ARCHIVAL MIGRATIONS AND "POETIC NOMADISM" IN *EL ECO DE LAS CANCIONES* (ANTONIA ROSSI, 2010)*

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INTRODUCTION: THE FILMIC BODY OF MEMORY

El eco de las canciones [The Echo of Songs] (Antonia Rossi, 2010) is a documentary whose narrative is associated with the concept of postmemory (Hirsch, 1997; 2021), which has also been described as "memory shot through with holes" (Raczymow, 1994), "vicarious memory" (Young, 2000), "late memory" or "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg, 2004), and "inherited memory" (Lury, 1998). All these terms designate a memory that is no longer direct because there is a generational distance between the historical events remembered and those remembering them. As Annette Kuhn (2002) points out, memory does not require one to have witnessed the original act, as the connection to a traumatic past is "mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (Hirsch, 2012: 5). Living in the shadow of the past event, the sons and daughters of direct victims establish an emotional connection with the experience of the horror. The stories that emerge are marked by the discovery of violence, absence, exile or disappearance in a past lived outside the body, or at least shrouded in mystery, as it straddles the boundary between memory and childhood amnesia. Second-generation authors thus attempt to heal the wounds and harms of these episodes of repression through the creation of a network of memories and inventions, giving new meanings to inherited images, dissolving borders between genres and eliciting emotions as part of a reflection on the processes of memory (Quílez Esteve, 2014). This is a formula that Elisabeth Ramírez-Soto (2019) has given the name "cinema of affect" in the case of Chilean post-dictatorship documentary. In contrast to the "cinema of the affected" constructed on testimony and documentary evidence that characterised the 1990s, there has been an "affective turn" toward a cinema that is elusive and evocative in this regard, where the focus shifts from the human body to the filmic body (Ramírez-Soto, 2019: 4-5). Documentary production thus "oscillates—intersecting at times—between the unveiling of two types of bodies: those of the direct victims and those of the films" (Ramírez-Soto, 2019: 4).

This study explores the cinematic mechanisms implemented by Antonia Rossi in *El eco de las canciones*. In this film, Rossi captures the process of constructing a provisional memory, an unstable phenomenon that requires constant negotiation with the device, interweaving and shaping the

aesthetic and content in a kind of *mise en abyme*. Because the memory being documented is fragmentary, Rossi makes use of found footage obtained from a wide variety of archival sources and reconstructs it by means of an unruly cinematic syntax, with the use of a collage technique that mirrors mnemonic operations based on the correlation of sensory information and contextual markers to aid the memory retrieval process. The sequencing of sound and image is not chronological but analogical; as Lattanzi points out, "the editing of archival material here is a complex, fragmented, evocative memory system that interweaves heterogeneous times, images and spaces [...] opening up its significant possibilities" (2022). It is important to note the presence of an associative form (Bordwell and Thompson, 1995) inherent in juxtaposition: there is thus a poetic contagion that is revealed in the application of metaphorical and parallel techniques; the grouping and repetition of images, sounds and noises that not only reflect the structure of memory and forgetting, but also evoke an imaginary gaze upon the place of origin. Rossi's unconventional filmmaking style possesses its own patterns to outline a minimalist, domestic and subjective approach. Essentially, she reflects on artistic practice as a threshold giving access to private worlds, and from this perspective she problematises the supposedly fixed nature of memory and identity.

Confined to the private sphere, the film is inscribed in the grammaticality of the first person. However, it plays at being and not being a true story of the authorial "I", shifting from the autobiographical form to autofiction (Arfuch, 2005). A filmmaker of the diaspora, Rossi subverts the personal dimension of her story and condenses the collective experience of a generation by recycling a diverse collection of materials. Her retrospective vision is underpinned by an accumulation of images of others; the past inhabits the present through the enunciative presence of a voice broken up into echoes.

