

Aesthetics and ethics of the fragment in *Cuaterros* (2016) by Albertina Carri*

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María Belén Contreras

Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile
contreras.mbelen@gmail.com

Abstract

In this work, I analyze Albertina Carri's *Cuaterros* as an essay film. Firstly, I focus on the outlining of the broken image that the film advances and also on the representational strategies that allow me to explore the thematic and visual features that link Carri's work with the essay. Secondly, I analyze the ethical and aesthetic consequences of the film's formal resources. I propose that the elaboration of a tapestry image works primarily as a non-systematic method to examine both personal and filmic memories. I offer a close reading of the audio-visual text that pays attention to its specificities as a medium, but that also goes back to concepts from the literary theorization of the essay form that are relevant to analyze the essay film. The conclusions show that in *Cuaterros*, an interplay is established between an intimate-biographical dimension and a broader one -namely, the issue of representing the dictatorial history of Argentina's recent past.

Key Words: Argentine cinema, essay film, fragment, Albertina Carri

Resumen

En este trabajo analizo *Cuaterros* (2016) de Albertina Carri como ensayo fílmico. En primer lugar, me concentro en la definición de la imagen quebrada del filme y en las estrategias de representación que permitirán ahondar en las características temáticas y visuales que emparentan la obra de Carri con el ensayo. En segundo lugar, analizo las consecuencias estéticas y éticas de los recursos formales de la película. Planteo que la estructuración de una imagen tapiz funciona, principalmente, como método asistemático de investigación de la memoria fílmica y personal. El análisis apuesta por una lectura detallada del texto audiovisual, atendiendo a sus especificidades como soporte, pero retomando conceptos de la teoría literaria del ensayo pertinentes para pensar el ensayo fílmico. Las conclusiones del análisis indican que en *Cuaterros* se establece un entrecruzamiento entre la dimensión íntima-biográfica con la dimensión más amplia: el problema de la representación de la historia dictatorial del pasado reciente argentino.

Palabras clave: cine argentino, ensayo fílmico, fragmento, Albertina Carri

*Este trabajo fue financiado por CONICYT PFCHA/Doctorado Nacional/2018 - 21181255

1. Introduction

The feature film *Cuatreros* (2016) by Albertina Carri is a filmic essay that, as a pretext, directs its questions towards the life of Isidro Velázquez, popular hero considered the last *gauchillo* celebrated in Argentina. The idea, that which in the voice of the director is said to have failed, consisted of making a film about the character that was, also, main character of a sociological book written by her murdered father. Having abandoned the initial project, Carri creates a documentary of multiple, interwoven thematic threads: the mentioned attempt to film the story of Velázquez; the journey to recover the film called *Los Velázquez* –disappeared military film, of which she only has a fragment of the script–; the Argentinean history of recursive violence and institutional repression; and, finally, the family history of the director that goes back and forth between positions of daughter and mother. The story of the film is comprised almost exclusively by a voiceover of Carri herself, story told based on the structure of a chronicle of a journey that, at the same time, includes the semi-fictional story on the failed creative project. On the other hand, while Carri's voice tells a chronological sequence of events, the screen shows a collage of fragmented images of different cinematographic archives of which no exact references are given and that, far from being mere illustrations of verbal language, incorporate new meanings and on occasions contradict and interrupt the continuity of the story.

Cuatreros is catalogued by critics using the feature film's name or the documentary film's name,¹ maybe for the thematic and stylistic connections with its hailed predecessor, the biographical documentary *Los rubios* (2003). The 2003 film awakened a lot of academic interest due to the peculiar treatment of the political memory recently made by the daughter of two intellectuals who disappeared during the dictatorship: in this feature film, the director uses in a way that is de-hierarchized, the *stop-motion* technique, the fiction, and the testimony. *Los rubios* presents a fragmentary aesthetic that includes one actress in the role of Carri and meta-filmic scenes in which the team in charge of filming the documentary, including the director, reflects on filming the scene. However, despite the evident connections between both films –specifically the meta-fictitious work on the truth and the

memory that links the personal and the collective— the objective of this work is to study *Cuatreros* from another viewpoint: interpret the work like a filmic essay.

