

# **Transnational Identities in Galician Documentary Film: Alberte Pagán's *Bs. As.* and Xurxo Chirro's *Vikingland***

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## **Abstract**

What is Galician cinema? Should any film set in Galicia be considered as Galician or should this label be restricted to those films spoken in Galician and shot by local filmmakers? In order to bridge the economic constraints that lie behind this dichotomy, many young directors have embraced digital filmmaking and moved towards the non-fiction field, producing a set of works that address the Galician Diaspora from a clearly subjective perspective. Identity has thus become one of the main topics of films such as *Bs. As.* (Alberte Pagán, 2006), *Vikingland* (Xurxo Chirro, 2011) or *Pettring* (Eloy Domínguez Serén, 2013). They all put the migratory phenomenon into a transnational context in both thematic and formal terms. The following analysis of their mise-en-scène strategies aims to explain the way these filmmakers have set a new pattern for Galician cinema in which the global helps to depict the local.

## **Keywords**

Galician Cinema, Novo Cinema Galego, Non-Fiction Film, Digital Filmmaking, Galician Diaspora, Identity, *Bs. As.*, Alberte Pagán, *Vikingland*, Xurxo Chirro.

Galician cinema is an ambiguous and slippery concept. According to some critics, the only films that should be labelled as Galician are those filmed in Galicia and in Galician, directed by local filmmakers and funded by production companies based there. Other critics, on the contrary, perceive any film shot in Galicia as Galician regardless of the filmmaker's origins, or, conversely, they consider any film made anywhere in the world by a Galician filmmaker as Galician, regardless of its language, location or official nationality. The first option tries to be precise at the expense of excluding many titles that do not fulfil all

the requirements. The second option, in turn, seeks to include the largest possible number of works, causing a dangerous lack of definition. Consequently, any attempt to refine this concept has historically been caught between these two positions. This is the reason why most scholars working on this subject have resorted to production criteria, even though this choice has led them to admit that Galician cinema can hardly exist as an independent film industry within the Spanish context (Pérez Perucha 1996, p. 131; Folgar de la Calle 2002, p. 211; Fernández Iglesias 2008, pp. 39-40).

In the 1980s, critics and historians agreed to replace the term ‘Galician cinema’ with ‘Cinema in Galicia’, because this label allowed them to avoid the previous ontological controversy (Hueso Montón 1996, p. 274). The new term placed on the same footing productions such as *El bosque animado / The Enchanted Forest* (José Luis Cuerda, 1987) or *Sempre Xonxa / Always Xonxa* (Chano Piñeiro, 1989), which represent the widest and the most specific options respectively. By the end of the twentieth century, the label ‘Cinema in Galicia’ referred to both a small television industry and a set of maverick filmmakers who worked on their own. The impact of the recent economic crisis has significantly limited the growth potential of this industry, but these economic circumstances has also enabled the rise of a new generation of maverick filmmakers who take advantage of the funding and distribution opportunities provided by digital filmmaking. The core members of what is currently known as *Novo Cinema Galego* would be Alberte Pagán, Óliver Laxe, Ángel Santos, Peque Varela, Xurxo Chirro, Marcos Nine, Eloy Enciso, Pela del Álamo, Lois Patiño, Diana Toucedo, Pablo Cayuela, Xan Gómez Viñas, Otto Roca, Xacio Baño, Alberto Gracia, Ramiro Ledo and Eloy Domínguez Serén, among others. They all share a common interest in non-fiction film understood as their main creative territory, digital filmmaking as their usual working tool and self-production as the only economic system affordable for them.

