
Cartographies of Identity in *Caballos salvajes*

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During the 1990s, Argentina's implementation of neoliberal reforms, which were directed to fully incorporate the country in the global economy, led, as it is well known, to a profound social and economic crisis. The effects of that crisis in daily life and the impact of globalization on national culture became a focal topic of the Argentine cinematic production of the time. The films of those years and of the beginning of the new century show a strong interest in examining the features of the times and the result of the "desnacionalización" ["de-nationalization"] and the "des-democratización" ["de-democratization"] of the state and society (Quijano). Argentine films addressed topics such as the increase in social inequalities, the marginalization of youth, the urban decay, the preponderance of crime and corruption and the weakening of national culture. Although Argentine cinema pointedly displayed the dire condition of the country, it also worked to affirm the nation. As Joanna Page has so aptly observed: "Recent Argentine films are implicated in a dual effort to chart the decline of the state and to question its legitimacy while reasserting national identity and rebuilding a sense of community mobilized around an idea of the nation" (312).

Within this context, it is noticeable the interest that several filmmakers demonstrate in representing in their films the regions of the interior of Argentina and in offering them in contrast to the urban spaces of Buenos Aires. The landscape of the interior in these films is not just a setting, a background for the unfolding of the drama; rather, images of the land—of natural, open spaces—stand in the foreground and take a central role in the narrative. We can appreciate the imagery in, among other films, *Un lugar en el mundo* (Aristarain 1992), *Caballos salvajes* (Piñeyro 1995), *La vida según Muriel* (Milewicz 1997), *Tocá para mí* (Fürth 2001), and *Lugares comunes* (Aristarain 2002). The manner in which these films present the landscape builds a sense of place and creates, to borrow Don Mitchell's term, a "geography of belonging" (259). The emphasis on landscape as place establishes in these films a reflection on the condition of cultural identity under deterritorialization, that is, the cultural experience of globalization generated by "the loss of the 'natural' relation of culture to geographical and social territories" (García Canclini 228-229). At the same time, however, these films attempt to

anchor national identity in the national territory, and in order to do so they make use of the long established source of representing identity in Latin America: the dichotomy city/countryside. In Argentina that opposition is expressed in the renowned contrast between Buenos Aires and the interior. With this approach, these films engage in acts of “reterritorialization,” that is to say, they become involved in those “partial territorial relocalizations of old and new symbolic productions” that always accompany the process of deterritorialization (García Canclini 228-229). Consequently, they join other contemporary Argentine films in that, while they operate in the transnational market and even take some of the characteristics of the Hollywood cinema, they firmly assert the cultural roots of the nation and make the nation the *mise-en-scène* of their production (Page 312).

In *Caballos salvajes* [*Wild Horses*] as an example, cinematic techniques and narrative elements construct the landscape as place. To highlight this treatment of the landscape, we can contrast it with the one employed in the film *Una sombra ya pronto serás* [*A Shadow You Soon Will Be*] (Olivera 1994). Both films underscore the landscape to express and comment on the cultural experience of globalization; but while *Una sombra ya pronto serás* focuses on showing precisely the sensation of “placelessness” that the globalization of culture generates, *Caballos salvajes* counters it by pointing to the national territory, to the particularities of localized place as the foundation of identity.

In studies of globalization, the compression of time and space in modernity has been at the center of the discussion. Anthony Giddens elucidates this feature of modernity pointing to two processes: “distantiation” and “disembedding.” Distantiation refers to “the conditions under which time and space are organised so as to connect presence and absence” (14) and disembedding to the “‘lifting out’ of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space” (21). In modern life social relations are not limited to space, as was the case in pre-modern societies where face-to-face interactions were based on “proximity” and anchored in place. Modernity stretched social relations across time and space and disembedded them from their attachment to local environments. Our daily lives still go on in “real” and familiar places, but we are also conscious that they are “phantasmagoric,” that is to say, their “familiar features are often not unique to that locale and part of its ‘organic development’ but, rather, features that have been ‘placed into’ the locale by distanced forces” (Tomlinson, *Globalization* 107). The shopping mall, for example, offers the comfort and security of its familiar features, but we know that its characteristics are shared by multiple shopping malls nationally and around the world (Tomlinson, *Globalization* 107).