2. Genealogy of *Cuatreros*; on essay and archive

The thematic motifs and formal directrices of *Cuatreros* and, specifically, its essayistic texture, can be tracked back to two previous works by Carri; I'm referring to the genealogy first used in *Restos*, a short film released in 2010 and project given to Carri by the Secretaría de Cultura Argentina in celebration of the Bicentennial. This genealogy continues with the video installation *Operación fracaso y el sonido recobrado*, series of works exhibited in the PAYS Hall of the Parque de la Memoria in 2015, that later, transforms into the film *Cuatreros*. The trilogy of works by the Argentine director is linked by the essayistic and fragmentary search and by the proposal of an aesthetical-political reflection of cinematographic archive, at the same time that it questions the powers of the ruins of images in the present. In the following, I will expound briefly on this genealogy, in the links between the works and among them and the filmic essay.

The main theme in *Restos* is the problem of destruction, disappearance and reducing to ruin of the Argentine clandestine cinema archive by the repressive mechanism of the last military dictatorship that, together with the forced disappearance of the body of the political party member, also waged war “in the territory of the imaginary”, as indicated in the narration told in the short film by actress Analía Couceyro. In accordance with the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, Marcela Rivera reflects on the staging of the duality of the archive in this short film, of that logic in which there is both a collection-conservative principle, as well as a destructor principle. In regards to *Restos*, Rivera indicates that “Carri returns, then, on this closed filmic archive, to respond —via what she herself calls an essay (irreducible, in its visual texture, both in terms of fiction and documentary)— to the denominated spectrum of the piercing presence of its absence” (2014, s/n). In this sense, the images of a naked man in nature, of towers of piled up and disorganized films, of sequences of restoration and

of celluloid destruction, occur while the story asks itself in an essayistic manner about the violence of the double void (of bodies and images), without resolving unequivocally the question that opens the script: "Accumulating images is resisting?". The denouncement that this short film provides and the explicitly making a theme of archivism, will portray in *Cuaterros* towards the narrative logic of the film and will not only function as a theme, but also like the main mechanism of representation of the film.

On the other hand, the series of works of the video installation *Operación fracaso* is composed by the music "Allegro" and "A piacere", in addition to the expositions "Cine puro", that refers to the loss of cinematographic materials via the staging of the film in disuse, "Investigación del cuaterismo", that projects on multiple screens a diverse archive related to Roberto Carri and the lost film *Los Velázquez*, and "Punto impropio", where a familiar epistolary archive is presented via the reading of the letters that Carri's mother, Ana María Caruso, wrote to her daughters while she was being held prisoner. In this way, *Operación fracaso* shows the intertextuality among the works of Carri-Caruso (Peller, 2016, n/n), via essayistic texts and pre-texts and that refer to each other. The sound material, the videos and the stories presented in the museum show the idea of extended cinema that operates in the work of Carri, of her proposal for the de-autonomation or, in other words, for its extension of the cinema towards other fields of contemporary art. Jorge La Ferla thinks this installation from a comparable optic to that of Rivera on *Restos*, upon defining it as "information, documents and register that comprise the recovery of the memory based on archives found —publications, correspondence epistolary, scripts and film fragments— [that] are the foundation of an archive policy" (2015, p.6). Plus, La Ferla adds that in the work Carri, party member cinema, of realist and figurative characteristics, "has become experimental, and continues to be clandestine in relation to the cultural visibility of entertainment or signature cinema" (2015, p.7). This affirmation interests us a purpose of the connection between the work of Carri and the historic vanguard that we will analyze further ahead in relation to her later filmic essay. Upon revisiting the material of *Operación fracaso*, and transferring it from the museum to the movie theater and giving it certain continuity, the film *Cuaterros* is born.

