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The Active Archive: Haptic Reconstruction in Albertina Carri's *Los Rubios* (2003)

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The fragility of memory beyond any specific context is a biological and universal bodily process. That is the initial reflection behind Albertina Carri's 2003 Los Rubios, a film that, through its retelling of autobiographical events from the Argentinian Dirty War, breaks documentary conventions and maximises the audiovisual medium to portray an erased history. Aligning with frameworks from Walter Benjamin's Theses on the Philosophy of History, this paper contends that the process of historical reconstruction is best questioned when audiences are encouraged to experience agency through the body rather than through a passive, institutionalised historical reconstruction. In Los Rubios, director Albertina Carri utilises haptic visuality, a technique examined by Laura Marks, in which the images pursue a sensorial response from the eye. Through an audience that encounters the reconstruction of events via a sensory experience, new perspectives can be formed. The methods utilised by Carri to present either past or contemporary documented archives, such as photographs and testimonies, encourage the body to notice and reflect on the gaps and fragility of a nation's collective memory. By intentionally foregrounding the inability to achieve a linear or truthful reconstruction, the documentary moves beyond the political dichotomies and heroic iconographies often promoted under conventional mediations of collective memory managed by national institutions. Ultimately, the paper concludes that Los Rubios transforms the human body itself into a momentary active archive, proposing embodiment as an alternative, sensorial way of processing information that allows historical reconstruction to remain a flowing and ever-evolving process of reparation, functioning under the now, rather than a set of definitive truths left behind in a fixed and empty past.

Introduction

Memory, like the human body, is not timeless; as a result, history, a process arising from human reconstruction, remains full of gaps. Once time and death defeat memory, humans turn to objects to reconstruct, often categorising and institutionalising them. Yet, as Ocasio et al. state, this process "is shaped by organisational practices, information technologies, and the politics enveloping archivists and their audiences" (683). Inevitable

erasure therefore arises from biased external frameworks, while the power lies with those who collect, store, and interpret the objects themselves. This imbalance is central to Albertina Carri's *Los Rubios* (2003), a documentary about the Argentine dictatorship that questions historical reconstruction by "examining representations and documentations of ... the selective retrieval of analogies from the past" (Ocasio et al. 695). *Los Rubios* becomes an active investigation into how Argentina's institutionalised historical reconstruction has shaped collective memory, often denying its own gaps and repudiations. Rather than accepting history as a fixed truth, it invites audiences to experience it as a living, ever-evolving, embodied process.

Similarly, Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1942) challenges the common misconception that history is always an active process because it reconstructs the past. Benjamin's passive historicism arises as a practice attached to an "empty, homogenous time" (260), carried onto the present through "traditional practices" that superficially engage with "cultural treasures" (257). That is, an engagement through which hierarchal rulers treat objects of the past as conquests to be exhibited, almost like prizes, while simultaneously drowning their connections to the present, claiming their significance belonged to a faraway and disjointed time. Here, a static timeline presents itself as a matter of memorisation, solidifying an "eternal image of the past" (261): distanced and dead, incapable of continuous growth (256-257). Its contrary, a present that Benjamin describes as the "time of the now" (260), opposes a motionless pulse – it disrupts chronology, seizing a fleeting moment in which time isn't dictated by a past, present, or future, instead colliding into a non-linear existence. Compared by Benjamin with the act of naming constellations (261), the "time of now" parallels the capacity to trace strokes over dead stars which existed centuries apart yet become momentarily visible under the eye of the critical historian. Here, like a heliotropic flower that dances, gently bending from east to west to brace itself for the sun, the active historian allows the past to unfold towards the present, dictating its growth and direction (256).

Ultimately, expanding on previous scholarship that investigates the representation of the fragility of memory in *Los Rubios*, this paper examines how the historical gaps – arising from past romanticised reconstructions of the Argentine dictatorship – are materialised through the moving image to become detonators of Benjamin's active "time of now".

