

## Special Issue No. 41 "Latin American Televised Fiction: dimensions and challenges of the 21st century"

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Guest Editors:

### Simone Rocha

Associate Professor,  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil

### Gabriela Borges

Adjunct Professor,  
Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, Brazil

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The important changes occurring in the audiovisual sector and their impact on regional production motivated the publishing of this special issue on "Latin American Televised Fiction: dimensions and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century". There are numerous and varied aspects to these shifts, and we are convinced that contributions made by researchers from different institutions, nationalities, and cultures in Latin America are essential parts in the construction of a production landscape; a multifaceted and extremely dynamic sector that, at the same time, remains operative and continues to perform a fundamental role in this continent's cultural history.

The monograph is organized around addressing three key aspects currently present in fictional television series in Latin America. The first two studies focus on the narrative analysis of Chilean experiences. The two following articles address the new means for production and presenting of these fictions based on the analysis of an example from Brazil and another from Argentina. The two final texts analyze modes of consumption and creative production that online social media provide based on two case studies, one in Chile and another in Brazil.

The first article centers on re-establishing and updating Jesús Martín-Barbero's diagnosis of the role Latin American audiovisual narratives play in our realities:

*(...) starting in the fifties/sixties, Latin American majorities access and appropriate modernity, without abandoning their oral culture. We are facing a profound symbiosis born of the complicity and complexity of the relationship between orality, prevailing as the primary cultural experience, and the electronic/digital visualities of television and video games. Despite how alarming it may sound, it is an undeniable cultural fact that the majorities in Latin America are not joining the contemporary world through the pages of a book, but rather via the genres and the narratives, languages, and writings of the audiovisual industry and experience (Martín-Barbero, 2003, p. 262).*

This continues to be a current, accurate, and enlightening diagnosis of the contemporary Latin America experience with fictional series narratives as confirmed by some of the articles that comprise this issue. These are works that describe and discuss how the analyzed audiovisual productions constitute important mediations in our experience with the eras and temporalities of the cultural worlds used as reference.

Considering the current political and social context in Chile, Lorena Antezana and Cristian Cabalin present "Repression and Memory: Political Violence and Fiction on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Military Coup in Chile". The article effectively contributes to understanding the role that communication media play, especially television, in the dispute over narratives and stories on issues that have marked Chilean society and are updated in this country's recent history: the violence and authoritarianism of the State and its construal in light of revisionist theses and advances in neoliberal politics that camouflage structural inequalities. In this article, the authors analyze how three different generations of viewers build their memories related to the recent past and on violence exercised by the dictatorship, via the reception of four television series: *Los 80*, *Los archivos del cardenal*, *Ecos del desierto* and *No, la serie*. The authors also offer inroads on how to better understand the impacts and implications of fiction on contemporary Chilean historical reality.

The article “Narrative analysis and creation of drama series: The first season of the television series *Los 80*” offers a perspective focused on the fictional experience of a television series. The purpose of the article is to contribute to the analysis and creation of series based on the dramatic foundations of the script quality of a series that audiences significantly identify with both at the time it was broadcast and years later. Via an analysis based on the theory and dramatic technique of the serialized story, Pablo Unda Henríquez and Paz Crisóstomo Flores argue that it is possible to extrapolate narrative decisions taken in *Los 80* that serve to analyze and produce other television series.

The contribution of these articles both to this monograph and the overall field of television studies lies, above all, in that they show how regional audiovisual production continues to be a key place for experiences of “re-acknowledgement” (in the sense proposed by Martín-Barbero: a renewed awareness and/or recognition of perhaps forgotten knowledge) of the history of Latin American countries and their societies.

The second set of articles explores and reflects on new narrative strategies in today’s market. This can be related to the emergence and expansion of a new audiovisual ecosystem and the leadership role that Netflix plays in the global market of streaming services. Said influence of the American-born company—but with millions of subscribers around the world, including Latin America—is supported on at least two fronts: its prolific production of original content or the “Netflix original” tag and the inclusion and presentation of fictional series in new launch forums, such as international film festivals.