3. Filmic essay and vanguard

Daniel Link interprets this Carri trilogy as a way of interrogating the archive, not for its truthful value, but rather as the way of separating it from the memory and the forgotten and, not only for its materials, but rather because it would take its logic from the archive (2018, s/n). Link defines these works as post-cinematographic because propose taking imaginary notes on the remains of a story and not to record it: "[from the analogical archives or the binary archives, of the images and the stories produced as gems or chiseled like rocks, each one in their perfect place, in syntactic formation, to the images and the linked histories as pieces of a pre-existing jigsaw puzzle but whose final picture turns out indecipherable" (s/n). This jigsaw puzzle that Link mentions corresponds to an appreciation related to the ideas of broken image and image tapestry, ideas which we will further analyze in order to study *Cuaterros'* condition of filmic essay and its vanguard fragmentation.

For Ana Amado, the work of Carri proposes a generational interpretation of the past and, in *Los Rubios*, "eludes the formulas of epic exaltation of the protagonists (or of the insurgence) of that story and exercises its critical thinking, its rebellion, with the option of a vanguard aesthetic that continues and replicates in its territory, with blonde wigs or without them, the vanguard policy which her parents and her generation are a part of" (2009, p.196). In this work, I adhere to the idea of Benjaminian influx of Amado and propose that the affinities between the work of Carri and the strategies of vanguard representation continue in *Cuaterros*. With this characterization, I do not intend to carry out an anachronic interpretation of the historic vanguards for the Argentine post-dictatorship context. Instead I am interested in studying the re-functionalization of the gesture just as Wolfgang Bongers would think of it regarding *Restos*:

When Carri shifts the filmic materiality of *Restos* towards those plastic sculptures, poetics and tactile in movement, it is a gesture that makes one think of the experimental cinema of the 20s, of a Man Ray, a Hans Richter or a Marcel Duchamp. However, in the cultural and political context in which the film of Carri finds itself, and considering the programmatic com-

mentary of the voice that reclaims a work in and with the archive of cinematographic images like a form of memory, the *Restos* are, precisely, what will remain (2010, p.72).

Thus, the problem between the context and the cinematographic work is pertinently analyzed by Bongers, who relates the film materiality of Carri's short film with experimental cinema and asks, immediately, for the context of production of her work —problem that is tentatively resolved in its interpretation via the association of the use of the archive with a related political dimension, the need for work of memory and its potential for the future—. I think about the re-functionalization of the vanguard in the work of Carri according to the recognized proposals of Fredric Jameson on the postmodernity as cultural logic of late capitalism. For the Marxist thinker, one of the most prominent features of this logic corresponds to the regime of functioning of the imitation of past artistic styles: of the modern regime, and its parodic configuration, to postmodernism and its attraction for the *pastiche*,

once again, the *pastiche*: in a world where stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate is dead styles, speak through masks and with the voices of the styles of the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is going to refer to a new mode of art itself; moreover, it means that one of its essential messages will imply the necessary failure of art and aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment of the past (2010, p.22).

As we will see further ahead, the idea of the failure of the work of art is found throughout the filmic essay *Cuaterros*, that rejects filming new material. As a child of the times, the work of Carri re-functionalizes the staging, the fragmentation, the reflection on the links between art and life, the *collage*, and offers itself to the audience as an artefact, just as the "dead style" of the vanguard would do it. In the style of a *pastiche*, it uses, without being ironic, textuality previous to its own to interpret the intangible present.