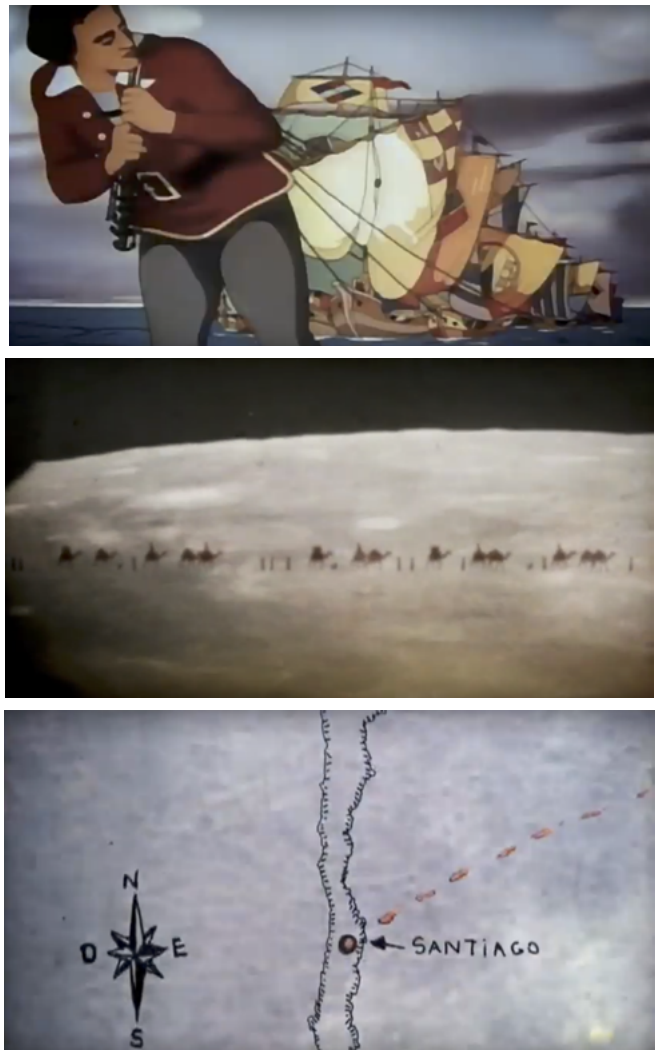
Based on the considerations outlined above, it is possible to identify a number of techniques employed in Rossi's film: the use of archives, re-editing, poetic and metaphorical language, temporal confusions, a plurally constructed first-person voice and a reflexive approach to the cinematic medium. These audiovisual strategies are explored in the various sections of this article.

CUTTINGS TO ASSEMBLE A FILMOGRAPHY

The oeuvre of Antonia Rossi (b. Rome 1978) is marked by a methodological preference for fragmentation. The filmmaker "appropriates" materials from a wide range of media, formats, genres and sources, making use of documentary archives while also employing fictional elements. Severed from their original context, the still-frames are rendered ambiguous, thus acquiring a degree of openness to the creation of new meanings through various compositional methods. Her preferred expressive technique is collage, whereby she manipulates the preexisting footage, connecting and juxtaposing discrete images to create symbolic resonances or secondary meanings. She also places an emphasis on the gaps and the seams in her work, exposing the patching process and the marks of the fractures. In this way, she explores the discontinuity intrinsic to the editing of heterogeneous materials, a process that "accentuates 'the edges' of the image, denaturalises the editing, emphasizes parataxis, and visibly redefines the appropriated fragments by highlighting the disjunction between their original meanings and connotations and those acquired in their new context" (Weinrichter, 2009: 197). Rossi's ultimate aim is to destabilise the temporal dimension and expose the plurality of perspectives on the space, transgressing the illusion of reality that characterises the institutional mode of representation (García López and Gómez Vaquero, 2009). Rossi juxtaposes "distant" fragments for experimental, evocative purposes to bring out complex spa-

tio-temporal articulations that resemble a subjective perspective. In her *papier collé* works, video installations and filmography, she uses the collage technique to represent private experiences such as dreams, memories, or perceptual processes. Collages thus constitute "metaphoric fabrications of reality" (Arthur, 1999-2000: 66). Through this practice, Rossi explores ambivalent realms, imitating their operations in her filmmaking.