Through its use of haptic visuality, a concept first developed by Laura Marks where “vision itself can be tactile, as though one were touching a film with one’s eyes” (xi), director Albertina Carri seeks to actively evoke a connection between the viewer and their senses, highlighting elements such as textures and human skin through extreme close-ups or provocative angles, thereby arousing a tactile and bodily response. While Benjamin’s view of the chronicler, a figure able to fill the gaps left by romanticised historicism (256), may be utopian, that does not mean that the historians reach an impasse. Instead, these gaps become a call for action; the “time of now” draws on the past to critically engage with the present, becoming an active history that resists institutionalised imbalances (Benjamin 261). By emphasising tactile materiality and encouraging audiences to experience an embodied historical reconstruction, Carri prevents the consumption of historical evidence as absolute linear truths, instead using cinema as a mediator to evoke resistance against the erasures and biases of passive historicism.

History and *Los Rubios*

Established by a coup in 1976, the “preferred repressive method” of “disappearance” during Argentina’s military dictatorship began under “its antirevolutionary ‘dirty war’ ... [with] an estimated ten thousand disappeared on the political left” (Robben 129). Throughout the next eight years, a period of violent instability and widespread casualties dictated the future of generations who lived under the repression caused by the Process of National Reorganisation (PRN). Furthermore, as Crenzel explains, these clandestine war crimes were conducted under strategies such as “the division of tasks among perpetrators, the use of ‘war names’ to conceal their identities, [and] the deliberate destruction of files and buildings” (1068), all of which resulted in evidence erasure that made the reconstruction of the crimes nearly inconceivable. The brutality of the crackdown against those declared subversive left Argentina with a challenging future, as it struggled to come to terms with a history from which most evidence had vanished.

Consequently, Argentina’s return to democracy in 1983 marked the beginning of a series of efforts by elected President Raúl Alfonsín to navigate the reconstruction of the crimes (Crenzel 1063). However, throughout the period of the dictatorship, the military had

already adopted defensive strategies, justifying their actions by blaming them on guerrilla warfare (Robben 137), thus transforming the discourse about the crimes into a political dichotomy (153). However, Crenzel expands on how this narrative was, in fact, convenient for the state, as a focus on this dichotomy disregarded the government's violence and responsibilities prior to the coup (1066, 1072). This logic, also named the "theory of the two evils", was illustrated by Alfonsín's decision to persecute leaders from both sides of the dirty war (Crenzel 1065), mirroring Benjamin's elements of a historicism that seeks to solidify a romanticised version of the past, ignoring relevant casualties (257-258). The glorification of democracy under this pretence was "forward-looking" (Crenzel 1066), just like the empty progress that erases the capacity for the critical historian to engage with the past beyond a homogeneous passivity (Benjamin 261).

Nonetheless, Alfonsín's attempt at a reconstruction prevailed, for which the state established the CONADEP (Commission on the Disappearance of Persons), a state agency in charge of a series of written reports often referred to as "*Nunca Más/Never Again*" (Crenzel 1063). These reports, based on the victim's written testimonies, signify an important task, as they "condense a portion of lost history and lived history; they operate as a bond between the past and the present, and between the dead and the living" (Crenzel 1069). This method, besides being undeniably relevant, gets comparably close to aligning with Benjamin's principles of the active "time of now". Testimonies seize the voices of the victims through a fleeting image, denying their possibility to become a mere cultural treasure; the testimonies should, in theory, allow present historians to rescue the past struggles for further present action (Benjamin 257).

Notwithstanding, rather than representing a historical reconstruction aligned with Benjamin's "time of now", the Report's chosen language follows a "humanitarian narrative" that "places the crimes outside history" (Crenzel 1065). When describing victims in its prologue, *Nunca Más* avoids a direct verbal link to the terminology of guerrilleros, although many political activists form part of the testimonies (Crenzel 1067). Persecuting the same ideological group that was simultaneously deemed the victim in *Nunca Más* would have demonstrated a contradiction from the state's reasoning; thus, the categorisation under which the testimonies are positioned strategically removes the political identities of the

victims. Accordingly, there lies the inevitable paradox behind the historical reconstruction of the Dirty War, as Crenzel illustrates:

The Report gives a new political significance to the identity of the disappeared with respect to the dictatorial government's perspective, which identified them as guerrilla members. At the same time, it renders them apolitical by presenting them as innocent victims and by effectively excluding their ideological commitments (1067).

