

Crossing borders: identities, federal fiction series and road movie on Argentine TV

Cruzando fronteras: identidades, series de ficción federal y road movie en la televisión argentina

Cristina Andrea Siragusa

Universidad Nacional de Villa María
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Córdoba, Argentina
siragusasociologia@yahoo.com.ar

Mariana Britos

Universidad Nacional de Villa María, Córdoba, Argentina
marianabritosmusa@gmail.com

Abstract

*After the enactment of the Law on Audiovisual Communication Services, a policy of promoting the production of television content was implemented by the Argentine National Government, which led to the start of an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of media communication: gestation and circulation of narratives that referred from / from national territories to plural local identities. In this context, from an ongoing research that has as one of its objectives to map the production experiences and the images of TV fiction series gestated in the expressive territories of Argentina, it is important to describe and interpret the specific features displayed contemplating the narrative dimensions, techniques and aesthetics. In *Siete vuelos* (Gastón Gularte, 2012) and in *El viaje, 9 días buscando Norte* (Jorge Vargas, 2013), a search trip is exhibited that configures the construction-del-yo, landscapes, and subjects in the same movement.*

Keywords

Fiction; Television; Identities; Road Movie; Seriality

Resumen

Tras la sanción de la Ley de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual se implementó, desde el Estado Nacional argentino, una política de fomento a la producción de contenidos para televisión que propició el inicio de un fenómeno sin precedentes en la historia de la comunicación mediática: la gestación y circulación de narrativas que refirieron de/desde los territorios nacionales a plurales identidades locales. En ese contexto, desde una investigación que tiene como uno de sus objetivos mapear las experiencias de producción y las imágenes propias de series ficcionales para televisión gestadas en territorios argentinos, importa describir e interpretar rasgos específicos desplegados, contemplando las dimensiones narrativas, técnicas y estéticas. En *Siete vuelos* (Gastón Gularte, 2012) y en *El viaje, 9 días buscando Norte* (Jorge Vargas, 2013) se exhibe un viaje de búsqueda que configura en un mismo movimiento la construcción-del-yo, paisajes, y sujetos.

Palabras clave

Ficción; Televisión; Identities; Road Movie; Serialidad

1. Introduction

*Siete vuelos*¹ (Misiones) y *El viaje, 9 días buscando Norte*² (Jujuy) are part of the cultural heritage of the fictional production for television that, after the passing of Law No. 26.522, developed in Argentina in the context of a public policy aimed to create conditions for the creation of content, among other aspects, with a federal focus. In this line of stories and images, a new group of filmmakers explored ways and themes, recovering on occasions, genres habitually linked to the cinematographic device. In particular, it is important in this article to consider the *road movie* in Argentine telefiction, outside of Buenos Aires, as a genre that in the cases studied transcended, based on its international appropriation, its American origins and features (Brandellero, 2013; Blasini, 2016); resorting to procedures close to the documentary (Piedras, 2016) to exhibit geographical areas, customs and rituals from the subjective perspective of the traveler in a quasi-testimonial position. It is for this reason that the focus used voids any essentialist view of the genre system, adopting instead a regional perspective to contemplate the *road movie* (Garibotto & Pérez, 2016) inquiring as to the unique features of a combination of fictional narratives for TV in which the *journey*, and its impact on the subjects that experience it, becomes the organizing topic of the story.

Along this line, it is agreed that the "itinerant" character of the road movie narrative and the express interest in crossing lines and borders (physical and metaphorical) makes for an interpretation in which you can see, at the same time, the ideological foundations of regional and national discourses (Garibotto & Pérez, 2016:2). The two fictions analyzed contribute politically and poetically to a televisuality that questioned the aim of it constituting a *regimen of hiding diversity* (Grimson, 2006), which originally responded to a desire to create by the nation state and to the creation of specific imaginaries as to the real Argentina of the 19th century modernity.

2. Conceptual Anchors

Images coming from regional subjects and spaces have not been absent on Argentine TV screens, given that historically they have existed based on 2 types of matrices: one, belonging to *spectacularism* and *exotism*; and the other, that was characterized for its *stigmatization* solidifying a process of discursive marginalization especially, but not exclusively, in the journalistic formats. For this reason, the analytical view that captures the richness and complexity of the cases plans to question the particular means that are developed to refer to particular expressive territories³ considering the unique qualities of a medium (the television), a constructive principle (the continuity narrative) and a genre (the miniseries).

Technically speaking *Siete vuelos* and *El viaje. 9 días buscando Norte* both have the convergence of road movie components, images of expressive territories and stories of travel. As a result, each one of the stories unfolds via the subjective itinerary of a group of young people (Clara/Victoria and Gabriel, in each case) that set out on a search for identity in which the absence of a father figure causes a double movement: *spatial* (through landscapes and communities unknown to them) and *temporal* (linked to la construction of memory in which, in some cases, the memories of a shared past appear).