The film analysed here, *El eco de las canciones,* maps out some imagined memories founded on intimacy, division and rupture. Rossi superimposes footage, exposing the cuts, thereby invoking the feelings underlying the shared reality, where



Images 1-3. Still-frames of wandering in *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010)

"the archival images do not convey information about a past to be reconstructed; instead, they get carried away with their evocative capacities in conjunction with the sound, vindicating the affective as a means of acquiring knowledge about a biographical past" (Lattanzi, 2022). It is a collage film whose technical strategy is putting together and picking apart the tangible materials, traces, remains and ruins contained in a wide range of archives. At the same time, Rossi sketches images that are entangled and integrated with the found footage. Her filmmaking weaves or threads together different textures and corporealities to document an exile that has no end. She creates symbolic storylines that evoke the tones of alienation (exile, return, homecoming). In this way, she creates her own "imaginary archive and collects clues to return to a country that is hers and yet not hers (anymore) but must be recovered, reconstructed, reinvented" (Bongers, 2016: 135). This life story of travelling and (re)locating is presented to us as a dispersed textual experience in which any refuge is inconceivable. What stands out in this story is the "poetic nomadism" (Bongers, 2016: 133) of images that capture geographical snippets, traces of the homeland and private corners, along with shifts between times and spaces without providing specific coordinates. The spacing out and suspension of time are essential features of this approach, as it operates by analogy and metaphor in "a system of allusions, repetitions, oppositions and correspondences" (Lattanzi, 2022), with a repetition of references to wandering, visible in the still-frames taken from *Gulliver's Travels* (Dave Fleischer, 1939),[1] the drawings of nomads who travel "clinging to the contours of the earth," the animated maps that chart the journeys between Santiago and Rome, and the images of voyages in different modes of transport that reappear again and again throughout the film (Images 1-3).

Rossi uses this subtle approach again in her more recent films, such as *Una vez la noche* (2018), which has the appearance of an illustrated story-

book, as any illusion of movement has been removed and strategies such as voice-over, zoom and variable shots are used to provide volume and kineticism. In this case, the atypical nature of the materials used is due to the ungrammatical quality of the drawings, which transgresses any formal continuity in what is, furthermore, a chaotic narrative. There are also documentary inserts such as photographs and a series of images of fetish-objects. Collage is used in an undisciplined graphic combination where the contours of time are malleable and the spaces are sterile. Her feature film *El espíritu de la araña* [The Spirit of the Spider] (2024) examines her affinity for collage and the poetic exploration of the vicissitudes of memory. In this film she compiles, manipulates and reconstructs archival material, while creating a complex sound design network that denotes and detonates the images. The result is a visual constellation of shadow play, phantasmagoria and audiovisual footage related to the female body.

Collage thus underpins an experimental project aimed at reconstructing events of the past that have little or nothing to do with the historical world of the privileged class, but that are related instead to the phenomenological dimensions of those events. Rossi's is therefore not a passive or mimetic gaze but an inner gaze. Perhaps the only possible way to capture this sensibility in sounds and images is to uncover the latent properties of the archive. If we understand the archive as a regulated site, the choice of what to collect and preserve is governed by power, and it is therefore marked by hegemonic inclusions and exclusions (Derrida, 1997). Moreover, various contemporary theorists call into question the notion of the archive as a mere container or repository of documents, information and knowledge, conceiving of it instead as a system of counterweights that stores or destroys the marks of the past (Guasch, 2011). It is therefore an impossible, incomplete project for tomorrow's world. In this sense, past, present and future are interwoven, not in a linear progression, but in a way that opens cracks and chasms that render the absences palpable. Aesthetic experience and affective exploration render the opacities legible, thereby creating "contact zones" (Ahmed, 2015: 42), circulations and migrations. Searching among the cracks, recovering lost images and imaginaries, creating an archive from the waste, combining materials and opening them up to processes of resignification (Sánchez-Biosca, 2015) constitute acts of resistance (Bongers, 2016). Rossi thus aims to "glean" images that function as a residue of historical time, in order to conjure up this sensory reality. Like a collector, or the rag-picker described by Walter Benjamin in *Unpacking My Library: A Speech on Collecting* (1931), this filmmaker picks out materials from her own archives or those of others, and even rescues some that were previously discarded as insignificant, re-imagining these ephemeral, marginal elements to configure a particular "collection" charged with memory and meaning. This strategy contains an allegorical dimension, as the combination of scraps and traces drills through their original meaning, although flashes of that meaning remain, and in this way, the two illuminate each other. Also notable in this film is its construction of *sound collages*. The soundtrack is made up of pre-existing fragments that are manipulated, dissected and reassembled in combinations of the material, the metaphorical and the self-referential. The expressive digressions offered by these snippets of radio and television broadcasts, voices and noises from home movies, music and songs all reverberate in the chain of images. Through the clash of different layers and their respective depths, the audio augments the visuals, vesting them with new meanings. And the editing of sound and image also offers rhythmic nuances and counterpoints. The sonic modulations and interferences form a collage simultaneous with the shot or even within it, which expresses the concentration of the soundscape. The opposite effect can also be achieved by placing all the sounds