Therefore, the Report describes the persecutors under a "semantic delusion" (Crenzel 1066), allowing this language to position the crimes under a barbarist dissociation, a key element of passive historicism (Benjamin 257). This portrayal of the victims, provided through a humanitarian approach that presents them as generic individuals, and not political subjects, does represent a valuable argument against the dictatorship's justification of their crimes. At the same time, however, it results in an erasure of the socioeconomic conditions that led to the coup, obscuring a side of history just as relevant for the collective memory of Argentina's nation.

Therefore, *Nunca Más* paradoxically results in a destruction of Benjamin's "time of now", replacing it instead with a passive lesson of civic morality that does not question the power structures that survived the dictatorship. Correspondingly, *Los Rubios* director Albertina Carri emerges from a shaped generation that grew up under the contradictions of this fragmented nation, where she lost her parents – both scholars disappeared under the military regime – when she was just a child. While Carri has a filmography primarily composed of fiction features, in this film, overwhelmed by the lack of evidence surrounding her parents' disappearance, she attempts to make sense of the impactful event that changed her life beyond the political dichotomy that has undeniably shaped its historical perception. Inevitably, the process of filming becomes its own space of reconstruction, repeatedly encountering the unfixable gaps that exist beneath the fragility of memory and the contradictions of the previously established institutional reconstruction. Eventually, rather than quitting at the realisation that a complete view of the events is forever lost, Carri positions herself amidst Benjamin's thesis; the key does not lie in the ability to perfectly reconstruct history, but rather in one's own capacity to abandon the elusive pursuit of an objective historical truth. Instead, through hapticity, audiences are

transformed into active archives, embodying an investigation that embraces fragmentation as the core intersection that allows a reparation through the “time of now”.

Analysis: Photographs

Developed by writer Marianne Hirsch, the concept of Postmemory highlights that generations that did not directly experience specific historical events are also greatly shaped by their ancestors’ experiences. This concept further aligns with Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, where he borrows from Lotze to explain that often what humans envy is not defined by the future, but by a familiar past; this yearning forges a theological and ancestral connection between past and present, allowing historical materialism to become the disruptor that challenges past struggles into guidance for a potential revolutionary present (255). Notably, this act can be seen in the work by the Postmemory artists who, instead of solely relying on public recollections of the periods lived by their parents, create art “to reactivate and reembody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression” (Hirsch 111). Personal and internal reconstructions allow some distance from institutional and political biases, and although at times imperfect and subjective, these reconstructions also offer opportunities for new perspectives and the ability to find new meanings from rigid reconstructions of the past.

Furthermore, particularly relevant in the context of *Los Rubios*, Hirsch discusses the power of photography within this personal process as an “inscriptive (archival) memorial practice that also has an incorporative (embodied) dimension” (117). In this sense, using photographs as objects able to reconstruct can be seen as a haptic practice; they become archives that engage in a sensorial process driven by the need to look and contextualise the frame. At the same time, however, as Hirsch argues (116), and Bartalini discusses in relation to *Los Rubios*, the photographic image exhibits a “paradoxical character ... between the reality of its reference in the past and its absences in the present” (“el carácter paradójico ... entre lo real de su referencia en el pasado y sus ausencias en el presente”; 10; my translation). While archival photography captures valuable moments for the process of

looking and reconstructing the past, it also emphasises the gaps around it. The focus of a sensorial engagement, however, can be employed to address this liminality.