In this line of development, the protagonists leave their ordinary worlds to travel into some territories that are (de)constructed in their political, cultural, geographic and socio-economic dimensions before the camera, creating a "strange" view for the exhibition of marginalized realities. There is no sense of rebellion in them, like the common theme of *road movies* of the 60s and 70s in the United States that questioned a conservative world from which the subject need to escape (Laderman, 2002; Corrigan, 1991), but rather an uncritical social innocence that changes during the trip.

The focus, in general, allows the spectator to observe and discover those geo-territories (the coast and northeast of Argentina) based on its protagonists, creating a strategy leading to the non-stereotyped visibility of ways of life and of representations of communities historically "absent" (or rarely present) in the televisual panorama of national fiction. The concerns of those that are mentioned in the different episodes often occupy the space of journalistic discourse in the TV palimpsest: like spectacular events (in terms of expressive celebrations with a touristic attraction like for example the celebration of Carnival or "Mardi Gras" or the celebration of Pachamama or "Mother Earth"), or in the majority of cases like political and/or police events that make up the map of social protest emerging from situations of injustice and inequality (with an important exposition of a classist point of view).

The road, an indispensable component of the *road movie*, will thus adopt different modes of construction: like (re)creation of the loneliness of the traveler immersed in unfathomable natural spaces with a propensity for the movement of the subject and the emergence of his personal life based on the panoramic planes that show the genre's self-reflective character (Corrigan, 1991; Brandellero, 2013; Piedras, 2016); like the space of the chance encounter with the most typical inhabitants of the journey (truckdrivers) and their vehicles; like the point of control of security forces (prison guards, police, customs agents); among others. In both mini-series, Clara/Victoria and Gabriel start their journeys by suspending their present and throwing themselves (with different levels of resignation) into a search that will inevitably change their lives. Facing disenchantment with the present, they decide (to travel) to go in search of a lost father.

In this wandering, because the characters roam through a space that brings them into contact with their fears and desires, there is no chance for indifference: from this point of view the young people are questioned by a "*reparto de lo sensible*" (Rancière, 2014) that will seem

far But not impossible. Both mini-series show a narrative that details the processes of *alteration of the experience* (Briones, 1998) that involves the protagonists when they involve themselves in interrelations that seem strange to them and inadmissible, questioning, at this moment, their previous beliefs. In this sense, the telefictions under study create a construction and (re)production of the *distinctiveness* and the *cultural difference* based on an *imaginary narrative* (Di-paola, 2013) that is politically charged on the symbolic-ideological plane that is in accordance with the focus of a public policy that gave value to the federal.

In the particularity of these fictions, the rural-coastal, the rural-Andean and the urban-Andean areas are fully present, displaying a pedagogical vocation that presents before the viewer's eyes some scenarios and subjectivities on an open plane, some unique musical scores (their instruments and rhythms), an ancestral dietary regimen but profoundly present in the contemporaneity of the daily diet, and a mythological universe intensely rooted in the territorial imaginary.

The type of TV series presented combines a mixed structure: one, that implies the preeminence of the continuity narrative justified by its subscription to the mini-series as a genre, another that proposes an opening for the entry of leading or self-conclusive plots in which conflicts are introduced and resolved in the same episode (Guarinos & Gordillo, 2011:376). This narrative architecture is in formal accordance with the traditional *road movie*, and in the Patagonian *road movie* (heuristically productive category for the interpretive process), conceived as a *sinusoid dispersive structure*:

The dispersive and the conjectural fill the aspects of the representation and show the way. The protagonist will go meeting characters that cross his path, but whom the majority of he will not see again. In each episode there is a challenge that the protagonist must address, although he may not always resolve it successfully. There is also a separation, an abandonment, and in each episode

a part of the argument is revealed (Tranchini, 2011:207).

In each proposal there are particular ways of telling and showing the development of the subject and his entry, from uncertainty, to spaces and communities different from his daily experiences. Spaces that are transversally affected by the proximity (to different degrees) to border zones (the Triple border and Villazón-La Quiaca) which bear the presence, subtle or explicit, of some "spaces on the verge where there are at the same time international identities, as well as conflicts and stigmatizations between national groups" (Grimson, 2001:93). The border may emerge as a space of confluence which is actually never reached but its proximity is perceived (*Siete vuelos*) or may be the passage to another world that produces dilemmas (*El viaje*).