on the same level, in a regeneration that leads to noise and even silence due to audio saturation. The anatomical transposition of sounds and images sweeps us through the passages and landscapes of memory.

ARCHI(VE)PELAGO: THE GEOGRAPHY OF POSTMEMORY

El eco de las canciones resounds with the power of a maritime metaphor. In a film that speaks to us of exile and alienation, images of a de-spatialised, liminal sea appear again and again (Images 4-6). In the years immediately after Augusto Pinochet's military coup in Chile in 1973, some 200,000 Chileans were forced into exile. This figure may have reached as high as 400,000 by 1988, when Pinochet's ban on exiles was finally lifted.

Antonia Rossi was born in Rome, where her family had gone into exile. In 1990, they returned to Chile. This idea of wandering the earth with no clear destination is figuratively represented by a sea whose symbolic scope dissolves in countless allusions. In *L'Arcipelago* (2000), Massimo Cacciari explores the ambivalence of the sea through its various names (Thalassa, Pélagos, Pontus, etc.), a strategy in keeping with the recurring presence of sea images in Rossi's film. The sea is a welcoming embrace, the mother goddess Thalassa, a route for incessant voyages; its waters may also represent the fluid nature of a blurred identity, not to mention the association of the sea with flooding, capsizing or being cast adrift. Perhaps the most powerful of these metonymic references is the one that suggests a connection between nomads and the land, and the search for water. These perceptions of the sea reproduce the physical and psychological displacement inherent in exile. The voice-over underscores this relationship, "it was said that my cradle was a boat rocking on the sea and that at some point it would go under" (00:10:17). In his book *On Collective Memory* (1950), Maurice Halbwachs explains that memory and identity, both of the individual and of the social group, need a spatial framework in order to take shape. Continuing with the trope described above, the setting in which Rossi constructs her memory is the part of the sea that lies furthest from the land, the endless, rolling open sea (*pélagos*). As a biographical space, it is unstable due to its buoyancy; it is impossible to take root in these waters because there is no soil. It thus offers us only a broken identity and a second-hand memory.

One more idea related to the sea metaphor is worth considering here. The word "archipelago" etymologically designates the first area of the sea with islands. It could therefore be thought of as an "in-between space", a bridge (*pontos*) between the sea and the land. These images reflecting the constant movements of the characters are constructed as animated maps of an imaginary area split off from *terra firme*. The homeland appears isolated, spectral and distorted, its reconstruction seemingly impossible. Among the various associations established by the editing, the representations of the country are linked to images of weather phenomena wreaking havoc, in a juxtaposition of shots that establishes an imaginary of a forbidden and inhospitable land (Carvajal, 2012).

The director explores the condition of insularity that political exile brings with it. To this end, she seeks out a diverse range of materials to give shape to a story that eschews the recurring image of exile to take a position in peripheral and marginal imaginaries.[2] This somewhat frenzied sensory contexture is doomed to failure as a means of documenting facts and constructing an identity, but the filmmaker turns this essential failure into something evocative, tangentially opposed to the abuse of the archive. Her cinematographic style involves the combination of various forms of representation, including documentary and fiction, as well as a wide range of images and expressive registers. It is an archive that does not belong to her in the strict sense, but she uses it to turn the experience of others into her own and reality into fantasy.