Throughout *Los Rubios*, there is a vast collection of photographs of Carri's family, presented as part of the personal sphere of evidence to reconstruct. Seeking to engage with the investigation beyond a non-diegetic realm, and as an attempt to navigate her own identity as part of the post-memory generation, Carri asks actress Analía Couceyro to portray a recreational version of Carri in front of the camera. As a result of this unique decision, the photographs in the film are unconventionally presented in a diegetic manner, within the documentary's space, often disguised as mise-en-scène around the office where Couceyro reviews her sources and progress on the investigation. While interacting with the images, she cuts, touches, moves, and engages with them; there is a materialisation of the "time of now". Through this representation, audiences are immersively positioned in the middle of the personal reconstruction.

Diving into the first act of *Los Rubios*, once the main tones of the investigation have been set, a handheld camera pans down, revealing close-up inserts of a collage of images. The blurriness of the photographs and the often-sliced body parts encourage contemplation, as the digital camera adds texture that disrupts the static photographic state (fig. 1). As illustrated by this example, Marks emphasises how a haptic touch is often encouraged when a "decaying image makes the viewer reflect on how much of perception is generated by memory and longing, rather than engagement with a crisply available visual object" (156). Like this collage, photographs throughout the film are not mindless objects. They do not serve as supporting evidence for what is being said. Instead, they communicate through the absence of context, activating a bodily response. In other words, the photographs stimulate what Hirsch calls "the act of looking" (117) to materialise the liminality between an incomplete documentation of the past and the present, reflecting Carri's own confusion regarding her parents' identities, despite the physical evidence at hand.



Fig. 1, Close-up of the blurred photographic collage, 2003.

Furthermore, often “haptic images refuse visual plenitude ... to prevent an easy connection to narrative” (Marks 177). By refusing the audience a detailed look at the image, not only is the act of looking encouraged, but viewers are also forced to engage with a distant, blurry version that parallels that of a faded memory. For example, around the third act of *Los Rubios*, after the investigation reaches a dead end, a sequence opens with a framed photograph seen earlier, right before the haptic collage, initially appearing meaningless without context. Both times, Carri emphasises Couceyro in the foreground, framing the leading lines towards her. The act of looking is embodied, highlighting the complex layers that shape how the archive is presented to the public (fig. 2). The same act is carried throughout the film, often when engaging with particularly difficult images related to forensic and institutionalised evidence. The use of this framing creates a distance from the photograph that prevents audiences from noticing the details of the photograph, materialising the loss of detail and reality, gradually fading as archival material is reconstructed and represented within external frameworks over time.

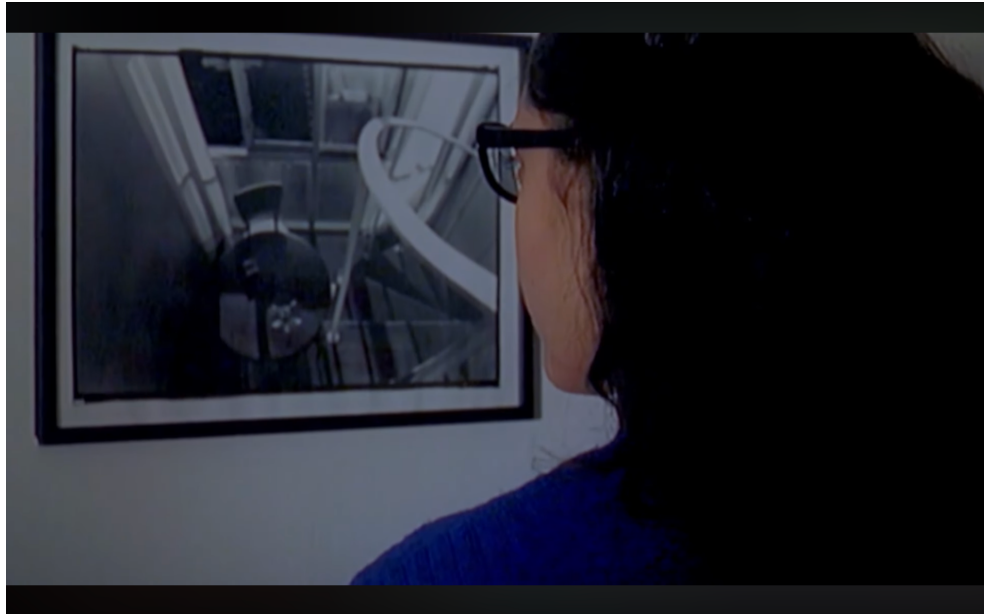


Fig. 2, Couceyro framed in the foreground before the photograph, 2003.