A hypothetical canon – still under construction - for the *Novo Cinema Galego* should include non-fiction and experimental works such as *Bs. As.* (Alberte Pagán, 2006), *1977* (Peque Varela, 2007), *París #1* (Óliver Laxe, 2008), *Eclipse* (Alberte Pagán, 2010), *Todos vós sodes capitáns / You Are All Captains* (Óliver Laxe, 2010), *Vikíngland* (Xurxo Chirro, 2011), *La Brecha / The Gap* (Marcos Nine, 2011), *Arraianos* (Eloy Enciso, 2012), *Montaña en sombra / Mountain in Shadow* (Lois Patiño, 2012), *Fóra / Out* (Pablo Cayuela and Xan Gómez Viñas, 2012), *N-VI / N-VI, Vanishing Roadsides* (Pela Del Álamo 2012), *Piedad* (Otto Roca, 2012), *O quinto evanxeo de Gaspar Hauser / The Fifth Gospel of Kaspar Hauser* (Alberto Gracia, 2013), *Costa da Morte / Coast of Death* (Lois Patiño, 2013) and *VidaExtra / ExtraLife* (Ramiro Ledo, 2013). These films, however, do not present a clear aesthetic or

thematic unity that allows us to identify the main features of this film movement beyond the filmmakers' will to belong to this group. In fact, the first attempts to summarize such features do not precisely stand out for their clarity:

These new documentaries are heterogeneous and polymorphous, as their idiosyncrasy demands: creative documentaries, unreconciled cinema, non-fiction cinema, mutations... Perhaps the only connection shared by these artists is their personal and singular perspective on the issues they examine, some of which were also the focus of twentieth century Galician writers: the landscape, the rural world, emigration, memory, and the passage of time. These are eternal themes but here they are dealt with from a significantly personal and subjective perspective, and the films have emerged from the periphery of the conventional audio-visual industry and established culture. They are thus a breath of fresh air, different, daring – in short, contemporary – and they also mark a generational renewal which has not yet been sufficiently recognized. All of these filmmakers have been free to undertake their own explorations, set aside all commercial interests, and place the film at the heart of everything, with no dogmas, standards, production models or norms to follow. The tales they tell are hybrid, with an interplay between fiction and documentary and a questioning of the traditional objective point of view of the genre (González Álvarez 2013).

These films do not follow an established pattern, they offer instead a wide variety of proposals. There is a great interest in experimentation and a remarkable willingness to take creative risks. Filmmakers deal with contemporary and universal topics that transcend the local perspective: memory, identity, pantheism, otherness, environmentalism... For the first time in Galicia, creators are supported by both critics and programmers. There is a paradigm shift in film production characterized by the rise of low-cost and the disappearance of traditional producers, a turning point that has led to the predominance of non-fiction film due to its creative freedom and easy availability (González 2013a, my translation).

Without a common aesthetic program, the *Novo Cinema Galego* is basically an open community in which filmmakers share similar practices and interests. They no longer work in a standardized film industry located in a particular territory, but within a decentralized digital network, as Gonzalo de Pedro and Elena Oroz have explained regarding the Catalan non-fiction film:

Plenty of filmmakers (or, more exactly, video makers) [...] are shaping a new mediascape in which the concept of documentary itself is being completely redefined, while the traditional power centres, beginning with the dichotomy between Madrid (as the main industrial centre) and Barcelona (as the capital of auteur cinema), are being relegated to the background in order to make way to a kind of not hierarchical, decentralized and (dis)organized network that is a *real* equivalent to the P2P networks in which people exchange files online without central servers, and where any author is simultaneously an author-producer-and-server. Accordingly, we cannot strictly speak about a dispersion of production centres, or a displacement of the Barcelona-Madrid axis in favour of other places, but about the overcoming of the traditional system, which has been replaced by a dispersed movement disconnected from industry, even though some filmmakers do work between both systems (2010, p. 74, my translation).

The *Novo Cinema Galego* would then be the outcome of the same process of decentralization, that is, the Galician avatar of the so-called *Otro Cine Español* (Losilla 2013, pp. 6-8), as well as the umpteenth attempt to develop a national cinema in Galicia, a project supported, for the first time, by programmers and critics, as Xurxo González said above (2013a). On the one hand, these films are regularly programmed in institutions like the CGAI (*Centro Galego de Artes da Imaxe*), film societies such as the *Cineclub de Compostela* or the *Cineclub Padre Feijoo de Ourense*, and several film festivals, beginning with Play-Doc, in Tui, and following with Curtocircuito and Cineuropa, both in Santiago de Compostela. On the other hand, a few film magazines, blogs and TV programs – namely, *A Cuarta Parede*, *Acto de Primavera* and *Zig Zag* - devote several pages and minutes to promote and analyze these films, thereby helping them to find their potential audience.