The analytical operation carried out on the two mini-series has considered the proposition by Tranchini (2011) in his addressing of the Patagonian *road movie* in which he contemplates the ways the South is represented in a group of films. The author observes how a process of deconstruction takes place of the images and previous representations that had been created both in manifestations of the cinematographic as well as literary fields⁴. It is necessary to promote a (possible) interpretation of fictional TV material focusing on an interpretive movement that discusses (to understand presences or absences) with other images on Misiones, specifically or northeast Argentina, as a region. In this exercise, it is necessary to define narrative and stylistic modes focusing on the specific qualities of the TV medium and to the type of fiction proposed, considering the heterogeneous advances that circulated in a movement of connection and disconnection with previous contemporary imaginaries of two expressive Argentine territories.

3. *Siete vuelos* (2012)

Clara is a young chemist that works in her family's laboratory on the production of a new

medicine in Buenos Aires. Her life, organized and enjoyable, will be disrupted when she finds pictures of her childhood and a letter from somebody named Vicente, who claims to be her father, and conveys his desperation to find his daughter who had been taken from him as a child. The need to reveal the identity secret (in terms of the persistent lie and family silence) serves as a narrative motor that mobilizes the beginning of a journey through Misiones in order to find this man.

In the *Redlands*, she finds out that her original name was Victoria, which is used by all those close to Vicente to refer to her. The double name Clara/Victoria will operate as a way to reflect the conflicting feelings she will experience upon entering into contact with others that are completely unknown to her for their differences. For this reason, the double name symbolically represents the signs of the oppressor and the oppressed, of the exploiter and those exploited, that coexist in her life. This Argentine coastal area (re)visited will be built based on the *juxtaposition* of images on geo-spaces, subjects, cultural practices, myths and socio-political struggles.

The *road movie* will refer to Misiones exposing its complexity in each one of the protagonist's "trips", presenting a multi-cultural view that travels highways and backroads from a perceptive, sensitive, and cognitive angle. Provincial literature has highlighted this particularity: "The province embodies a semiosphere of landscapes, translations and words that flow and flow together" (Lemes & García, 2010). The observation as to how TV images address social aspects in this mini-series makes one aware of a border zone, interstitial, between economic-productive, natural landscapes, magical rituals and daily life experiences that will take on a politically-charged movement exhibiting the concerns held by the local population. In this sense, just as expressed by Piedras (2016) you can observe how narratively-speaking the *road movie* simultaneously articulates the personal with the collective, one's own story with that of social memory, in a type of proposal that approaches the documentary forms.

The ostensive character of the classic features of the *road movie*, the highway and the landscape, are omnipresent in the narration as companions of the protagonist, while at the same time they symbolically provoke the contrast between the grandeur of nature and the social conflicts found on the Argentine coast. The wide, medium and short frames are chosen strategically, generating contrasts between the subjects and their environment. The characters' personal lives are revealed via this selection. At different times the camera takes on an observational role making the spectator a participant of the moment.

Throughout there is a topography that links the space and the socio-cultural universes of the inhabitants: in Colonia Alicia, among panoramic views that follow the work done with tobacco from a family business, they will discuss the effects glyphosate has on children and pregnant women; using the scenes featuring the ruins of the San Ignacio Jesuit mission, awareness is brought to the issue of the trafficking of eggs of endangered animals; on the banks of the Uruguay River there will be an introduction to flavors and typical dishes, daily activities that recognize the impossibility to overcome the pain of mourning the dead (soldiers) of the War of Malvinas that remain to today in the memories of the local people; in Concepción de las Sierras there is a(n) (inter) linking of the preparations for the local Carnival celebration with the struggle of the mate tea co-op workers against the pressure of the mate tea farm owners; in the mines of Wanda the film refers to the safety risks that workers must endure beyond the charms of the place; among other topics.

The development, distant for Clara/Victoria but planned by Vicente, allows for the intersubjective encounter and discovery: the spectator, along with the protagonist, subject themselves to the various realities that make this area a heterogeneous place. By way of the various myths (elves, witches), the polyphony in terms of the language, clothing, traditional celebrations (Carnival), musical diversity, a reality is produced that differs from the collective imaginary.

The articulating topic is man and his ties to the land, the links between his peers and the conflicts that take place daily in situations of social inequality.

On screen, there are typical customs, the flora and fauna complete that structure, but also the diverse communities that coexist in the area. The photography takes on an emblematic chromatic code in which red and green dominate (even in the temporary story breaks, the colors, lightly saturated, you can see this predominance), and the music (diegetic and extradiegetic) take on a dramatic role and one of territorial construction. Therefore, the combination (un) builds the image constructions of what Misiones is, which is to say, they vary from the typical widely-accepted associations in the *river territory* or in the *jungle territory*, and contribute multiple special, ethnic, and socio-economic textures.