The film *Una sombra ya pronto serás* gives expression to the transformation that globalization brings to the way we connect to our local environments and to the impact those changes have on our cultural practices, experiences, and identities. In other words, this film concentrates on the condition of deterritorialization. The film is based faithfully on Osvaldo Soriano's novel of the same title, which was written between 1989 and 1990. In both the film and the novel, we enter, as spectators or readers, a phantasmagoric world, one that consists of spaces with recognizable features but that is, at the same time, an inhospitable environment, devoid of the comfort and security that familiar places offer. The characters we meet are solitary travelers who encounter each other by chance and separate after brief connections only to find each other on the road again later. They pass through desolate plains and isolated, decrepit towns, identical to each other not only in their sleepy plazas but also in the lethargy that consumes them and the apathy of their inhabitants. The characters are beings who seek a sense of location and direction, looking, unsuccessfully, for points of reference that can help them arrive to their destinations.

The narrator/protagonist is a nameless individual whose past is barely drawn. The few details about his life indicate that he is an Argentine computer programmer who has lived and worked in Europe for many years. In his wandering through desolate plains, trying to get to Neuquén, to the southwest of Argentina, he first encounters Coluccini, a second-rate swindler who pretends to be Italian with the intention of making his fake money credible for the scams. Coluccini carries the weight of his memories, the remembrance of a failed business, a circus, where, if we were to believe him, he was an acrobat and magician. He also endures the bitter memory of the wife and children who had abandoned him to follow his business partner to Australia, taking with them what was left of the business. The entire country had been converted into a circus and his, Coluccini laments, was unneeded.

During his journey the protagonist also meets other individuals. He comes across Lem, a reserved and dejected man. His car, a Jaguar with documentation from the state of New Jersey, his elegant suits, the luxurious objects that fill his vehicle and what is for the protagonist a strange vocabulary—he says, for example, “autobus” instead of “colectivo,” the typical Argentine expression—suggest that he is a wealthy foreigner. There is also Nadia, a fortune-teller; Barrante, a traveling salesman who dreams of having a “private enterprise”; a young couple going to Cleveland, Ohio in an old Mercury; and a fake priest who enthusiastically assures wealthy ranchers that the rich *can* pass through the eye of the needle. They are a diverse cast of wanderers lost in a space of uncertainty and deception.

The places through which the characters pass (motels, hotels, small rural towns, bars, gas stations) offer recognizable features, but they provide only brief and provisional shelter and are far from giving the reassurance the travelers need. These localities have lost their particular features. They are all similar: the same plazas, the same monoliths, the same dust. The names of towns or streets, with which the location of a particular place is announced, are of no importance anymore. Road signs that mark the direction to the towns lay in a pile by the side of the road. Why bother to identify the towns if they are, after all, the same?

The characters' journey takes on the characteristics of the absurd. The protagonist goes around, forwards and backwards, and at certain moments he finds himself, as he confesses, "en el mismo lugar que al principio o en otro idéntico" ["in the same place of the beginning or in another identical one"]. Lem had traveled great distances without even having noticed it. He explains: "Una vez estuve en Alaska y después aparecí en Kuala Lumpur. No me acuerdo de haber subido jamás a un barco" ["Once I was in Alaska and later I turned up in Kuala Lumpur. I do not remember ever getting on a ship"]. Coluccini has Bolivia as his destination and he is headed there but he never arrives. How can one arrive at a particular place if there are not particular features that distinguish one from another? How can a specific place be found if there are no directions or ways of knowing that one has found it? The young couple headed for Cleveland travel as if they were to find that city around the corner from where they are. Local space has lost its particular features and its distance from other areas and places are indistinguishable from each other or merge in perplexing ways.

