

Abstract – The Disinterred Western: Thwarting Fables at the Border in
Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada and *No Country for Old Men*

This chapter analyzes *Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005) and *No Country for Old Men* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 2007) as self-consciously engaging with the Western genre as a historically burdened cultural form. A variant of Philip French and Neil Campbell's Post-Western, the Disinterred Western aesthetically and narratively thwarts the Classical Western fable. This fable is symptomatic of an ideological consensus and historical subjectivity born of 1950s American popular culture, when the Western was at its height. Reductively simplified in retrospect, the Disinterred Western raises the specter of the Classical Western through deploying its iconographies, tropes, gender-performative scripts, and authoritative point-of-view, only to quash it through immersion in late modernity. The Disinterred Western expands upon Rancière's notion of the thwarted fable as a clash between *mythos* and *opsis* in the image, by raising the sense of aesthetic play to a meta-historical engagement with the genre as a whole. Both on the levels of cinematography and formal style, the Disinterred Western critiques the politics of narration, and how the genre cannot really *see* the Other. Its old ways of seeing and being in the world are perpetually frustrated within the transnational, militarized border region of contemporary southwest Texas.