Images 4–6. Images of the sea in *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010)

With its reference to an origin, the word "archive" shares a connection with "archipelago". The film is thus founded on the spectral nature of a country and of a manipulated archive whose content is ghostly and unreal, because if raw data ever do appear, they do so in strange, distorted or hallucinatory ways. There is television footage of political events: the Days of National Protest in the 1980s, the earthquakes of 1985, the attempted assassination of Pinochet in 1986, the referendum of 1988, and the dictator's death in 2006. The aesthetic banality of the news is set in opposition against the poetic voracity of animated films, found footage or images created using fades, overlays, elision and off-screen space.

The soundtrack is endowed with the same poetic sensibility as the visuals, as each component—music, noise and vocal textures—has a symbolic function and organises the metaphorical enunciation of the narrative (Caffy and Falcón, 2020). Extradiegetic music operates on several registers, ranging from gentle background accompaniment to sinister digressions with a common theme: waves on the sea. In some scenes, the parameters are distorted by violently overlapping layers of sound, noise, atonality, distortions of timbre, audio saturation, silence or syncopation, synthetic textures or ruptures in the vocal track that remind us of the presence of the cinematic device. The special importance of sound in the film's construction is not limited to these resources, as there are also unexpected noises, asynchronous sounds, semantic uses of noise and silence, tropes and repetitions, discontinuities and dissonances between the audio and the visuals. The voice-over adopts an allegorical tone and plays with different volumes, tones and vocal nuances that enrich its contribution to the film.

MATERIALITY OF THE DEVICE AND TRANSLUCENT IMAGES

The use of collage extends to the very surface of the shot by means of two expressive techniques: superimposed images and the inclusion of film outtakes. The director uses both of these to construct and reconstruct images through the accumulation of layers and simultaneous fragments. Foreign elements are also inserted into the image itself to break up its unitary nature, forming a pictorial collage within the film frame. For example, the exposure of the framing or the appearance of the frame within the frame directs the spectator's attention to the properties of the filming device, while underscoring the idea of cuts and boundaries inherent in collage.

Similarly, superimposed images, overlays, double exposures and multiple images such as lap dissolves produce a stratifying effect. A series of images creates a larger unit that is unstable and dynamic, i.e., conveying a strong sense of transience, as the images in question are veiled and unveiled. In her "cartography" of found footage, Nicole Brenez describes cross-cutting or superimposition as the "technique of highlighting certain images by superimposing other images on them" (2002: 95). Rossi makes metaphorical and metonymic use of lap dissolves between shots and superimposed images by regulating their simultaneous appearance on the screen and intervening in the degrees of visual predominance of each image. Thus, their features fade and intertwine to form new figurations.[3] The encounter between them creates connections and resonances that straddle the line between transparency and opacity, in a sort of phenomenology of translucence (Peyraga, Gautreau *et al.*, 2016). And in the shift from one image to another, the rhythm of the change invites us to explore the filmic device itself and its storytelling activity (Peyraga, Gautreau *et al.*, 2016). This is an exercise in "cinematographic reflexivity" (Gerstenkorn, 1987: 7) that is reflected in the other strategy mentioned above, the exposure of the filmic exoskeleton. These proximate, unstable images introduce the latent states and material structure, the subtlety and brutality of the filmic body into the representation itself. The wear and tear of an anachronistic film format like Super-8, the grains, scratches and edges on the film stock, the use of outtakes, the raw camera footage, the effects of emulsion, the combination of film, video and photography, the exploration of surfaces, the camera positions very close to bodies, objects and spaces, the adjustments of focus, the truncated shots and the reframing to expose the visible and the invisible are some of the technical strategies used to expose the filmmaking material.[4]

The audio is arranged as another material component by switching back and forth between synchronized and unsynchronized sound, noise and silence, elisions and syncopations. This materialism is not just a self-referential act but also possesses a sensory power that connects it with "haptic visuality" and "haptic listening" (Marks, 2000). According to Marks, haptic perception privileges embodied experience and sensory contact with the image. The observer/spectator becomes "vulnerable to the image, reversing the relation of mastery that characterizes optical viewing" (Marks, 2000: 185) and its distanced perception. Listening is also founded on this principle, as sounds have a tactile dimension in their unevenness and ambiguity. Marks stresses the embodied experience of cinema and the blurring of the boundaries of perception. In *El eco de las canciones*, we can touch and be touched by images that overlap and merge with each other and with our own anatomy. A closer look at some of these compositions can illustrate