The novel was published in the year Carlos Saúl Menem became the president of Argentina after the bloody military dictatorship and Raúl Alfonsín's failed presidency. The neoliberal project implemented by the military government and the constant economic crisis that Alfonsín had to confront had left the country in a serious economic situation. The state was insolvent and inflation had reached an astonishing 4,000%. The Argentina of 1990 was a deteriorated place and the people were exhausted after so many years of political conflict and economic crisis. It is possible, then, to interpret *Una sombra ya pronto serás* as "una sinécdoque del país tras el paso de los milicos" ["a synecdoche of the country after the military had passed through"], as Sergio Tarín does in his review of the novel. The title and the landscape, which consists of dilapidated towns and desolate places filled with rubble and abandoned buildings, certainly suggest the collapse of the nation and the uncertain path of the country's future. The condition of the country at that time was not, however, the result of an isolated project. We must see it and understand it, rather, in the international context that generated that plan. The

neoliberal policies of the military dictatorship were a response to the forces of the new wave of capitalism: globalization. Under the dictatorship and the economic program of José Martínez de Hoz, considered the most brilliant of the “Chicago Boys,” the protectionist state built by Peronism began to be dismantled. Free market was established as the principal drive of the economy while the role of the state was dramatically reduced. The government promoted the privatization of the public sector and the opening of the market to foreign investment. Later, Menem would continue this path with the catastrophic results that Argentina is still enduring.

By the time the film version premiered in 1994, Argentina was already immersed in the frenetic current of neoliberal politics and in the transformations brought on by the forces of globalization. The effects of these changes were felt in the cultural sphere, altering experiences, practices, and identities. The film powerfully conveys not only the state of the nation but also the troubling confusion of cultural upheaval. The experience is eloquently articulated in the relationship the characters have with their surroundings. In this work, the landscape is a confusing and, at times, hostile environment. It is not a “geography of belonging” but, rather, a geography of disorientation and disconnection. The landscape gives, thus, expression to the experience of deterritorialization, to the “lifting out” of social relations. The spaces that the novel and the film represent are without borders or anchors in the local territory; they are just barely defined with a few stone markers.

The representation of the landscape together with references to tango music and fragmented, brief images of Argentina’s past, such as a political button with Peron’s face or an old newspaper with Evita’s picture, construct a nostalgic tone that engenders a yearning for the national culture that appears to have faded. The world depicted through the landscape incites a desire for a stronger connection of the culture to geographical and social territories. In contrast to that disconcerting area where local and global spaces intermingle and where unsettling, ghostly signs of the past remind us that a national culture has been rendered obsolete, we long for the assurance of the local. In the landscape of *Una sombra ya pronto serás*, the characters are not able to find the coordinates that can orient them in their travels and secure them a clear course. All they have is a sensation that they have lost their “place in the world.”

The tango music gives the final touches to the nostalgic tone of the work. The novel begins with the lyrics of the famous tango *Caminito*, from which Soriano extracts the title of his work. The tango, a cultural manifestation that has come to represent Argentine national culture, thus frames the narrative. The lyrics, which speak of loss, and the sad nostalgic melody that they bring to mind, prepare and

guide the reading towards a longing for the lost culture. The film opts, instead, for a postmodern tune that combines tango sounds with classical and New Age music. It is, nevertheless, a very nostalgic piece that achieves that tone by lightly insinuating the tango sounds. The tango, just like the culture it symbolizes, is and is not there, recognizable only by a few phantasmagoric notes.

The landscape depicted in this film calls attention to the fact that in contemporary culture our experiences are formed by processes which operate on a global level. As Tomlinson reminds us, we are not able at this moment to represent or imagine the global level. He observes, "The cultural space of the global is one to which we are constantly *referred*, particularly by the mass media, but one in which it is extremely difficult to locate our own personal experience. To use Jameson's term, we need, somehow to be able to 'map' the new cultural space of the global" (*Cultural Imperialism* 177).