Moreover, as the sequence progresses, Couceyro reveals that the significant photograph is from the clandestine centre where Carri's parents were tortured, and it was taken by Paula, its only survivor. By the time this information is disclosed, the photograph is out of frame, and the scene cuts to Couceyro narrating the stories Paula shared off the record. Wanting to avoid becoming a part of the political dichotomy of the dictatorship, Paula is revealed to have denied public testimonies and will continue to do so. While Couceyro narrates, Carri guides the dialogue from behind the lens, the real and the reenacted Carri collaborating in the reconstruction from Paula's unrecorded narrations, as the tactile texture of the moment emphasises the fragility of stories passed by word of mouth.

Eventually, Couceyro mentions Paula drew a picture of the clandestine centre's cell layout, as the camera tilts down towards her, recreating an image of Paula's drawing. This is another haptic approach foregrounded; the utilisation of "drawn images rather than photographic or film footage of the site of an assassination" (Swalwell 3). According to Marks, this allows a midpoint between valuable representation that focuses less on the political meaning and more on the event itself, avoiding biased "red herring" representations that divert attention away from the central issue (44). Accordingly, the

objective categorisation that Benjamin relates to passive historicism includes a one-sided interpretation from the “victor” within the power structure of historical reconstruction (256). As illustrated, Marks’s approach suggests that the detachment from an objective optical reference makes way for an unbiased encounter with the space that surrounded the crimes, unrestricted by previous institutionalised frameworks. The recurring reference to Paula’s drawing of the cells thus represents an active effort to see beyond the prepossessions established under the state’s ideal reconstruction of events.

Here, as Couceyro redraws Paula’s original image, the shot remains medium wide, and the back of Couceyro stays obstructed. Eventually, the drawing is revealed through a slow zoom (fig. 3). In this moment, the distorted VHS texture, more prominent as the camera zooms, makes an already abstract drawing even less reconstructable. The reveal, despite its contrasting close-up, is anticlimactic, as no comparison makes the layout of the clandestine centre recognisable. The image itself becomes a reflection of the inability to reconstruct the crimes undergone within the space, information fading as it goes from mouth to mouth, generation by generation. Ultimately, the overlying hapticity of the moving image itself reaches an inevitable conclusion; no amount of aesthetic cognitivism can fill the disrupted gaps of an erased history.