Images 7 and 8. Outtakes and superimposed images in *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010)

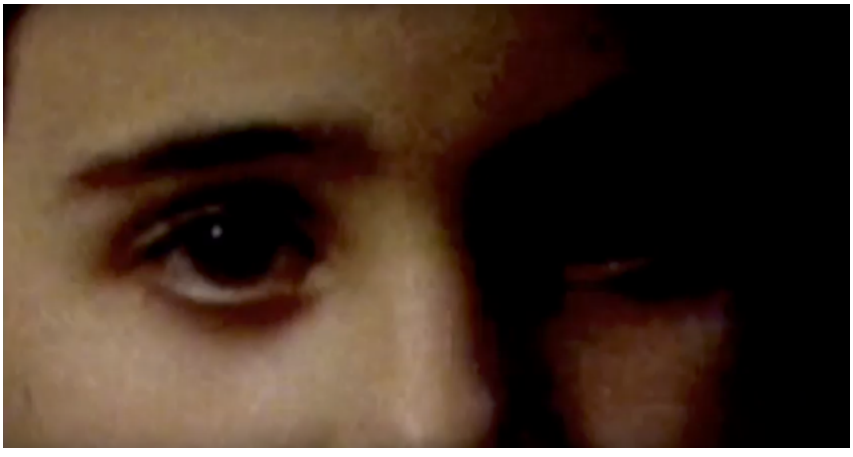
this point (Images 7 and 8). These examples juxtapose shots of different origins (live action and animated), such as a rotoscoped image of a red-haired woman walking at dawn or the check dam containing a violent storm. Suspended in the air, the figure gives sensory form both to motion and to motionlessness. In another sequence, the instability of the camera is made palpable. However, this movement has not resulted in the shot being discarded; on the contrary, it is incorporated in an imperfect register. The shaking possesses sensory qualities that are explored in terms of sensual and tactile proximity.

WITH NOBODY'S VOICE AND A CHILD'S GAZE

In minute 00:01:25 of the film, we hear a voice-over that tells us: "I wake up with my eyes shut." In this way, Antonia Rossi responds to the call of the past, through something as volatile as sensibility and the waking dream state. With this statement, she proposes an exercise of memory with closed eyes. This secret inner gaze resembles a hypnagogic phenomenon: the field of vision is filled with luminous reflections of things previously perceived. By delving into one's private world, the memory of exile is revealed to be a game of apparitions and eclipses. The expatriate experience is an unstable and ambiguous mnemonic sign, as there can be no straight line between a sense belonging and a geographical location. Any place is simply where "my body" is; there is no anchor, only a constant coming and going. The subjective expression of alienation seems to place us in an autobiographical narrative, which is, however, contaminated by fiction. The first-person voice-over that accompanies the images contains the echo of those "thousands of children who, like a plague, were born and grew up on the same borrowed patch of land" (00:10:45). The director's creative method depends on a long period of previous research, conducting a series of interviews with people who experienced their early childhood in exile. Out of the memories, impressions and sensations described in these discussions, she constructs a monologue that interweaves the personal with the collective.[5] Inhabited by the stories of others, this voice has a political consistency, because it confirms that possessing the past is impossible. This acousmatic character explores the lyricism of the images, articulating a poetic, metaphorical language that also provides a halting tempo, repetitions and durations as the images flow past.

While it is an adult voice that tells the story, the gaze evoked in this projection of memories is a child's. The filmmaker brings together these two periods of life by assigning them complementary roles. The adult recalls the memories in the present and drives the narration, while spatial, symbolic and historical references are elaborated from the child's perspective, based on what she felt in the past. The recreated character explores the extent to which the present is imbued with that other, undelimited time, because the evocative exercise assumes a certain coexistence of adulthood and childhood. One image appears repeatedly throughout the film: "Juana's eyes" (Im-

Image 9. Juana's eyes in *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010)



age 9), a close-up shot of the face of a child whose gaze is becomes an unexpected protagonist. The voice-over, which accompanies the different appearances of the shot, expresses sensory experiences, dreams and memories of that past with something of a magical view of the world, blurring the boundary between reality and fiction as a result.