While *Una sombra ya pronto serás* seeks to express the cultural experience of globalization through the depiction of an unmappable landscape, *Caballos salvajes* attempts to resist that experience by developing a strong sense of place and belonging through the images of Patagonia. Although the stories in all the films are framed by a journey that culminates in the positive psychological or spiritual transformation of the protagonist, only *Caballos salvajes* constructs the change through the journey itself. Following the codes and conventions of the road movie, the protagonists in *Caballos salvajes* experience a transformation as they travel through a changing landscape. In this film, as Wendy Everett points out with respect to all road movies, "the narrative trajectory of the road serves as an extended metaphor of quest and discovery and affords the protagonist various transformative experiences" (167). The road is thus a liminal space where boundaries are weakened. It is a threshold world in which the protagonist, no longer restricted by the norms or fixed social roles and identities that had formed her or him at the point of departure, is receptive to other possibilities of being and emerges, at the end of the journey, a changed individual. The meanings that the codes of the road construct, however, do not just work at the individual level; they extend also to cover the socio-political area by presenting in the protagonist an explicit image of subversion (Everett 166). The road movie's concern with liminality, as well as its rejection of conventions and its desire for change, may offer, Everett points out, "a powerful political and social critique" (166). This is precisely the twofold work that *Caballos salvajes* conducts.

The first fifteen minutes of the film take place in Buenos Aires and its surrounding area. This segment shows the urban activity that characterizes the city: the crowds, the fast pace of life, the noise, the bumper-to-bumper traffic. It

also centers on the corruption of a financial firm, which is set as a microcosm of the globalized business world. The story begins when José, a septuagenarian who lives in Patagonia and hates the big city, enters a financial firm and approaches Pedro, one of its young executives. As Pedro is about to assist José, Rodolfo, one of the company's vice-presidents and Pedro's friend, asks them to move to his office while he is at a meeting. Rodolfo explains that he is expecting a phone call from an important client, Mr. Pérez, and he doesn't want to miss it. In Rodolfo's office, José hands Pedro a note and, pointing a gun to his own neck, threatens to shoot himself unless the company returns exactly the \$15,344 that he had deposited 20 years ago. The company, which was previously a bank and had recently been acquired by a transnational financial firm, had insisted that there is no record of José's account and had consistently refused to return the money. Pedro, unnerved by the situation, insists that no money is kept in the offices; but, while he is frantically opening the drawers in Rodolfo's desk to prove his point, he finds, to his surprise, close to half a million dollars. While Pedro fills José's backpack with the money, he realizes that a security guard is ready to shoot José and impulsively decides to save him by placing himself as a shield and pretending to be a hostage. Fearing that now he is going to be considered an accomplice, Pedro decides to flee with José and together they leave in Pedro's Ford convertible. After a Hollywoodesque car chase through the streets of Buenos Aires, complete with the predictable falling barrels blocking the pursuers and the crashing of police cars, they get out of the city heading "south."

In the outskirts of the city, Pedro calls Rodolfo and attempts to explain what happened. Rodolfo refuses to hear what Pedro has to say and threatens to kill him if he doesn't return the money. It's obvious by Rodolfo's demands that he is conducting illicit transactions for the company and that he believes that Pedro knew of it and is taking advantage of the clandestine nature of the dealings. Pedro, who in fact ignores what's going on, is totally dumbfounded by his friend's behavior and the viciousness of his reaction. Pedro, therefore, is naïvely unaware of the world that surrounds him. Pedro and José, both in shock by the unexpected turn of events, reluctantly begin to accept that their lives are now linked and start their journey on the road. As they leave Buenos Aires, Pedro foresees the end of the comfortable life he had lived until that moment.