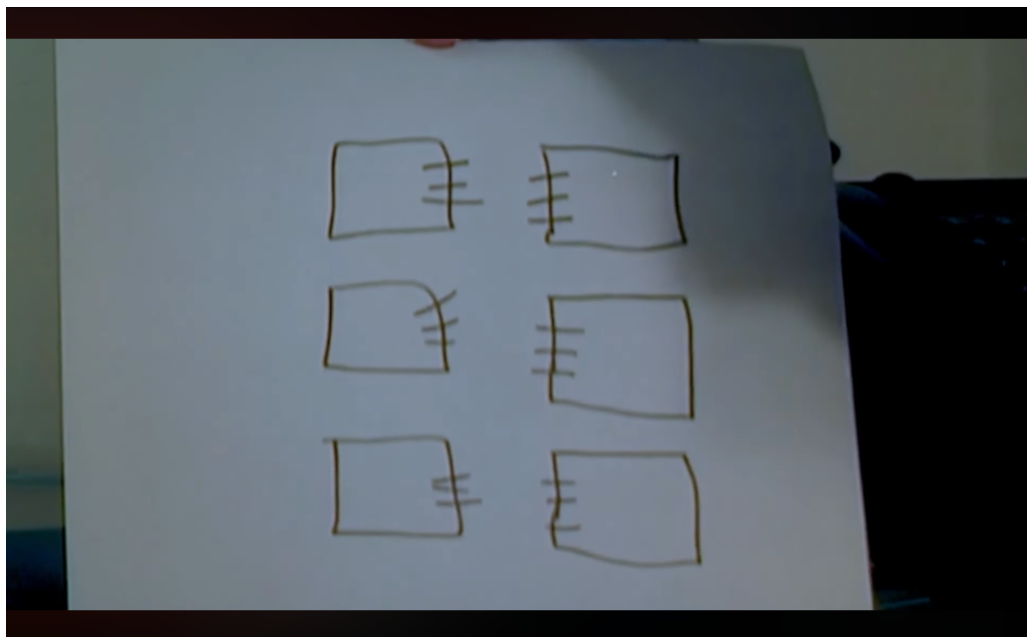


Fig. 3, Couceyro recreating Paula’s drawing of the cell layout, 2003.

Thus, while true that, as Breckenridge argues, “Carri subtly underscores the inadequacy of these verbal and visual representations; rather than assist ... [they] work to inhibit viewer recognition” (16), there also lies a deeper meaning to this conclusion. Carri’s representation within the Postmemory generation evokes Benjamin’s spirit of the “time of now”, forging the ancestral personal sphere between the past and the present (255). But beyond that, photographs and drawings are presented in ways that invite the audience to embody the researcher’s perspective; they are encouraged to observe, listen, and reconstruct. Because the evidence often leads nowhere, offering incomplete and non-tangible answers, one suggests that in *Los Rubios*, photographs fail their evidential purpose. But rather than allowing this frustration to become a conclusion, *Los Rubios* transforms the gaps into a reflection. By materialising this liminality through a haptic visuality, the human body, instead of the film itself, becomes the site for reconstruction, allowing audiences to question from within, from an embodied and present reconstruction, which, as a result, questions how collective memory is often handled in political and institutional absolutes, and how cinema can mediate alternatives to this unstable practice.

Analysis: Testimonies

When thinking about documentary forms that align with Benjamin’s now-time, Annette Kuhn’s concept of the ‘memory text’ illustrates a prime example of an approach that is active rather than passive, as it is a form that “undercuts assumptions about the transparency or the authenticity of what is remembered, taking it not as ‘truth’ but as evidence” (303). Rather than assuming that recollections are completely accurate, memory work treats the past as clues that need to be explored. The memory text becomes “a montage of vignettes, anecdotes, fragments, ‘snap-shots’ and flashes that can generate a feeling of synchrony: remembered events seem to be outside any linear time frame” (299). More conventional approaches, such as the essay documentary, also present a “personal subjectivity as it replaces the teleological organisations of narrative” (Alter and Corrigan 9). The following of a mind at work rather than a more classic cause-and-effect progression is the main thing these approaches have in common. Contrastingly, however, memory texts

“[are] opposed to autobiography, ... appear[ing] to be capable of feeding readily into collective forms of consciousness” (Kuhn 303). In the memory text, an opportunity arises when filmmakers present a personal narrative originating from within but expand it into a collective output that doesn’t seek to align with a single identity. As a result, reconstruction becomes an active process between the private and public spheres. Therefore, under this approach, the gaps generated in history are themselves presented as non-linear and poetic, and it is upon the audience to reconstruct them.

In *Los Rubios*, the essay film conventions are broken as the direction of the plot doesn’t emerge from a direct engagement with its subject. Throughout the film, the superimposition of an active process of investigation and the physical evidence evolves the “I” in the reconstruction into a collective one. Through Couceyro’s representation of Carri, and the participation of the film crew in the investigation, the filming process itself becomes a liminal site “of construction and negotiation” (Kuhn 299), not just by intertwining multiple subjects and objects that interact with the camera, but also by materialising the gaps originating from the process and foregrounding a sensorial engagement with them. Audiences are therefore invited to connect with the fragility of time beyond a particular context, ultimately revealing how fractured memories and contradictory records can undermine absolute claims by institutional authorities.