FOUND FOOTAGE AND (RE)IMAGINED FOOTAGE

The desire to preserve the child's view in the recovery of the past informs the filmmaker's search for archival materials that are inscribed in a family register. She has found home movies—on Super-8 film and analogue video—of the Parra and Downey families and her fieldwork has turned up an important archive: the films of the Chilean folk group Inti Illimani. This amateur filmmaking lies at the very core of the film's conception. The elasticity and the absence of sequential structure of the original footage make it an open text (Zimmermann, 2008). The director intervenes in the flow of images of a private world, eroding and reshaping the fragmented actions typical of family films and incorporating them into an evocative, metaphorical chain. In other words, she provides them with an aesthetic base and a technical cohesion. The footage remains, of course, a remnant of meaning: the affectivity exuded by images created and preserved in a family environment. At the same time, this domestic dynamic has the effect of "enabling personal micronarratives to emerge as a significant element of our understanding of past events" (Baron, 2014: 121). *El eco de las canciones* sheds light on the little stories found in the reverse shot of history, manifesting an "aesthetic of unimportance, of the objects and the subjects of everyday life" (Catalá, 2010: 305). The breakdown of the everyday world hints at the historical conflict, thanks to the understanding established with a spectator who remembers what was happening outside the frame. The home movie stitches together the on-screen and off-screen worlds through the life experiences shared by its participants. The potency of this universe prompts the director to engage in a metafilmic exploration that (re)creates this film. Some of the other footage has the appearance of home movies,[6] as Rossi used a Super-8 camera to film new material that emulates technical aspects of the found footage: inconclusive scenes, narrative dispersion, indeterminate time-frames, indifference toward the setting in which the action takes place, poses and gazes to camera, interferences, gestures of aggression, abrupt cuts between shots, etc. (Odin, 2010: 51). With this intertextual operation, not only does she blur the boundary between reality and fiction, but she also offers a reflection on the power of cinema to capture shadows and save fragments of life from oblivion.

ANALYSIS

Having examined the aesthetic and technical features of the film, this section presents an analysis of sequences, or more precisely, associative chains. In the prelude to this mnemonic exercise, the first images are outtakes that lead us into an imaginary that is more abstract than figurative due to its residual nature. Overexposed images produce a higher level of spatial estrangement, and the temporal dimension is subject to an enigmatic alternate history (Image 10). In line with this approach, the soundtrack offers noises that may allude to the gentle rumble of the sea. This flaw in the representation, where neither sound nor visuals have defined contours, evokes the historical episode: the bombing of the Chilean presidential palace, La Moneda, on 11 September 1973. The event is transfigured into an abyss, an absolute blackness embedded with a distorted audio recording: a radio conversation between Pinochet and his military commanders. The omission of the iconic images of the bombing establishes a

profoundly affective connection with the traumatic past (Ramírez-Soto, 2018). The poetic voice awakens to illuminate the visual development, constructing a different timeframe that combines biographical details with historical facts. The voice-over and image metonymically activate the evocative framework. The voice's description suggests an adherence to minimalism, restricted to the sensory impressions of an uncertain time. Similarly, the images are limited to small spatial segments. Rossi manipulates the material of others to extract detail and cuts out still-frames from animated films with different textures based on the type of animation used—specifically, from *Gulliver's Travels* and *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (Larry Roemer and Kizo Nagashima, 1964). The narrative content of these excerpts deals with the imminence of catastrophe, reflected in the sound of flashes added to numerous shots. The allusion to electric shocks and the accumulation of images offer a metonymic reading of film collage as a multifaceted technique. She inserts a series of exterior shots of the city where her parents lived (Image 11); as we fly over the orderly urban grid, the voice-over tells us she is unfamiliar with it. Next, a framework is articulated around a postmemory sustained more by affect than by knowledge of the facts, offering visions of exile. We are shown old archival footage of an expedition to the Chilean glaciers. In the home movies, the characters are outlined as fleeting wisps: Juana's eyes, the mother's profile, the father's glasses reflecting the sea (Image 12). Rossi intersperses, superimposes, and finally overlays the footage of the expedition with animated maps and a visual trope that is repeated throughout the film: birds as an archetypal symbol of migration. The soundtrack imitates this additive strategy with the juxtaposition of sound effects: the musicality of a theremin, the audio of a military proclamation and recordings of Pinochet justifying the regime's extradition policy. A final shot reveals that this chain is not only elliptical but also metaphorical: accumulated belongings are shown like the remains of a shipwreck.