At the start of the journey on the road, Pedro's ignorance about the situation of Argentina under globalization and of the country's past is revealed in his conversations with José. Pedro's difficulty in understanding the nature of the financial company's business is particularly irritating to José, who suggests to an incredulous Pedro that the company is perhaps involved in a money laundering

operation for drugs or weapons sales. He also offers the possibility that the money in Rodolfo's desk is the type of commission that intermediaries receive from the dirty businesses going on in the system. Annoyed by Pedro's insistence that he is not interested in politics, José shouts that he is talking about the contemporary world not something obscure, incomprehensible. "I am talking about the world you are living in," José asserts. "Countries are being sold, auctioned off; corporations divide the map and the people among themselves. Pérez may be a drug courier but he may also be a privatizing official or an agent for an intelligence campaign. That's how the whole system works." Away from the shallowness and the materialism of the world he left behind, Pedro begins to discern the hidden characteristics of what he has seen as a harmless business.

As they travel, pursued by the thugs Rodolfo has hired, the media converts the two into celebrities. Taking advantage of the attention that their story is attracting, José and Pedro decide to reveal the true story and tape a message relating the amount José originally wanted and the surprising discovery of the half a million. Their tapes and the continuous reporting of their escape increase their fame. The press coverage nicknames them "los indomables contra la injusticia" ["the untamable against injustice"]. Their celebrity grows even more when they "return" the money they had taken—minus the amount the bank owed José—by throwing the bills out over a town that had been left economically devastated as a result of the closing of an oil company. Television had helped expose the story behind the theft and the two fugitives appear now as the victims of a fraud, of the shady dealings of a financial company that blatantly robs the common people.

The journey distances the protagonists from Buenos Aires, which is offered as a place of corruption and materialism, a center of the pernicious forces of global capitalism. As they travel, they enter a space of solidarity and generosity, values that are presented as inherent to the common folks of the interior. Pedro leaves his space and enters José's, and, as he goes further south, he begins to see another landscape, another Argentina: the autochthonous country that he could not notice in and from the city. Although modernity has penetrated that space, as evidenced by the highways traversed by commercial trucks, the presence of some transnational companies, and the omnipresence of television, it has not been able to change or contaminate the essence of the people. The film conveys the decency of the inhabitants of the interior through the selfless kindness they show towards Pedro and José. Even though Rodolfo advertises on television a hefty reward for information on the whereabouts of the two, and in spite of being recognized wherever they go, nobody betrays them. On the contrary, people risk their own lives and suffer beatings in order to protect them. The new space and the values

Pedro discovers in it with José's assistance, begin to transform him. On the road, mile by mile, he discovers other ways of being and with them his true identity. At the end of the journey he is no longer "Peter," as Rodolfo calls him anglicizing his name, but the true "Pedro." As Pedro recognizes at the end, José had saved his life by taking him away from his former life in the city.

The road trip maps the route from Buenos Aires towards the interior of the country creating at the same time a sharp contrast between the two areas. The opposition city/countryside that we can recognize here is, according to Fernando Aínsa, one of the best known "geographical forms of expression" employed by Latin American narratives to define the cultural identity of the region (12). A rural cultural identity is in this paradigm delineated in contrast to an urban cultural identity. In some versions, the first one is conceived as being linked to the roots of society and to traditional values. In other accounts, however, it is seen as a barbarous and backward identity. Urban cultural identity, in turn, is articulated either as a civilizing force that opens society to progress or as a receptacle and conduit of foreign ideas and influences, which are ultimately damaging to the life of the nation.