Despite the complexity brought by this approach, the main critique of Carri’s *Los Rubios* has been the “lack of a dimension of political ideology within the film” (“la falta de una dimensión ideológica de la película”; Pignuoli 334; my translation). While Carri engages with her father’s leftist work by reading a passage from one of his books, the documentary was nonetheless criticised for failing to reflect her parents’ political stance (Pignuoli 334; Blejmar 53; Nouzeilles 273-274). Perhaps the most prominent critic supporting this view appears in the film itself; the INCAA (Argentina’s National Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts) was, in fact, the first to flag a lack of political discourse during the production stage. To let the production team know, they send a letter that reaches them near the middle of the film. As Couceyro is filmed reading it out loud, the INCAA announces their financial withdrawal from the documentary, fearing that by putting so much weight on Carri’s investigation, there would be a lack of explicit political substance. The INCAA proposes a solution: by incorporating filmed testimonies from her parents’ former colleagues, who might offer a

deeper perspective on their political background, the film will position itself politically, offering audiences a clear message.

Immediately after the letter is read, a jump cut reveals a black and white shot, the same one used throughout the film to capture the liminality of the film crew and briefly breaking Couceyro's character. The team discusses the implications of the letter, as Couceyro notes that the 'colleagues' suggested by the INCAA have personally signed it, presuming that their involvement in the film would shift the focus towards another heroic portrayal of the dictatorship's martyrs. Ultimately, Carri states that a film with this perspective would be valuable, but not her place to make. Succumbing to this request, rather than allowing the film to become a memory-text that mediates the "time of now", would risk a historical revisionism aligning with previous justifications and biased reconstructions discussed under the historical context of this paper. As part of the post-memory generation, Carri's viewpoint acknowledges the political conflict behind the history of Argentina without presenting it as the central concern of her investigation, which is instead focused on questioning what the inconsistencies of this process mean for the present of her nation's fragmented collective memory. Seeking to foreground the memory-text, scattered and poetic, Carri avoids the use of conventional testimonies as a main narrative thread, allowing audiences to explore the clues through an embodied hapticity instead of laying out the information bare. As a result, as Sanz summarises, "The importance of the testimony, normally rich in the historical report of documentary cinema, is reduced in *Los Rubios* to a nearly anecdotal presence" ("La importancia del testimonio, normalmente privilegiado en el relato histórico del cine documental, es reducida en *Los Rubios* hasta tener una presencia casi anecdótica"; 127; my translation).

Nonetheless, to comply with the INCAA's request, some testimonies given by her parents' colleagues were included in the final cut, but, just like the haptic photographs, these testimonies are played with. Rather than presenting the videos non-diegetically, in a static interview format, they are filmed on top of a television and recorded as they show on the screen. With a cold, blue-tinted colour palette and pixelated texture, the tactile image becomes more evident. Sometimes, it is Couceyro watching the television, embodying the act of looking. Other times, the television is so close that its edges disappear. In the testimonies themselves, despite the camera's proximity to the subject, it becomes difficult

to visually analyse them, as the liminality of the playback being played on the TV acts as a physical barrier between the audience and the testimonies. Muffled or at times silent audio makes the dialogue incomprehensible, allowing the texture to speak more than the voice.

By highlighting this separation, Carri achieves two things: first, she demonstrates the performativity of testimonies, aligning with Couceyro's analysis of a traditional 'heroic' iconography that foregrounds a specific political ideology. Second, as Nouzeilles affirms, "By opposing Montonero memory, ... [Carri] affirms her right to read the text of the past from a different perspective" (274). Rejecting external pressure to tell her story within the political dichotomy often promoted by institutions, Carri adopts a new post-memory perspective from the first generation growing up with active and lively consequences of such a complex conflict. Here, aiming to explore the consequences of succumbing to the institutional bias behind their collective memory, Carri highlights the system's limitations by encouraging a haptic reflexivity.