Regarding the previous attempts to create a national cinema in Galicia, the main novelty of the *Novo Cinema Galego* has to do with its transnational approach in aesthetic, thematic and distribution

terms. It must be taken into account that these films do not necessary talk about Galicia, but from Galicia: according to Alberte Pagán, the idea is to express ‘a view from here, regardless of whether it deals with a Galician topic or not’ (in Sande 2009, p. 16, my translation). Their audience, in fact, may be both within and outside the country, inasmuch as these works are firstly addressed to the international film festival circuit (Martin Pawley in Sande 2009, p. 17). (1) In this context, the titles currently succeeding in that circuit are the main source of inspiration for the *Novo Cinema Galego*: films halfway between fiction and documentary, storytelling and experimentation, the subjective and the collective, the seen and the imagined. Such an interest in transnational aesthetic models, which do not belong to a single national cinema, is precisely what allows Galician cinema to be currently known as such abroad for the first time in its brief history.

### **Galician Diaspora in Film**

Emigration is a cross-cutting issue in Galician culture: it pervades different times, genres, styles and discourses. From the 1850s to the 1970s, successive generations of Galician people moved to different countries in America – mainly Argentina, Cuba and Venezuela – and Europe – especially Switzerland, France and Germany. One of the first films to depict this phenomenon was *Canto de emigración / A Hymn to Migration* (Antonio Román, 1934), a short documentary made during the Spanish Second Republic in which the causes of emigration were addressed from an endogenous perspective, that is, from within Galicia itself. This approach, however, was soon replaced with an exogenous gaze: from the 1940s to the 1970s, Galician emigrants were almost exclusively represented from the point of view of the host society, in both Spanish films about *indianos* –returned migrants- and Latin American films about *gayegos*. (2)

In the 1980s, after the Spanish transition to democracy, the migration dynamics slowed down to the point of almost disappearing at the end of the century, when the number of returnees became higher than the number of emigrants (Bouzada Fernández and Lage Picos 2004, pp. 26-35). In this period, the two perspectives discussed above co-existed in fiction film: on the one hand, titles such as *Gallego / Galician* (Manuel Octavio Gómez, 1988), *Frontera Sur / South Border* (Gerardo Herrero, 1998) or *Un Franco, 14 Pesetas / Crossing Borders* (Carlos Iglesias, 2006) preserved the previous exogenous approach; while *O pai de Migueliño / Migueliño's Father* (Miguel Castelo, 1977), *Mamasunción* (Chano Piñeiro, 1984) or *Sempre*

*Xonxa* recovered the endogenous perception of the Galician Diaspora. Obviously, both approaches were conditioned by the kind of stories filmmakers wanted to tell: on the one hand, the adventures of emigrants away from their country; on the other hand, the effects of their absence on their homeland, and especially among their loved ones.

The emergence of the *Novo Cinema Galego* chronologically coincides with the first years of the recent economic crisis and the subsequent restart of migration flows. It should not be surprising that many of these filmmakers have taken up the issue again, especially those that somewhat belong to the Diaspora: Óliver Laxe was born in Paris, where his parents had emigrated, and shot his first feature film in Tangiers (*Todos vós sodes capitáns*); Peque Varela emigrated to London, where she made *1977*; and Ramiro Ledo filmed *VidaExtra* in Barcelona, where he lived for almost a decade. Their personal itineraries and creative decisions correspond to a new migratory cycle in which the previous dichotomy between exogenous and endogenous gaze is no longer operating. For example, *París #1* could be interpreted as a travelogue in which Óliver Laxe meets his Galician roots and gradually becomes more and more fascinated by a series of group dynamics that are as strange as familiar to him. By showing both landscape and humandscape through a primitivist visual style, he establishes a permanent tension between recognition and estrangement that ultimately leads to an idiosyncratic film in which the everyday and the exotic goes hand in hand.