There are, moreover, other meanings that can be drawn from this opposition. As Aínsa observes:

The geographic antinomy that is simplified in the opposition between countryside and city, or rural life and urbanism, translates the more general antinomy of nationalism opposed to internationalism, and idolatry of the past (tradition) opposed to modernity (innovation), pairs that are synthesized in another antinomy: autochthonous character versus universal character. (13)

Caballos salvajes relies on the chain of meaning that this geographic antinomy generates in order to emphasize the interior as the territory where national identity resides, where the autochthonous character of the nation is still strong and visible. This depiction is reinforced by the role that the landscape occupies in the narrative. The beautiful images of Patagonia take the position of a supporting actor rather than serving solely as background scenery. The journey of the protagonists is constantly marked by views of the region and iconic images of the land situate the characters as well as the spectators. The camera work guides our view from the vanishing point of the road in the horizon, which gives us a sense of direction and distance, to the sights of the surrounding landscape. The combination of those strategies operates to build up the presence of the landscape, which increasingly demands the attention of the viewers, and to construct a connection between the landscape and the characters, and also with the spectators. In other words, the film insists on giving the landscape the characteristics of place.

Chris Lukinbeal points out that landscape as place is usually established in the master shot. “Master shots,” he explains, “rely on icons and stereotypes of place to establish a cognitive map of the narrative’s geographic location. The cognitive map depends on the audience understanding the central icons of a location” (8). In *Caballos salvajes* there are two master shots: one for the segment set in Buenos Aires—the recognizable busy, crowded streets—and another for the journey to the interior. The master shot of the road trip occurs immediately after Pedro and José leave the Buenos Aires area. The shot establishes the journey with views of the road extending towards a distant horizon and the change of area with scenes of the open spaces of a rural landscape. In this way the separation of the two regions is clearly set.

The film uses the characteristic camera work that creates the landscape as place: extreme long shots, long shots, and deep focus shots as well as high angle camera setups that allow us to view the characters or the geography at long distances (Lukinbeal 8). *Caballos salvajes* uses also pan shots of the landscape. With this strategy a film is able to re-establish an individual or action in its environment. When this happens, the repetitions of images “reinforce and create a bond between narrative and place” (Lukinbeal 8-9). When showing a landscape, the views of the land that the camera offers is, as Martin Lefebvre reminds us, a gaze, a particular form of a view, a framed scene. Therefore, under the lens and within its frame, “nature turns into culture, land into landscape” (xv). Consequently, the form that the landscape takes relates to our experiences of it, including the representations of the functions it can connect to or provide (Lefebvre xv). In *Caballos salvajes* the form of the landscape shown during the road trip is guided by a familiar way of contrasting the interior to Buenos Aires; the geographic antinomy acts on the landscape to unleash the chain of meanings that it evokes.

In addition to the repeated projection of images of Patagonia shown in a way that positions characters and spectators alike (much in contrast with the landscape formation in *Una sombra ya pronto serás*), is an important component in the construction of the landscape as place. The concept of landscape usually refers to a portion of the earth’s surface that is viewed from one spot. That idea points also to an observer that looks at the landscape from the outside. Place, on the other hand, is a location that is known from the inside. Tim Cresswell states, “When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way (naming is one such way) it becomes a place” (10). While in *Caballos salvajes* the camera builds place by presenting the landscape as an indispensable part of the narrative, we are attached to it also by memory. We recognize it, we know it, we sense a connection with what we see. In the collective imagery of

Argentines Patagonia is not only part of “the interior”; it is also the “south,” the mythical land seen as the last frontier, the land untouched by civilization and open to new possibilities.

Even though the notion of place has tended to be applied to small areas, such as cities, towns, or neighborhoods, it has been recognized that larger political spacial divisions—nations, regions—also display the characteristics attributed to place. A nation-state, for example, “combines the abstraction of space with the deeply felt emotions of place” (Cresswell 99). Just as the members of a nation cannot possibly know each other and the nation is, therefore, an “imagined community,” neither can we know personally all the geographic areas of the nation. Its spaces, places, and landscapes, however, can be known through representations, and these portray the nation and contribute to giving form and content to national identities. In *Caballos salvajes*, the geographic antinomy synthesizes the national territory but one that is divided, separated by ways of life. In the interior, the film argues, resides the autochthonous nation. The construction of Patagonia as place implies also the definition of what is left outside of it and, obviously, the film plays with a setting where Buenos Aires is not included in this distinct place that is the authentic nation. Thus, with the interior we are offered the view of an alternative nation to the one that Buenos Aires defines.