4. The theory of the essay and the filmic essay

In contrast to the extensive theoretical tradition of the literary essay, that has its matrix text in the 16th century with the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne, the filmic essay, cinema-essay or audiovisual essay is of recent affiliation and has few films defined as such, perhaps due to the non-systematic character or to the elasticity of the same forma². For this reason, this work relates to the filmic essay with the literary analysis, although it replies to the specificities of the audiovisual support. For Alberto García Martínez, the features that make the cinematographic essay unique are related to "a discourse that joins the I and the thinking, far from the notion of system and that teaches by doing", also pointing out that certain theoretical aspects of the visual mode, such as "certain willingness of style, a use of the montage that returns value to words to the point that it prioritizes them over the image, the use of a variety of meta-fictitious resources and, finally, the active role developed in the discourse by both the author and the audience" (2006, p.82). Each one of these points will be relevant for the analysis of *Cuaterros*: the importance conferred by this essay to the voiceover by Carri, the meta-filmic reflections without which the film would not exist, and the privileged role given to the spectator in the construction of the meaning, allow us to define the work with the tools provided by the theory of the essay. The option to define the film by Carri as filmic essay and not as a documentary proposing the distinction between these two forms; although for years the essay was classified as a particular mode of the documentary, in reality "there is a recognizable dividing line between them: in the film-essay, the filmic work does not deviate from reality, but rather from sound and visual representations —depending on its contract with the real— that blend leaving the visible traces of a process of thought" (García Martínez, 2006, p.87).

In her study of the Latin American cinema-essay by Ignacio Agüero, Adriana Bellamy is emphatic in pointing out the critique possibilities opened by the filmic essay that, far from articulating an individualist I that only reflects on its experience in the world, "discovers a horizon of exploration shared with the audience" (2018, p.74), "it is an I that thinks as us, not only via the voice, but rather in the

audiovisual discourse" (2018, p.77). There we state that, although it is true that *Cuaterros* shows an autobiographic dimension fundamental for the union of the narrated events, it is also true that the archive is presented as ruins of a world cinema and, moreover, like an accumulation that not only thinks the experience of an I, but rather the experience of an entire generation; such is the appeal that the narrator explains at different times in the film.

5. Broken Image and image tapestry: *Cuaterros* as filmic essay

Cuaterros starts with a reading of the book by Roberto Carri, Albertina Carri's father and Montonero party member who disappeared in the last Argentine military dictatorship and author of the sociological text titled *Isidro Velázquez. Formas prerrevolucionarias de la violencia* (1968). In addition, the film opens with the discovery of the film script of *Los Velázquez*, a lost film based on the book by Roberto Carri and filmed by Pablo Szir and Lita Stantic (1971-1972). One of the fundamental procedures of the film is that *Cuaterros* rejects almost completely the use of new images, in other words, it works with existing films: advertising images and news briefs from that era, instructions on how to build a Molotov cocktail, images showing the use of violence in protests or state repression, a fiction in which the two characters emulate dialogues between Carri and Stantic, animations and fragments of Argentine cinema taken out of their original contexts and projected on two, three, four and five small screens that are presented at times simultaneously and at times alternately. In the film narrative, the voice of Carri becomes an intertwined chronology of events without a causal logic, and the image of this archive of diverse origin —mainly during the 60s and 70s, but that in reality go from 1920 to 1983, according to the same author— linked to the biography of the subject of the declaration, the present absence of her parents, the conflictive relationship having recently become a mother and political violence. Cinema, politics and memory intertwine to the point of indistinctness.

The film that we see, just as Carri emphatically clarifies in her story, is not the typical biographical documentary on heroicness of a historic figure, despite the idea of making the film would make

it seem so. One could say that *Cuaterros* has another stable story; a story that begins with the unexpected discovery of a missing film script and portrays the adventures of the production process of a feature film in the voice of its director, protagonist and narrator. Or, there is an even more solid story: that this adventure was pure exposition of intimacy and, in reality, narrates the journey of the protagonist in search of her father, a Telemachy where Albertina the daughter tracks her parent using photograms. However, *Cuaterros* is neither one nor the other, while at the same time it is both. Based on a fundamental absence, that of a father and that of a closed story, Carri premieres a failed film. From the script, various images stand out that the narrator considers as possible pertinent films to narrate the elusive history of Isidro Velázquez: a film of men, "of shots and undercover homosexual motivations"; the film of Fernando, a man who dedicates himself to passionately rescuing the Argentine national cinema archive, a solitary man leaning towards the memory; a three-part film, filmed in three separate years, not starring 3 actors but rather just one, film that he says he wrote five versions of together with his wife and of which he even makes a long list of possible names; or finally, a film made using a static camera focused on a gigantic dust cloud in Chaco, with wide-spread human presence to emphasize the hostile geography of the place. The response to how each one of these ideas arises, and also how they are squelched, is given by Albertina herself, who places the responsibility on her own affective dispositions: those of a dislocated subject, but extremely self-aware, that is ensnared in its production; those of a subject that, above all, that "beats around the bush or the thorns", as she herself indicates in *Cuaterros*. This process of going back and forth along the path of artistic creation and exhibit the threads that unite film, relate to the aesthetic of the Argentine director with the work of essayistic writing, given that "behind the strategy of the essay is the desire for exhibition. Mirrored language, the essay observes itself" (Jacobsen, 2009, p.35).