The filmmakers of the *Novo Cinema Galego* voluntarily place themselves in a limbo between tradition and modernity: being aware of the limitations of localism, their films explore easily recognizable situations in order to depict Galicia in relation to the rest of the world, that is, from a transnational, instead of a postnational, position. Consequently, the way they depict Galician identity moves beyond *costumbrismo* to approach the postmodern paradigm described by Gérard Imbert:

Identity is perceived as something cracked that no longer brands for life, something that can be challenged and negotiated in accordance with the Other, because identity currently relies on relational issues. From this perspective, the relational contract is stronger than the social contract, while immanent values – those constructed by the subject itself while interacting with the Other – prevail over transcendent values – those imposed by value systems (2010, p. 160, my translation).

Galician films directly dealing with the emigrant's experience, such as *Bs. As.*, *Vikingland* or *Pettring* (Eloy Domínguez Serén, 2013), no longer confront emigrants with the world, but rather show their encounter with host societies through the recycling of all types of private material filmed by emigrants themselves. The clearest case is *Vikingland*, a found-footage documentary made from a sailor's video blog that depicts his everyday life as a migrant worker away from his homeland. *Bs. As.* and *Pettring*, in turn, are made from images belonging to the filmmakers' personal recordings – in particular, a travelogue and a film correspondence. As we shall see below, these films are, first and foremost, reflections on the emigrant's identity, an identity that first needs to go abroad to encounter the Other in order to be later perceived and assumed by the individual him- or herself.

### **The Two Sides of the Same Ocean: *Bs. As.***

Alberte Pagán was the first Galician filmmaker who embraced digital filmmaking. His first feature film, *Bs. As.*, echoes Stan Brakhage's, Michael Snow's or Andy Warhol's works, probably because Pagán is a recognized specialist in the American avant-garde film (Pagán 1999, 2004, 2007, 2014). More specifically, this movie strongly resembles *News from Home* (Chantal Akerman, 1977), given that both films combine elements from non-fiction genres such as the family portrait and the travelogue in order to address the historical relationship between Europe and America, which are respectively represented by Brussels and New York in *News from Home* and by Galicia and Argentina in *Bs. As.* The most significant similarity between both films is their narrative structure, which is based on the filmmakers' family correspondence. They also share several stylistic features, inasmuch as both are composed of subjective impressions of foreign cityscapes. Indeed, Pagán even borrows some shots and leitmotifs previously used by Akerman, such as her long static takes filmed from moving vehicles or in subway cars and stations. It could be said, therefore, that Pagán rewrites Akerman's film in a different time and country, although *Bs. As.* differs from *News from Home* in terms of approach and meaning.

Pagán aimed to reflect on how Galician identity is perceived on both sides of the Atlantic by people from different generations: in the first half of *Bs. As.*, the filmmaker's mother tells the story of how her brother went to Argentina in the 1950s, from where he never came back again; while in the second half, a strange voice, which belongs to a British woman of Indian origin called Jesvir Mahil, reads aloud a series of emails sent to the filmmaker by his Argentinean cousin, Celia, the daughter of the

aforementioned lost relative. In her messages, Celia roughly describes her everyday life after the 1998–2002 Argentine Great Depression, but she also makes some comments on her inherited identity as a second-generation Galician. Jesvir Mahil’s accent is a key element to convey the immigrant’s experience, because her uncanny diction in Spanish – a language she did not speak - causes a deep sense of estrangement that attempts to aurally reproduce the immigrant’s shock upon arrival. The transnational vocation of *Bs. As.* comes precisely from this kind of formal choices, through which Pagán seeks to locate his film halfway between different continents, cultures and film traditions, in a liminal state in which the local and the global are closely intertwined.

The film’s division into two parts emphasizes a change of direction in the transatlantic dialogue that coincides with the reversal of the migration flows at the turn of the century: first, the story goes from Galicia to Argentina by means of the mother’s voice; and then, it returns from Argentina to Galicia through the cousin’s words. This change of narrator is also associated with a change in the camera position regarding the cityscape: Pagán initially places the camera in an elevated point of view, thereby adopting what Michel de Certeau named the *voyeur’s* perspective; but he later films at street level, using the walker’s perspective in order to get closer to his cousin’s experience (De Certeau 1984, pp. 91-98) [Images 1 & 2]. Such choice suggests the filmmaker’s gradual involvement with the city, Buenos Aires, or at least with the historical account associated with it. Consequently, the images filmed from outside the urban fabric refer to the geographical and emotional distance that separated the filmmaker’s mother’s generation; while the shots filmed at street level aim to show the place from where the cousin’s words come as an antidote capable of bridging the distance.