The means of transportation in the *road movie* plays a fundamental role, serving in this case as an objective that refers to, at the beginning of the trip, the freedom of movement of the protagonist breaking down that image-object to take on a functional character. In *Siete vueltos*, Clara/Victoria's car, a Fiat 500, symbolizes the young woman's process of transformation: it is the birthday gift from her adoptive father, a spotless, 0-miles car specially designed for city driving. In the first episodes, viewers observe the special precaution the woman takes to keep it clean and uncluttered; later it will be an object of "tricks" on behalf of the elves (sign of the magical universe); and with the passing of time in the story it will be shown as completely filthy, covered in red dirt from the roads, until it is destroyed (paradoxically Clara/Victoria does not pay attention to the "signs" indicating an oil leak). As an allegory of the environment comprised by her mother and her family, and the power they have over her, it shows the process of degradation (self/family) upon coming into contact with nature (geo-communities/Vicente) that represent, perhaps bucolically, what has not been corrupted.

Siete vuelos is seen as a politically-charged narrative upon giving weight to the choices made by Vicente in his life (that his daughter retraces in her journey): at home, with hanging pictures of Eva Peron and Che Guevara that, together with choosing his daughter's name, display an ideological option to which is added, successively, the group of friends (characters that enter sinusoidally into the narrative's main plots) and the popular struggles that they embody and in which he has been dedicated to at different times. *Siete vuelos* is a story of (re)cognition and also of denouncement based on the position of enunciation and the axiological signs that emerge in dialogues and actions, focusing on a summary exhibition of social injustices to which the local population is subject in such a way that it imposes a certain order of visibility in public space.

In this sense, you can see the construction of the area of Buenos Aires, in the first episode, that shows how the audiovisual story generates formal distinction, especially in the colorimetry, the setting and the music. Both areas (the capital and the coast) are clearly contrasted in order to accentuate the differences between the two different worlds although belonging to the same country. The images aim to establish a struggle for the attention, that until now the TV fiction limited to the confines of the visibility that is official and of Buenos Aires, that that is not (in) visible, in terms of its capacity to be seen by the eye. At this point, another characteristic of the *road movie* appears which is the constant conflict between the wild and civilized spaces, making this fiction similar to cinematographic stories that since the 90s created a way to propose the genre for Latin America (Garibotto & Pérez, 2016; Brandellero, 2013). In regards to the latter, and aiming at a regional vision that delves into the territory-that-crosses the protagonists, the imaginary of wild-space that is questioned when other realities of Misiones are shown. However, the conflict and the contrast are constantly present and rooted affecting the public, private and personal spheres. This strategy (de)constructs a way of conceive the territory, at least until the mid-20th century:

The profile of the *Misionero* is based on the initial discursive forms in the 18th century, the traveler's tales. In the 20th century, the story, the newspaper, and films created and disseminated the images and the evocation of Misiones. The hegemonic provincial discourse is consolidated, based on Quiroga, as a jungle scene crossed by the large Paraná River. The red dirt awakens the age-old modern intent to have influence over nature and dominate it, while at the same time representing an exotic and exuberant landscape. Gothic and fantasy moments appear as opportunities for new representations of the rural topic, in which the traditional customs are marked with a vanguard seal. Cinema during the 50s reinforces certain stereotypes of the Misiones frontier via films by Armando Bó, and the film version of the novel *Río Oscuro* by Alfredo Varela made by Hugo del Carril, in 1952 with the title *Las Aguas Bajan Turbias*. (Lemes & García, 2010)

Their myth of the land-to-be-conquered is debunked in the mini-series. The Redlands is a place to live, to be shared, where work is central to organizing life, production, and affective relationships. This is the story of a search. The spiritual journey that the fiction describes not only involves the protagonist but also society. The highway and the experiences combine to generate the transformation of the character and complete *los vuelos*, allegory of a (inter)subjective metamorphosis that is indispensable to combat an oppressive system and to strengthen the importance of a sense of community.

4. El viaje. 9 días buscando norte (2013)

Gabriel Saavedra, the protagonist of the mini-series, is an "estibador" born in Argentina that works with his mother in Villazón (Bolivia) on the border of La Quiaca. After his wife's death, the young man decides to set out in search of his father without enough information, money, or cultural resources to travel through Argentina

until reaching Tucumán. The central axis of the story is established from the beginning, a *story of search* that will also be a story of journey, in which three aspects will be emphasized in the construction of territory: the landscape and the highway, the music and the people that inhabit or pass through the area.