5.1. Juxtaposition, fragmentation and accidentality

In an interview with Carri given for a film festival in Mar del Plata, competing with her film *Cuaterros*, the director situates her work in a space in the middle of the road between a documentary and fiction, due to the interweaving of the biographical documentation with a personal history that, at least at times, seemed to narrate itself with the tone of the adventure novels. In fact, the final scene corresponds to a quote from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, read while we observe the only filmed scene: Carri playing with her son in the shadows. Diego Battle classifies the movie as a “road movie, western, documentary, autobiographical essay, audiovisual installation, experimental film based on *found footage* and, above all, political cinema” (s/n), allowing us glimpse at the multiplicity of the shots of the film, as well as also the difficulty of its generic classification. I concur with Battle and I believe that interpreting the film from the Theory of the Fragment and, particularly, as a filmic essay, can open particular axes of meaning for us.

I choose the notion of film essay according to Udo Jacobsen, critic that prefers this concept to others like essay or experimental cinema, because it alludes to a presence in the particular form of a film, more than a canon to use to denominate and produce cinema (2009, p.9). Considering the statements of Martín Cerda in *La palabra quebrada*, Jacobsen considers the Latin American filmic essay in relation to the notion of broken image. To that respect, he indicates that “if there is something that links the essay, and the essayist, with what he writes about, it is that he speaks of nothing else than himself in the situation of being in the world. [...] It is not about being physical but rather the essential commitment from the individual with that which he observes as if he were to inhabit, or more so, or case to inhabit the world” (2009, p.17). In other words, Jacobsen thinks of the filmic essay as a “inevitable contamination of writing and experience. Journey. Hostile Territory. Warning. Return of the sensitive as other” (39). The selection of Albertina Carri of a historical figure —Isidro Velázquez— works as the pretext of the essayist to begin the game of thought. Jacobsen continues stating that “[w]hat differentiates the essay form from the documentary treatment is specifically the validation of that viewpoint, the recognition of its

undeniable subjectivity and that movement that goes from the individual towards the world trying to understand it” (2009, p.17). This definition of the particular view of the essayist is directly related to the principles of the representation of Carri, who declares, upon finishing her filmic essay, the following verbal statement:

I immerse myself in reviewing the film that I will not make. The film on the work of my father. The film on the last gaucho hailed in Argentina. The film on the missing film during the last dictatorship. The film on how the horse stealing of a few powerful people have left us with an inheritance of inane violence. The images that are not here, the bodies never found, a trial that never happens.

In this sense, different dimensions of Carri’s life —her parents’ disappearance, the search for the missing film, as well as the neoliberal political present—, are juxtaposed with bound images and de-hierarchized, like a continuum of relations in the shot of the discourse. Just as Theodor Adorno states in regards to essay, in the film “the thought does not advance in only one direction, but rather the moments interweave the threads in a tapestry” (2003, p.22). Of course, that delimitation is not only thematic or discursive but rather visual as well, because the film is built based on pieces of very diverse archives that share a fundamental feature with the cultural forms to which the spoken word alludes: they are the ruins of the past. *Cuaterros* proposes the discontinuous “speculation” in terms of these cultural forms: from those ruins comes a new meaning that does not aspire to tell the truth or the entirety. The fragmentation of the essay by Carri operates in the form of this tapestry of archives, because, Adorno would say, “[t]hink in fragments the same as in reality is fragmentary, and finds its unity via the fragments, not by connecting them. The harmony of the logical order deceives in the antagonistic essence of what has been imposed. The discontinuity is essential to the essay, its topic is always an immobilized conflict” (2003, p.26).