During the journey, the figure of José is delineated slowly as his growing friendship with Pedro takes him to confide in the young man bits and pieces of his life. Thus we learn that the money he reclaimed from the bank by force carries a heavy emotional weight. The money had been a gift from José’s father to José’s son. The son, however, had been “killed” during the seventies (we are left to assume that he was assassinated by the military dictatorship) and the money had remained in deposit until José needed it and had to fight to retrieve it. Only in the final scenes we get the complete portrait of this character. We learn that José is a horse breeder, that the owners of the horse ranch for which he had worked are going to sell the horses, and that they will be killed. The money José recovers from the bank was needed to save the animals he loves, which he sets free after buying them. It is only then that we see that José’s figure is related to that of the gaucho as the human component of the interior. As the archetypal gaucho, José is the product of the rural way of life. His goodness and decency, as well as the resistant spirit against the injustices created by the politics of Buenos Aires, are part of the land, of the traditional culture of the interior.

Towards the end of the film, magnificent views of the Andes and of horses running free link the landscape to ideas of freedom. A changed Pedro, who is escaping by horse to Chile with Ana, a young woman who had joined them on the

road and with whom he is now in love, underscores the end of his transformation and the total abandonment of his past life. Although José is shot in the back by his pursuers and dies, the last scene of the film is a replay of a previous one that shows José dancing in front of a view of the sea. Life, he shouts with happiness, is worth living. The film thus ends with optimism and suggests that a new generation—represented in the young couple—will take over in the struggle to resist the forces of neoliberalism and form a life more connected to the needs of the local.

According to David Harvey, along with the radical reconfiguration of space and time triggered by globalization, there has been a tendency to cling to the security that certain places provide in our daily lives. While globalization presents a threat to place and to the identities that are based in place, he posits, our awareness of what we value in the places in which we live and work has, paradoxically, increased (Cresswell 58-59). Consequently, place has been converted in “the political symbol of those who want to fight against the ever-present power of global capitalism” (Cresswell 60). The search for a sense of authentic place has provoked what Harvey calls “militant particularism” to indicate the political use of the particularity of place as a way to resist global capitalism (qtd. in Cresswell 61). In *Caballos salvajes* we see that type of political work. In the construction of a sense of place, the film builds a sense of authentic place as a position of resistance to the cultural transformations engendered by global capitalism. Given that place is seen also as “the locus of collective memory,” a site where identity is created through the construction of collective memories linking a group of people into its past, the conservation or the production of a sense of place is also “an active moment in the passage from memory to hope, from past to future” (qtd. in Cresswell 61). It is in the use of this connection between place, memory, and identity where we find the film’s political strength. During his journey, Pedro’s realization of his connection to the land and its people and his ultimate understanding of the country’s past give him life. His redemption is hope; not all is lost if the new generations can appreciate the comforting security of a true identity based on the land.

The film adapted and recycled the traditional images of the interior and structured them within the codes of the road movie with touches of the Western. Nevertheless, the struggle for the definition of the nation and national identity, as expressed with the antinomy interior/Buenos Aires, is very much within the parameters of national culture. By constructing the landscape of the interior as place, *Caballos salvajes* reaffirms the nation and designs a very clear map that concentrates on national space. By centering the source of globalization in a specific spot in the national territory, Buenos Aires, the film recognizes the political, economic, and cultural roles of “world cities,” which today, as before in

other forms, serve as nodal points functioning as control centers in the network that sustains globalization and as an interface between the global and the local (Knox 329). The film therefore places us firmly in the territory of the nation to critique globalization, and what could be a stronger act of “re-territorialization”?

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