This reflexivity also undermines the effectiveness of the "universal 'code' underlying performances of memory" (Kuhn 307). Like most memory texts, *Los Rubios* constantly suggests that not all evidence can be interpreted and understood through conventional methods, because despite the materiality of the evidence being repeated, its contextual background shifts the meaning depending on where the material lies in space and time. While it would have been conventional to reconstruct an image of Carri's parents through the testimonies of their guerrillero friends, they would've become the type of evidence earlier referred to as "red herring" (Marks 44), inclining more towards Benjamin's historicism that avoids an unvarnished causality. This would shift away the attention from the political implications responsible for the gaps of a fragile collective memory and fall back into the representational bias that affirms the political dichotomy of the Dirty War.

Furthermore, Pignuoli expands this argument, suggesting that this approach to filmmaking among post-memory generations offers an insider's perspective that rejects the "unidirectional process where new generations do whatever they must to mirror their predecessors" ("un proceso unidireccional donde la nueva generación hace lo que sea necesario hacer para llegar a ser como la generación predecesora"; 335; my translation). As Pignuoli suggests, collective memory should not focus only on preserving a legacy but also

on allowing history to flow and be recontextualised, a shapeshifting process where the past is both questioned and learned from by aligning with Benjamin's "time of now".

Overall, *Los Rubios* concludes that certain aspects of this history do remain unrepresentable. From institutional intervention, which shapes a biased collective memory, to the limits of human memory itself, reconstructing and solidifying a nation's events is no easy task, not even when narrowed down to a single family's history. Yet for Carri, this fluidity is not a dead end; as Ocasio et al. propose, it can be a "positioning of collective memory as a critical, multi-staged process through which logics emerge and evolve" (692). It is a history that aims not just to evidence and reconstruct for the sake of a singular truth, but rather to support an evaluation of the societal logics that have driven the events leading to the present. By utilising the memory text, the gaps of Carri's investigation are presented narratively through a haptic language that connects with audiences through the body. As viewers are spoken to from within, the body becomes the archivist reconstructing not just from logic, but also from emotion. History becomes more than a political dichotomy, more than institutionalised labels; it becomes part of one's inner self, a universal capacity to be a critical historian, able to understand the way the heliotropic flower stems into the sun, and what this process means for one's existence today.

Conclusion

Los Rubios is a documentary that surpasses traditional portrayals not only of the documentary genre but also of the institutional narratives that have depicted and developed the Argentine dirty war as part of a political dichotomy. Albertina Carri's role as a member of the post-memory generation enabled an internal processing of personal and public information; ultimately, the insights gained during production contributed to something greater. Through an appraisal of the memory text suggested by Kuhn, it becomes clear that, indeed, Benjamin's chronicler is an unattainable figure. Thus, *Los Rubios* transforms into an analysis of a nation's division, ruled by fear and confusion, that has facilitated the institutionalisation of its collective trauma. This divisive contradiction prevents reconciliation and deepens the wounds inflicted by the brutality of the military dictatorship. As a response, a haptic visuality is employed to materialise a link between the

embodied acts of looking, feeling, and hearing, and the liminal spaces of those ungraspable fragments of history that spill between human fingers, all of which leads to a new approach to reconstructing past events.

Audiovisual communication offers endless opportunities to question our inner selves' perception of a fixed reality; in the case of *Los Rubios*, the piece proposes embodiment as an alternative, a less institutionalised way of processing information. By feeling that ungraspable liminality through a tactile vision, one can acknowledge the necessary path towards Benjamin's critical historian. This entails the necessity to understand how history has been shaped and how that has impacted what one understands as the past and the present. And most importantly, how these two matters intertwine to impact one's now-time. More than ever, under the current globalised and technocentric era, the surplus of information and the unreliability of statements proclaimed truths argue for a necessity to embody the critical historian. Epistemologically, there are critical tools available at one's disposal to challenge rigid perceptions; Albertina Carri proves through *Los Rubios* that cinema can be one of them.

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