Added to this fragmentation is the other fundamental characteristic: its accidentality, understood as a rupture of the linearity between the causes and the consequences and the motivations of the action. In this succession of events that exhibits as an

investigation, Carri confers relevance at random: finding the script of the missing film on Isidro Velázquez via a camera assistant from another film, who just happens to offer it to her. In this sense, the fragmentation in the work of Carri could even be related to the tools of the theory of the historic artistic vanguards. For the German theorist Peter Bürger “[e]l *objet trouvé*, the thing, that is not the result of a process of individual production but the accidental discovery in which materializes in the vanguard attempt of union between art and the praxis vital, today it is recognized as a work of art” (1987, p.135). However, the chance that for surrealists meant a hope for dominating the extraordinary and certain production of an objective meaning, given that it provides the origin of the production of meaning to nature, for Carri it brings nothing but desperation. Albertina discovers, with a sinister emotion in the last quarter of the film, that with the pretext of looking for material for the film of Isidro, in reality, she spends hours sitting in front of an enormous archive with unorganized images, searching the living faces of her parents in films about universities in occupation and street barricades. And the chance is a empresa que sabe fracasada. The complexity of the film consists of, precisely, exposing folds, cracks and a proliferation of references: a (failed) montage over another (missing) montage without meaning or continuity established beforehand. Although, at the same time and paradoxically, that risky movement in the multiplicity of screens is searched meticulously.

5.2. From Staging and the Harmony between Art and Life

One of the particular characteristics of the filmic essay by Carri is that the montage is not only the basic operative technique like in all cinematographic work, but rather is a strategy of representation exploited in other multiple possibilities. If commercial cinema hides the threads of the montage, this text exposes them with all their loose ends, to use an image of Martín Cerda. In this way, the fragmentation of the essay is related to the way in which a cubist *collage* incorporates materials that have not been elaborated by the artist for the production of meanings. For Peter Bürger: “the organic work of art wants to hide its device. The opposite applies to a work of vanguard: it is of-

ferred as an artistic product, as mechanism. To this degree, the montage can serve as basic principle of vanguard art. The “mounted” work leads to the understanding that it is composed of fragments of reality; ends with appearance of totality” (1987, p.136). From the beginning of the film, we mainly hear the voice of Carri, at times interrupted by the sound or the words of the archive on screen, that even interprets interactions and/or interviews by way of a reading of script: it does not omit the annotations, destabilizing the dividing lines between fiction and reality.

The particularities of montage in *Cuaterros* are not the only characteristic that link it to the vanguard aesthetics: another of the large problems that this filmic essay presents, that goes unresolved, is precisely that of the harmony and disharmony between art and life. At the end of the film, Carri, while rereading the written letters her parents left in the family archive and the camera presents in opposite macros images where those writings are indistinguishable, indicating explicitly what the definitive legacy of her father is: “the work as immanence of life, life as a point of immense light from which all things come, including death. And with it comes cinema. Then, only then, I make this film”. I mentioned earlier that the film begins with a quote; Albertina Carri reading her father’s work. The following is an excerpt from the lengthy excerpt that Albertina reads and whose content, in a certain way, manifests like an inheritance that awakens contradictions with which Carri daughter must endure:

More important than the chronicle of events is their actual meaning. [...] Here we have to escape from ‘civilized’ formalism of exclusively considering political forms to parties and ideologies to their platforms. This conception fails when trying to analyze this problem in the present and from the perspective of the national liberation. Positive formalism is based on events; the popular resistance, in all its phases from the very beginning, denies them. Upon resisting oppression, one denies the events it produces. With that, following Fanon, I want to say that the certainty is adapting to the facts but the truth for the people is that which harms the enemy.