The information about the place of arrival is not enough in order to make a process of “planning” for the fulfilling of that objective, which allows for discerning the power of the character’s desire and her consequent fear of paternal rejection. Thus, you can see a narrative of uncertainty that will take on the form of movement through Andean geo-territories that will mold the personal path of Gabriel. The highway is the main metaphor that is used as a resource to demonstrate at the same time the physical and spiritual journey, and the splendor of the landscape, at different times, meant to bring about reflection in the viewer. The flow of the discourse will also show the social forms of abuse and discrimination, the contradictions and the silences, which will affect the perception and comprehension of the protagonist as to the reality that she is experiencing for the first time.

The itinerary starts at Villazón-commercial border- with panoramas that underline a hyperbolic operation of “informal commerce” between the two countries (Argentina-Bolivia), a display that does not show the imaginary that is often associated to such city associated with tourism. From this mode there are a series of general shots that follow to offer a territorial perspective of the permanent movement at human beings at a constant rhythm whose body is shown as a means of transport⁵. The images show the space populated by a uniform, dehumanized population, absolutely vital for the traffic of food, drinks and electric appliances that cross the bridge, as well as contraband and the regulatory stare of customs control (Figure 2).

The camera only zooms in to focus on the detail of the protagonist but as it zooms out the bodies lose their individuality. The screen offers a perspective at a distance of the alienation of

the human body mixed with the merchandise, a discursive operation that enables proposing a person’s body as a means of transport and its objectification. Villazón is characterized as the place of departure, the space that is abandoned in order to start a search for identity but not only contemplating the dimension of the family gathering but also to discover the country of origin from its strangeness. Although Gabriel was born in Argentina, his world is anchored in that area of permanent passage which is the border, the international bridge, an environment of enclosure in apparent permanent movement and in the Bolivian sector⁶. This story finds its protagonist starting a journey from loneliness and uncertainty, and in the appearance of a *story-of-journey*, it becomes a *road movie* because on the road there will be a double experience: of (re)cognition-of-self and of alteration that will allow the subject to transform in a way that is unavoidable facing an experience in which the stigmatization which he is subject to due to his Bolivian past is not absent⁷.

The means of transport is heteroclitic and combines travel on foot (which is absolutely strange for a man who has been an *estibador*), by truck and in inter-city public transport. In this sense, and just as Garibotto and Pérez (2016:2) state, it is possible to consider that the *road movie* is not a narrative about people driving a car but instead the story focuses on the journey and its impact on the subject. The development of this mini-series will provide, also, a tour (which discovery) through different spaces: backroads over the mountains, the road, and the city (transportation stations, for example).

After passing into Argentine territory, *El viaje...* follows Gabriel is his encounters with local people and with foreigners in La Quiaca and Hornaditas until arrival at Humahuaca. This part of the trip is fundamental to narratively establish the recognition of a sector near Jujuy that is often forgotten, regarding the appearance that Humahuaca is the “border” of Argentine territory⁸. La Quiaca, as an area of merchandise transit, and Hornaditas, as a town that preserves its ancestral traditions represent opposing spa-

ces: one, the road, the mountainous imminence, the mirror of Villazón in terms of commercial exchange, in which the protagonist finds the outright display of discrimination, humiliation and deception; another, associated with a conservationist view of traditions coming from indigenous populations that perform socio-artistic rituals and where the protagonist finds haven.

Contrary to the depersonalization of La Quiaca, Hornaditas is shown as a place of learning, in terms of its capacity to be part of rituals to Mother Nature for example, collaboration in rural practices (the corn harvest, goat herding, among others) by the family and community. Episode 3 is the moment par excellence for the introduction of a visuality and music⁹ belonging to an Altiplano culture, and are accompanied predominantly by images of vegetation (cactus).

In the first episodes of the mini-series the presence of multiple takes of mountainous landscape is a feature that emphasizes the realist focus of the camera beyond its contribution as geo-contextual information. In accordance with Bettendorff (in his analysis of the work of Lisandro Alonso) one can see that in this case there is a proposed *sensorial experience*¹⁰: based on the wide shots, the internal movements of the frame and the cameras, you can see the place's geography which is visually stunning featuring a chromatic register with dominated by warm colors in the composition. Afterwards, the staging of Jujuy and Salta transforms giving priority to the urban territory and to the inclusion of cultural practices linked to the nightlife, for example.

Based on a *dispersive sinusoid structure* (Tranchini, 2011) the miniseries presents heterogeneous characters, some foreigners but the majority are locals, via which the protagonist displays some social problems of the North East (crime, sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, among others) that show the difference between the concentrations of power and the weakest and disadvantaged sectors. By way of these exchanges, the diverse languages and

customs are identified as well as the particular forms that these subjectivities have of inhabiting and feeling their place based on a naturalist style.