Images 1 & 2: *Bs. As.* *Voyeur’s* perspective (left) and walker’s perspective (right)

Pagán's and Celia's correspondence began at the beginning of 2002. Its original purpose was to discuss inheritance issues, but it soon became a dialogue about Celia's personal situation in the wake of the economic crisis: throughout ten emails written over two years, she explains her family situation, gives her opinion on the new social movements, describes her precarious employment status and finally reflects on her inherited identity as a second-generation Galician. Interest in family roots is a common reaction among Latin Americans of European descent in times of crisis, especially in those cases in which these roots may provide them with a new passport to retrace the steps of their ancestors. Some of these people may become returned emigrants, who reverse the previous family relationship between the country of origin and destination. Under these circumstances, their sense of belonging to one nation or another relies on practical reasons or elective affinities, because they are transnational subjects. Accordingly, *Bs. As.* advocates the need to adopt an open identity always under construction, which in cinematic terms entails the need to enrich any film tradition by means of foreign influences. In this context, a transnational identity does not lead to the dissolution of the original one, but to its strengthening through the contact with the Other.

### **Self-Portrait of the Filmmaker as a Migrant Worker: *Vikingland* and *Pettring***

Autumn, 1993. Luis Lomba 'O Haia' signed onto the crew of the ferry that links Rømo, in Denmark, with the German island of Sylt. At the time, his baggage included a camcorder with which he documented his everyday life and working activities between October 1993 and March 1994. A few years later, Galician film critic Xurxo Gonzalez found a copy of these recordings in his family home, where they had arrived as a gift for his father, who was once one of Lomba's workmates at the ferry. Being aware of the memorial value and artistic possibilities of this material, Xurxo González became Xurxo Chirro, his avatar as a filmmaker, and re-edited the footage, paying particular attention to those sequences in which Lomba and his workmates, among which there were other Galician sailors, depict themselves as migrant workers. Such recordings are a good example of what Jean-Louis Comolli has termed 'auto mise en scène', an individual's conscious and deliberate representation filmed by him- or herself (2003, pp. 153-154). The resulting film, *Vikingland*, preserves the original purpose of the recordings, but also emphasizes its nature as a document of the Galician Diaspora to the point of becoming a synecdoche of the emigrant's experience.

Chirro restructured Lomba's video blog in nine chapters, whose titles are quite explicit regarding its content: 'Crew', 'Luis', 'Cold', 'Christmas', 'Work', 'Journeys', 'Deck', 'Ice' and 'Whiteness'. The film evolves from a tangible beginning focused on the filmed subjects, who are introduced in 'Crew' and 'Luis', to an abstract end in which the action is replaced by a series of non-figurative images in 'Ice' and 'Whiteness'. Between both ends, the plot combines scenes of everyday life - 'Cold', 'Christmas' - and working time - 'Work', 'Journeys' - in which the initial playful and laid back attitude of the filmed subjects is gradually overshadowed by their alienation caused by both the job and the environment. Aboard the ferry, the camera serves to fight alienation, inasmuch as it gives a new meaning to the work, which becomes a performative act: this is the reason why the length of the shots in the chapter 'Work' is exactly the same as the length of the tasks undertaken by Lomba. 'The camera', therefore, 'is not simply a recording device that captures the experiences of the displacement', Alisa Lebow explains, 'it can be a symptom of that very displacement' (2012, pp. 230-231).

The long section of the Christmas dinner includes a direct statement about the ultimate sense of the recordings: in that sequence, the sailors directly address the camera, integrating it into their celebration 'to show to the people what a sailor's life is like', as one of them says; because the camera embodies the absent loved ones with whom they would like to share so many things lived away from home. Regarding this situation, Roger Odin has drawn attention to the documentary - almost historiographical - value of this kind of footage: 'home movies are usually the only means of documenting those racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual or social communities that have been marginalized by the official version of history since long time ago' (2008, p. 206, my translation). Lomba and his workmates thus express a conscious desire to create a document, which Chirro later strengthens in *Vikingland*.