The revolutionary and utopic tone of the quote contrasts with the disenchanting and distant vision the narrator will have during the story. However, the political inheritance of the father seems to transform itself in a poetic inheritance. Albertina Carri creates that actual meaning of the facts and, via her film, distances herself from positive formalism that her father rejects politically, denying the certainty in her work with the images. Therefore, according to Adorno's perspective, *Cuaterros* is linked to essays in that the latter, forms critique par excellence, will resist objectivist certainty, a unique and total truth of the modern Cartesian discourse.

6. *Dis-Carrian* Memoria: political reflections on the allegory and the staging in *Cuaterros*

At this point in the reflection, I will concentrate on the aesthetic and ethical consequences of the formal resources of the film. I refer specifically to the montage articulated on simultaneous screens, montage that breaks with the linearity of the cinematographic support and that obligates the spectator to decide where to focus their attention. I suggest that the structuration of an image tapestry, an accumulating and de-hierarchized image, works mainly as a method of investigation of the personal memory and filmic memory. Therefore, an intertwining is established between the intimate-biographic dimension and the widest dimension: the problem of the representation of the dictatorial history of Argentina's recent past. The archive becomes a scenario of a memory in progress that is, for Carri, a memory of different defeats: that of Isidro Velázquez, that of her parents' revolutionary political project, that of her family failure and that of the failure in the making of the film itself.

The audience of *Cuaterros* must actively decide where to look: like I mentioned, the materiality of the archive, shown on simultaneous screens that connect different stories, make the audience adapt their eye to the interpretation of cinematographic *collage*. In addition, it must accept the loss of information: it is impossible, for the human eye, to see the entire spectrum of actions that occur in the film. In this way, the visual construction of the film avoids a closed, monolithic meaning, leaving open multiple combinations and lines of interpretation.

What are the political consequences of this type of montage? I propose that based on the permanent noting of the lack of images in the plane of the discourse—the lost film of Szir, that has its correlation in the disappearance of the bodies during the dictatorship—to which *Cuaterros* responds with a proliferation of images. Thus, there is a certain sense of *horror vacui*, also linked—via its connection with Baroque style—with the film's own fragmentation. The exercise of the memory here, more than as ellipsis or silence before the terror of the catastrophe or before the irrepresentability of a dead father, transmutes into a thought out accumulation to crack the historicist conception of the archive and convert it into a pure conjecture of the disappearance of body and film.

6.1. Counterpoint: melancholic viewpoint and overcoming mourning

The tensions of the memory in the film avoid all lineal stories: from here we can think of a counterpoint between script or spoken story and visual archive portrayed; the first, has a melancholy tone, close to allegory in its relation with death, while the second, closer to the idea of montage, represents a construction of mourning that gives cinema a central place in the overcoming of the historic and personal trauma. I believe that the previous can be thought of together with the Argentine critic Luis Ignacio García, who says that in the thought of Walter Benjamin there is a struggle between the notions of allegory and montage, adding that "if allegory is the protest that relieves all regimen of meaning in terms of suffering and meaninglessness, the montage is the constructive proposal that is left after the dismembering of the totality" (2010, p.158).

The melancholic perspective of Carri is expressed, explicitly, in its fixation on the loss: in a certain way, *Cuaterros* works like a visual crypt that incorporates and houses father and missing film. Note the final visual sequences, where flies and worms eat away all traces of life. In his critique on the vanguards, Peter Bürger decomposes the constitutive elements of the notion of Baroque allegory for Walter Benjamin: the allegoric takes an element from the vital context, isolates it and rids it of its function and creates a certain meaning upon join-

ing these isolated fragments. In addition, Burger sees that Benjamin had interpreted the function of the allegoric as an expression of melancholy and that, regarding the audience's reception, the history would appear like decadence (1987, p.131-32). To this respect, I cite Benjamin himself:

While in the symbol, with the idealization of the destruction, the transfigured face of nature is shown fleetingly in the light of redemption, in the allegory the *Hippocratic face* of the story lies before the eyes of the observer as a primordial petrified landscape. Everything that the story, from the beginning, has as ungodly, as painful, as failed, is expressed on a face; or, better said: on a skull (1990, p.159).