Marcel Vieira Barreto Silva and Larissa Nascimento Lopes da Silva propose in their article “Nostalgic Gestures in Brazilian serial fiction: the case of *Samantha!*” a clarifying perspective for analyzing and better understanding the use of nostalgia as a strategy to capture audiences in television programs, particularly via Netflix. In the analysis of *Samantha!*, a “Netflix original” series, the authors highlight at least two relevant aspects of what they call the instrumentalization of nostalgia in contemporary audiovisual products. The first reveals that nostalgia should be thought of as a dimen-

sion anchored to the dynamics of contemporary media consumption. The second, in the series in question, specifically reveals how the act of revisiting the past is ambiguous, which is to say, a bitter sweet emotion; bitter in that it reminds the viewer of something that is no longer present today, and sweet in that the memory it brings to mind evokes a sense of pleasure. The article on *Samantha!* updates various contemporary debates on nostalgia, proving that it is not an exclusively-American phenomenon, but rather an evident trend in Over-The-Top (OTT) dramatization that supersedes the production location, in this case, emphasizing Brazilian discussions on the topic.

“Argentine TV Fictions at International Film Festivals” outlines a panorama of recent fiction series productions for Argentine television that have been presented in the circuit of international film festivals. One of the important aspects of Carolina Soria’s work is her contribution to the analysis of a novel issue within the festival circuit and how film directors have been inserted into the direction of fictional series. The author considers the changes the incursion of television series produces in festivals, and in the aesthetics of cinematographic production. Furthermore, Soria discusses to what degree festivals assimilate the series format or whether they see it as an equivalent to full-length film production.

The third set of articles addresses an aspect that has been widely explored in contemporary television studies: new modes of audiovisual consumption and the subsequent production of creative content, especially in online social media. In these studies, *prosumers* showcase their media skills in creating content on two levels. On one hand, they develop their way of thinking and perceiving the world via the images they consume; on the other, develop critical and creative skills about media in general that can be traced in the content they produce.

The article “Honest, Impolite, and Wicked: An Analysis of *Telenovela* Character Fanpages”, by Daniel Ríos and Dandara Magalhães, discusses the original media content production strategies deployed in the pages created on Facebook and on which they post memes based on characters from Brazilian soap operas. The pages produce humo-

rous content in the form of macro images, using the actors' cultural repertoire as reference, and the characters that they play in soap operas, which are resignified. The article identifies and analyzes these memes, via a mapping of the strategies used by the creators of these pages/profiles, in order to maintain and/or increase audience participation, in a context of digital production and consumption in which a post can easily go viral.

The article "Appropriation of audiovisual production in Chilean college students' creative writing and their representation of family", by Juan Carlos Carrillo and Beatriz Feijoo, explores the influence of audiovisual consumption in college students and their resignification of their own creative writing production practices. In the framework of an undergraduate creative writing course and via the use of the online platform Wattpad, 50 students wrote fictional novels in which all the stories included complex representations of family, independent of their significance to the plot. Therefore, as a final result, we saw texts laden with visual influences coming from films, series and video games, with the ideas of families that adopt various forms and values.

The panorama we present here includes relevant aspects to better understand current fiction production in South America. The first refers to the growing presence of serialized formats as a result of the current trend in audiovisual production, one that aligns with global tendencies in the era of streaming services. The second aspect that appears from this set of studies is related to the dynamic of change and how it gives more freedom in content and has expanded the range of possible audiovisual narratives. In terms of market strategies, the focus on audiences in the global production scenario has highlighted a particular challenge: finding a path to "audience reintegration" (Castellano & Meimaridis, 2017). This is the case with Netflix which seeks to connect with an already existing audience using nostalgia as a resource to engage with certain narratives. Lastly, viewers have a new, second role; they now also produce content, content that can influence the effects of fictional series, and their production.

The articles included in this monograph issue: "Latin American Televised Fiction: dimensions and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century", the objects,

the methodologies and the processes that they reveal and discuss suggest that it is not the story that is in crisis. Rather, what is at play are the new forms of production, distribution, consumption and appropriation.

As guest editors invited to prepare this special issue, we want to thank Professor Javier Mateos-Pérez who, before leaving his position as general-editor of *Comunicación y Medios*, entrusted us with the challenge of getting this issue to press. The entire process of putting out the call, distributing and promoting, reviewing field work, all to edit the issue you are reading was a stimulating endeavor and, we hope, it will contribute to contemporary discussion on audiovisual production in Latin America. Here, we explore a panorama that identifies and spotlights some of the strategies used for producing contemporary Latin American fiction, and with this intellectual opportunity, provide the means to strengthen dialogue and collaboration that both enriches and challenges our work on contemporary communication and cultural issues in Latin America. Such work excites and motivates us, especially in difficult times like those we are experiencing now at the close of this issue.

#### References

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