The *road movie* (de)constructs a northern imaginary based on the naive realism where there has been, for example in a sector of visual arts, that which has been identified as plastic indigenism, a symbolic matrix that incorporates the indigenous figure as "tied to the earth and therefore a part of national identity" (Giordano, 2009:1294) emphasizing a Pre-Hispanic history and a system of religious beliefs focused on the land and Mother Earth. The staging and dialogues seek to destroy a *picturesque* view of the subjects and spaces, exposing a willingness to describe social situations filled by absolutely contemporary issues, concerns present throughout other regions.

In accordance with Arancibia (2014), who analyzes a combination of TV productions from the period addressed here from the NOA Region, in the presence of a "multiplicity of overlapping territories, superimposed, interacting in conflict" (2014:149): a territory of cultural heritage, a marginalized and stigmatized territory that must be "hidden", a social space marked by mythology, and environment of protest and struggle, among others. The mini-series destroys not only the archetype of the north but also, subtly, tries to show the Argentine stereotype held by other countries.

Like a house of mirrors, the viewpoint of Other-over-me takes on positions of enunciation depending on who is looking. In this sense, a triple perspective is shown: one, linked to nationality and the archetype that distinguishes the Argentine, the Bolivian, the Chilean; another that is classist, linked to power and submission of the poor worker; finally, of gender tending to ignore all that may question the phallogocentric culture¹¹. Gabriel, in his journey, questions the hypocrisy of some very widely-accepted practices in some sectors of the community as a defiant gesture from the individual standpoint showing a moral position more than politically-charged one.

5. Conclusions

The construction of a TV screen susceptible of incorporating a plurality of images that refer to heterogeneous expressive territories, like part of the implementation of public policies, has allowed for making visible and seeing complex identity manifestations.

One of the risks for this type of televisuality, that willingly aimed to communicate that which is federal, was to resort to exotism to reference subjects and territories, in other words, prioritize the "*Otro folclórico por el Otro real* (Zizek, 1998). In the cases analyzed you can see that it has been specifically the choosing of generic components belonging to the *road movie* which contributed to a fiction that sparked debate as to local identities. As Brandellero (2013:6) says, in his analysis of the *road movie* in Brazil in the repertory of options of a "aesthetic of movement", there is often the presence of a self-reflective position that poses questions the relation between "locomotion" and "mediamotion", which means to question the place of cinema itself while at the same time configuring a "mise-en-abyme", narrative recourse used to exhibit the road travelled just as "it appears in the rear-view mirror".

The Argentine TV screens showed fiction, in this case two mini-series, that opted for a naturalist style based on the use of actors (some being amateur) that gave it verisimilitude in terms of gestures, bodies, movements and voices; on occasions the camera became observational combining (re)creations that question the real statute of the images; they used music and rhythms from expressive modes closer to contemporary cultural practices; established the landscape as stage and subjective experience of the local and the visitor; among other aspects.

However, this specific mode of constructing genre, or perhaps we could say beyond the genre of the *road movie*, is completely new. These features were already present in the Argentine cinematographic field starting in the

90s in a filmography that is often categorized as "Nuevo Cine Argentino" (without it implying any type of style unity or collective subscription by the directors); which is added to, corresponding to that same period in Latin America, the time in which the *road movie* as a genre reaches a considerable growth. Garibotto & Pérez (2016) recognized the existence of more than 200 *films* in the region in almost 20 years, which is considered a significant number in order to establish its relevance.

At least these two aspects show that the "innovation of these mini-series lies specifically in their capacity to contribute a way of telling (formally and thematically) to a screen, TV, unaccustomed to fiction production from national territories. This was used to establish, on the horizon of visibility and visuality, *images of self* (people, landscapes, customs) habitually generated from the strangeness compared to the country's capital. Nevertheless, their chances to enter the spectatorial horizon experienced serious obstacles.

As a bit of background in the Argentine televisuality, it is indispensable to mention a group of mini-series (from the production company Ideas del Sur) that were launched at the beginning of the 21st century that were noted for the themes addressed and the aesthetics used. These fictions arrived with a strange style for local TV and became famous for works like *Okupas* (2000), *Tumberos* (2002), *Disputas* (2003) and *Sol Negro* (2003). These narratives articulated a hole in terms of *the marginality* (subjectivities, territories, issues). This perspective had been scarcely explored in national TV fiction and was possible based on the convergence of narrative and formal dimensions (exploring TV language compared to cinema), at the same time that multiple eschatological metaphors on (especially capital city and urban) society were introduced.