Each one of the elements considered in this interpretation takes on meaning in the analysis of the work by Carri: *Cuaterros* seems to tear off pieces of an archive, stripped of its initial role, in order to give meaning in the work. Plus, the point of view of the subject of declaration can characterize itself like a melancholic perspective. Almost at the end of the filmic essay, the narrator, director and protagonist of the film indicates:

It is hard for me to get to Isidro. The discoveries reroute me to investigations that fill me with fear. What am I supposed to do with such massacres? Why am I permanently trapped in such dark states? "We all came from a catastrophe", my friend Daniel Link would say when he sees me in such a bad mood. "Yes, but I have them on top of me, my dear". They threw a death wagon at me and told me to look.

The previous excerpt not only shows the essay deviation that structures the film and the inheritance with which Albertina feels "diseased", but also with a specific point of view: the state of darkness that would seem not to be an object different from the subject, but rather is "on top of"; Carri identifies the catastrophe in a way in which the melancholy is identified with the loss object. For Bürger, this viewpoint is destined for failure because it does not respond to any concept of the formation of reality (1987, p.134), situation that is directly linked with the multiple failures that the film presents.

However, as we said earlier, the film's script is articulated as a counterpoint with the tone of the image, by way of a highly ironic montage. Paradoxically, first as tragedy and later as farce, the history of Velázquez is told showing visual sequences of *western movies* or via scenes from romantic films. The mention and display of fragments of the film *Ya es tiempo de violencia* by Enrique Juárez, political film that Carri judges as the best ever made in Argentina, shows the longing for that lost, in other words, the heroic force and the discursive logic that she sees in her parents and in the missing film archives, but that feels impossible for her generation: "if I had been old enough at that time I would have done the same as them. The same as Juárez, as Szir, as Mom and as Dad. I would have belonged to a subversive cell, without a doubt. But times are different and I'm living in the present, that of a nucleus that is so damaged that I cannot escape it".

7. Conclusions

I think it is possible to interpret the political consequences of this filmic essay in opposition to *Los rubios*. What there was of "post-political skepticism" in the first film, in the words of Oscar Cuervo, *Cuaterros* turns it into an explicit political discourse that embraces the multiplicity and the language of cinema as personal ethics. In fact, only when the narrator is able to embrace the political inheritance of her parents, she says to have built the film. Similar traces are found in the observations of Daniel Link, who states "contrary to what happens in *Los rubios*, where the interrogation underlines the perplexity in terms of the defeat (on all sides), *Cuaterros* affirms the necessity to continue the struggle (with concentration, enthusiasm and insistence) against the same old enemies" (s/n). Finally, the question that *Cuaterros* asks is the question for the representation of the catastrophe, to the questioning on the appropriate language to create the personal and collective memory. It is the language of cinema, the very language of montage over montage, one that allows Albertina Carri to finally build a multiform story and does not solely lose herself in the melancholy or even nostalgic contemplation of the past. The filmic essay becomes a process of unmethodical investigation and at the same time, a message of love to the possibilities provided by art.

Notes

1 Such is the case of the work of Adriana Bocchino, who, however, establishes the generic particularity of the film upon considering *Cuaterros* “like archive and, thus, place of memory. Unclassifiable among the cinematographic genres, putting in question artistic and also academic limits in that it develops and exhibits a documentary-style investigation at the same time it speaks of the subjectivity of its director” (s/n).

2 Among the theorists that have recently come close to definitions of the of the filmic essay are Alain Bergala, Josep María Catalá, Timothy Corrigan, Gustavo Provitina, Alberto García Martínez, Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, and others.

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- About the author:

María Belén Contreras is Professor of Spanish and Communication, with a degree in Hispanic Language and Literature and a Master's degree on Chilean and Hispano-American Literature from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. She currently holds a CONICYT scholarship is a student of the Doctorate in Literature program at Universidad de Chile.

- How to cite:

Contreras, M. B. (2019). EAesthetics and ethics of the fragment in Cuatreros (2016) by Albertina Carri. *Comunicación y Medios*, [39], 124-134.