The film fulfils and transcends the five basic functions identified by James M. Moran in the domestic mode: first, it represents the everyday, the daily life aboard the ferry; second, it explores and negotiates both individual and collective identity, as Lomba does directly and Chirro indirectly; third, it offers a material tool to establish generational continuity, which refers here to the transition from Lomba to Chirro as the subject who produces the images, as well as from Chirro's father to his filmmaker son; fourth, it constructs an image of home, which this time is an absent, offscreen home – Galicia - and fifth, it provides people with a narrative format capable of telling personal and family stories, something that

becomes more evident in *Lupita* (Xurxo Chirro, 2012), a short film made after *Vikingland* in which Chirro reveals the original purpose and receiver of Lomba's recordings (Moran 2002).

The domestic mode, according to Elspeth Kydd, also serves to articulate social groupings and establish their relationship regarding the imagined community of the nation (2012, pp. 190-191). In this sense, Lomba attempts to document the sailors' way of life, while Chirro links this group with the nation by conceiving *Vikingland* as the flip side of all those stories about absent emigrants that are so usual in Galician culture and society. Arguably, the national feeling of these sailors increases during their experience in the triple border between Germany, Denmark and the North Sea: again, what identified them as Galicians is the contact with the Other, which is here represented by the rest of the crew.

Chirro extracts this video blog from its original context and places it into a new one, in which the images, as Laura Rascaroli has pointed out, 'retain their original meanings but also obtain new ones' (2009, p. 51). *Vikingland* can then be interpreted in personal terms, given that the filmmaker once worked as a sailor; but also in family terms, since Chirro's father appears briefly in the footage; and even in professional terms, because this kind of video blogs are an important part of the footage collected and preserved by the Proxecto Socheo, a research project aimed at recovering the film heritage of the Baixo Miño region that is directed by Chirro himself under his real name, Xurxo González (2013b). Thanks to this polisemy, *Vikingland* can be understood as both a public record from a community archive and a private document through which the filmmaker shares part of his emotional memory with the audience. The outcome has even inspired other filmmakers who are currently living similar experiences, like Eloy Domínguez Serén, who has also depicted himself as a migrant worker in *Petting* [Images 3 & 4].



**Images 3 & 4: Luis Lomba in *Vikingland* (left) and Eloy Domínguez Serén in *Petting* (right)**

This short film arises from *Cartas / Letters* (Eloy Domínguez Serén / Marcos Nine, 2012-2013), a film correspondence in which Eloy Domínguez Serén tells his life as an emigrant in Stockholm to Marcos Nine, who chronicles in exchange the effects of the economic crisis in Galicia. These filmmakers have unknowingly updated a long-forgotten genre, the correspondence film *avant la lettre*, which consists of travelogues and documentaries commissioned to professional filmmakers by both emigrants in America and their relatives in Europe in order to maintain a mutual film exchange during the first half of the twentieth century. (3) Contrary to these works, which were conceived by and for a collectivity, Domínguez Serén's and Nine's letters are addressed to a particular individual, but their images can also represent the entire collectivity understood as the sum of those who emigrate and those who stay.

The generation gap between *Vikingland* and *Pettring* corresponds to different migration cycles. Both Luis Lomba 'O Haia' and Eloy Domínguez Serén share the same will to leave a testimony of their experience, but their feelings are not exactly the same: in *Vikingland*, Lomba expresses a slight homesickness and a clear class pride that have completely disappeared in *Pettring*, because Domínguez Serén belongs to a generation unable to find a job at home despite being much better educated and trained than the previous one. At a particular point of the film, Domínguez Serén even states that 'after a five-year Degree and one-year Master's program, I'm the least qualified worker here', referring to his temporary job as a construction worker in Sweden. *Pettring* basically conveys the frustration and disorientation among new emigrants, who have neither a future nor a way back. This post-punk attitude is fortunately balanced by Domínguez Serén's fascination for Swedish society, to the point that *Pettring* is rather a self-portrait of an immigrant instead of an emigrant. This time, the transnational experience not only highlights the original identity, but also foresees its evolution in the medium term, offering a glimpse into the future that causes both anxiety and pleasure.