Different from the main fiction production device in Argentina, mini-series like *Siete vuelos* and *El viaje 9 días buscando Norte* unlike the previous, show a willingness toward expressive exploration with recovery of cinematographic pro-

cedures, a political-poetic interest to give other image interpretations of the territory, in which the result can be considered even more “strange” (especially in the case of *El viaje...*) to the TV-eye of series and mini-series viewers. However, opting for the road movie enabled them to create an angle to discover worlds incorporating their images from the diversity (including constructing from the documentary register).

It can be said, then, that the hegemonic scopic regimen has formed in the last 25 years a way to conceive narrative rhythms, ways of contemplative and spectacular construction, faces and sounds, among other aspects, that are deeply rooted in the memory of viewers in Argentina. For this reason, emphasis is placed on the creative movement that has occurred in these last few years (2010-2015) framed in a battle in terms of the images, symbolic forms and the cognitive modes that have questioned (or at least destabilized) the comprehension of worlds and identities in the context of national mediatic communication.

Notes

1. The project of the Misiones production company *Detrás del Sol* (responsible for this mini-series) was one of the winners of the Consejo Interuniversitario Nacional (CIN) No. 02/2011 Contest for the selection of high-quality and high-definition (Full HD) fiction series for digital television. Gonzalez states, in relation to this contest, that despite not having gathered a federal group, it “had as objective to bring quality technical and argumental content to digital TV screens, also considering that the presentation of a new cultural change in the use of a new TV system implies promoting it and organizing it” (2012:19)

2. The mini-series is one of the productions of Fundación 7°Arte para el Cine Argentino y las Artes from Jujuy (Argentina). *El viaje. 9 días buscando norte* was one of the winners of the first Contest for Federal Fiction Series by Independent Producers and Directors from the (6) Regions of National Territory. The contest’s objective was to create content that would contribute to the repertory of national, provincial and regional identity and that would be included in the Banco de Contenidos Universales de Argentina.

3. For Arancibia: “The passage of spectacularizing social difference that appeared as the object of the communicational discourses and that only consisted of using mechanisms to speak for others to the strategies of the localized visibilities that take on their voices, their bodies, their ways of saying and doing things, their identities and their ways of expressing themselves as valuable to TV spaces, is a fundamental step towards the cultural distributive aim” (2014:149-150).

4. “These films uproot the representations of Patagonia offered by cinema from previous decades, and recreate an experience of the most heartless abandonment, a devastated world, stripped, dismantled, in which life unfolds far from the city, technology and progress and in which the forms of employment were eliminated, or seem to not to have had a place, of forgotten towns stripped of everything, with deserted train stations and abandoned train tracks, a rural world that seems lost in time” (Tranchini, 2011:258)

5. “Estibadores” transport goods via state “opened” roads in order to do it (in this case the international bridge between Argentina and Bolivia) putting them under the watchful eye of the guards and Customs. This type of goods circulation benefits large companies that use it to avoid adding on the importation duty fee. It is a type of job that often is seen in a negative light socially, image which is placed on the people who carry out such work daily, and which is often associated with “smuggling”.

6. Grimson (2004) indicates, in regards to the issues of the border zones, that in recent years the State has increased its presence based on a function of control. In other words, a model of militarization has been abandoned for another that is more linked to an economic-commercial issue. For the local population, state intervention diverts from a function of protection to one linked with regulation (fundamentally in regards to commerce).

7. Stigmatization of a Chilean truckdriver for being Argentine, but also by locals when he looks for work performing odd jobs. Mistreatment received for his physical characteristics is a constant in the mini-series.

8. Beyond accepting that in the discourse of the doxy there is an imagined Argentina (Anderson, 1993) that establishes La Quiaca as the farthest limit, it would seem that the spectacular territory considered as the cognitive limit is the Humahua-

ca Ravine which has even reached international legitimacy having been named a (UNESCO) World Heritage Site. This recognition values the cultural past that the space represents and its symbolic relevance linked to a millenary history of indigenous peoples.

9. The music of the celebrations, characteristic of the region, that are diegetic and non-diegetic accompany the protagonist and the local customs. The melodies chosen identify each trip that Gabriel carries out, both physical as well as metaphorical.

10. For the author: "the revealing of a physical reality hidden from the spectator, in which the time of

the plane is sustained and is felt, maintaining its ambiguity and indetermination, and claiming the view that also is sustained and constructs its own singularity" (2007:125).

11. Yoli, a young woman that the protagonist helps escape from a brothel in Episode 4, is a victim of human trafficking. The reaction from the men in her family (father and brother) upon her arrival is to deny what happened, making it invisible because it is considered a stigma and punish (with physical and symbolic violence) Gabriel when he tries to defend the girl (Episode 7). It also addresses the situation of homosexuals in the context of a conservative society (Episode 5).

