Navitski and Nicolas Poppe, "Introduction" to *Cosmopolitan Film Cultures in Latin America, 1896-1960*, eds. Navitski and Poppe (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 2017), 5.
- ⁴⁴ Esteban, interview.
- ⁴⁵ Ian Woodward and Zlatko Skrbis, "Performing Cosmopolitanism," in *Routledge Handbook*, 129-133.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the long critical tradition of cinematic performance as naturalistic, see Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Reframing Screen Performance* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008).