### **Conclusion: Representing the Periphery from the Periphery**

These three films show how Galician identity works as an ontological anchor that allows emigrants to orient themselves after the loss of their geographical, cultural and economic referents. In these documentaries, the filmed subjects express and defend their national identity as a consequence of their transnational experience. If we apply this logic to the *Novo Cinema Galego*, we can conclude that this group of filmmakers addresses identity issues from a peripheral position, which is transnational in itself:

they consciously avoid the centre to settle down in the margins, borrowing ideas from global non-fiction genres such as the travelogue, the found-footage documentary or the correspondence film in order to enrich their film tradition without giving up its particular idiosyncrasy.

This dynamic explains why so many Galician films have been shot outside Galicia - *Bs. As.*, *Todos vós sodes capitáns*, *Vikingland*, *Montaña en sombra*, *Pettring*, etc - as well as their systematic tendency to explore geographical and cultural borders, whether between Galicia and Portugal (*Arraianos*), Galicia and Castile (*N-VI*), rural and urban areas (*Piedad*) or real places and their respective myths (*Fóra*, *Costa da Morte*). Such an interest in borders is not only thematic but also formal, given that several films play with formats halfway between fiction and non-fiction, such as *Todos vós sodes capitáns* and *Arraianos*, or between home movies and professional recordings, as happens in *Bs. As.*, *París #1* and *Vikingland*. Accordingly, just as Galician migrants have reinforced their individual and collective identity through the encounter with the Other, the *Novo Cinema Galego* has widened the Galician cinematic imaginary by embracing transnational influences from global genres and filmmakers. These foreign influences have been primarily used to update the local film scene, but also – and this is perhaps the most important achievement of the *Novo Cinema Galego* – to create some representations in which, for once, Galician people can recognize themselves on the screen.

### Notes

(1) Between 2010 and 2014, the films of the *Novo Cinema Galego* have been selected, and sometimes even awarded, by international film festivals such as Cannes (*Todos vós sodes capitáns*), Locarno (*Arraianos*, *Costa da Morte*), Rotterdam (*O quinto evanxeo de Gaspar Hauser*), Marseilles (*Vikingland*), Buenos Aires (*La Brecha*, *Arraianos*, *VidaExtra*), Roma (*Montaña en sombra*) or Copenhagen (*Fóra*).

(2) Galician emigrants were pejoratively depicted in Latin American film through the popular character of the *gayego*. A prime example of this character is Cándida Loureiro Raballada, an antiquated maid played by Argentinean actress Niní Marshall in films such as *Cándida* (Luis Bayón Herrera, 1939), *Cándida millonaria / Candida, Millionairess* (Luis Bayón Herrera, 1941), *Santa Cándida* (Luis César Amadori, 1945), *Una gallega en Mexico / A Galician in Mexico* (Julián Soler, 1949), *Los enredos de una gallega / Galician Trouble* (Fernando Soler, 1951), etc.

(3) Manuel González Álvarez and Giuliana Bruno have respectively documented the existence of correspondence films among Galician immigrants in Buenos Aires and Italian immigrants in New York (González Álvarez 1996, pp. 216-224; and Bruno 1997, p. 54).

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## Biography

Iván Villarrea Álvarez (A Coruña, 1981) is a film critic, researcher, professor and programmer. He holds a degree in Journalism and another in Contemporary History, both from the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, where he also obtained a Master in Art History with a dissertation on Pedro Costa's films. He holds a Ph.D in English Studies from the Universidad de Zaragoza, where he wrote a doctoral thesis entitled *From Post-Industrial City to Postmetropolis. The Representation of Urban Change in Non-Fiction Film (1977-2010)*. He has worked as visiting researcher at the Universidad de La Habana, the Roehampton University, the University of Southern California and the California Institute of the Arts, has published numerous papers on the representation of the city in film, and has co-edited the volume *Jugar con la Memoria. El Cine Portugués en el Siglo XXI* (2014). Since 2013, he also co-directs the online film magazine *A Cuarta Pared*.