Bibliographic References

- Anderson B. (1993). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and the dissemination of nationalism*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Arancibia, V. (2014): "Distributive concentrations in the audiovisual field. Towards the construction of visibility (or visibilities) of diversity". En A. Nicolosi (compiladora) *La televisión en la década kirchnerista. Democracia audiovisual y batalla cultural*. Universidad Nacional de Quilmes.
- Bettendorff, P. (2007): "A director follows an actor, a spectator follows a director. The cinema of Lisandro Alonso". En M. Moore y P. Wolkowicz (editoras) *Cines al margen: nuevos modelos de representación en el cine argentino contemporáneo*. Buenos Aires: Librería.
- Blasini, G. (2016): "Road trip through the Americas: Cars, Roads, and Latin American Cinema", En V. Garibotto & J. Pérez (edit.) *The Latin America Road Movie*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brandellero, S. (2013): *The Brazilian Road Movie*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Briones, C. (1998): *The alteration of the "Fourth World": an anthropological deconstruction of difference*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Sol.
- Corrigan, T. (1991): "Genre, Gender and Hysteria: The Road Movie in Outer Space" En *A cinema without walls: movies and culture after Vietnam*, London: Routledge.
- Dipaola, E. (2013): *Comunidad impropia*. Postmodern aesthetics of social links. Buenos Aires: Letra Viva.
- Garibotto, V. & Pérez, J. (2016): "Introduction: Reconfiguring Precarious Landscapes: the Road movie in Latin America", En *The Latin America Road Movie*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Giordano, M. (2009): "Nation and Identity in the visual imaginaries of Argentina. 19th and 20th centuries". En *ARBOR Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura CLXXXV 740*, noviembre-diciembre (2009), doi: 10.3989/arbor.2009.740n1091
- González, N. (2012): "Content in Argentine digital TV. Strategies and actors", En *I Jor-*

- nadas de Difusión y Capacitación de Aplicaciones y Usabilidad de la Televisión Digital Interactiva, SEDICI Repositorio Institucional de la UNLP, Recuperado de <http://sedici.unlp.edu.ar/handle/10915/25935>
- Grimson, A. (2001): *Borders, states and identifications in the Southern Cone*. Clacso, Recuperado de <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/ar/libros/mato2/grimson.pdf>
- Grimson, A. (2004): *Borders, nations and region*. Fórum Social das Américas, Quito, Ecuador, 25 a 30 de julio de 2004, Recuperado de http://www.ibase.org.br/userimages/alejandro_grimson_esp.pdf
- Guarinos, V. & Gordillo, I. (2011): "Kate, we have to go back" Back and forth of the new narrative structures of the fictional series genre in the Hypertelevision. En M. A. Pérez-Gómez (Editor) *Previously On. Estudios interdisciplinarios sobre la ficción televisiva en la Tercera Edad de Oro de la Televisión*. Sevilla: Biblioteca de la Facultad de Comunicación de la Universidad de Sevilla.
- Laderman, D. (2002): *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie*, Austin: University of Texas Press. Lemes, K. y García Saraví, M. (2010): "The canon of the peripheral", En *Amerika N°*, Recuperado de <http://amerika.revues.org/1504>
- Piedras, P. (2016): "The Contemporary Documentary Road Movie in Latin America: Issues on Mobility, Displacement, and Autobiography", En V. Garibotto & J. Pérez (edit.) *The Latin America Road Movie*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rancière, J. (2014): *El reparto de lo sensible: aesthetic and political*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.
- Tranchini, E.(2010): "The Argentine literary imaginary on the mythical South in the Patagonia road movie". En *Romance Quarterly*, 57:4.
- Zizek, S. (1998): "Multiculturalism, or the cultural aspect of multinational capitalism". En F. Jameson & S. Zizek *Estudios Culturales. Reflexiones sobre el multiculturalismo*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Paidós

About the Authors

Cristina Andrea Siragusa is professor at Universidad de Villa María and Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (Argentina). Compiler of books like *Narrativas en progreso. Dramas en la televisión norteamericana contemporánea* (2012); *Narrativas imaginales. Temporalidades, ficción y TV* (2013); *La Imagen Imaginada. Nueva ficción televisiva en los territorios nacionales* (2017); *La imagen imaginada 2. Debates y reflexiones sobre ficción televisiva en Argentina* (2018).

Mariana Britos has a degree in Image Design and Production and is a researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Villa María (Córdoba, Argentina). She mainly produces documentaries, including various made with support from the INCAA and participating in various national and international festivals.

¿How to cite?

Siragusa, C. (2018). Cruzando fronteras: identidades, series de ficción federal y road movie en la televisión argentina. *Comunicación y Medios*, 27(37), 156-167. doi:10.5354/0719-1529.2018.48619