Images 10-12. Images of postmemory in *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010)

The sequence showing the attempted assassination of Pinochet coincides with a visit to Chile by the exiled family. Their brief return brings the girl face-to-face with the tyrant's omnipotence: "it was like looking at his face for the first time; I looked long and hard at his expressions, listening to his voice" (00:30:54). There follow news images that are either manipulated in the editing to enlarge the details of Pinochet's face or permeated with other images of a dreamlike quality (Image 13). Added to this scene are animated war scenes, film excerpts of explosions and a reference to a dream about the death of her family. The voice-

over continues by telling of the journey back to Rome, which "was dampened by the explosion of a nuclear plant" (00:32:50). These two events, the assassination attempt and the Chernobyl accident, depart from linear time to slip into symbolic time. The journey back to Italy is intertwined with a visual rhythm of destruction (Images 14 and 15): maps of Italy and Chile battered by some kind of wind god, archive footage of Chernobyl and a gale-force blast that sweeps away everything in its path. The symbolic intention of this series of shots is to represent an individual threatened by two regions on the brink of extinction.

In another sequence, the visuals include home movie footage of what appears to be a political gathering of exiles. The one remembering is situated in that child's world where the ways of adults are unknown, mysterious and unreadable, and can only be decoded in sensory terms: "a movement, a gaze, or the way of holding a glass, attitudes, expressions and names piled up, constructing the history of a far-off place" (12:30-13:37). This fragment is stitched together with family footage whose common theme is childhood. A tenuous symbolic connection serves to shift the timeframe, which is still vague, because no date is given. Nor are there any specific spatial clues, although there is a poetic tempo, in addition to a density of images that transport us to a place marked by the weight of everyday life: the home. A series of home movies with indoor scenes that "are about vitality, enjoyment, and activities such as dancing and playing" (Van Alphen, 2011: 61). Into these portraits of ordinary life slips the historical event. In elusive language, the political issue of exile is hinted at. One example of this is the shot of a woman whose gaze to the world outside the story, so characteristic of the aesthetic canon of family films, offers a glimpse of the forced nature of her distance from home (Image 16). We return to the footage of the exiles' meeting, but this time it is explored more fully through the manipulation of the footage (zooms and pans). Little



Images 13-15. Images of destruction in *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010)

indications serve to reconstruct the banishment and political violence of the dictatorship (Images 17 and 18).

Finally, there is the series of images that allude to the exiles' return. The magnitude of the odyssey is now unfathomable, given that the return is to a fantasy realm with no mooring in real life. It is, once again, an alienating experience. This is why the combination of visuals used to represent it takes us into outer space (Images 19-21). Punctuated by television archives (the official announcement of the lifting of the ban on exiles returning to the country), the homecoming is reconstructed using a constellation of images







Images 16-18. Excerpts from home movies in *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010)

of weightlessness. Animated still-frames of trees uprooted from the ground, footage of falling airships, a tracking shot over an empty airport or *non-place* and fragments of an airline safety video. Also shown are documentaries of space missions, but their original pacing is disrupted—accelerated, suspended or slowed down. The poetic association of outer space with the return journey is consolidated with footage that offers a view of the Earth seen from a spaceship in orbit, a cosmonaut falling into the atmosphere and an open parachute dissolving into a map of Chile. Added to these extraterrestrial scenes are shots of a flying saucer landing, taken from the Italian sci-fi parody film *The Twelve-Handed Men of Mars* (I marziani hanno 12 mani, Franco Castellano and Giuseppe Moccia, 1964). The voice-over confesses to a fear of her memories being "hijacked"; hence, the need to amass "clues". The sensory expression of this kind of specular alienation is made complete with animated images of a storm shaking Gulliver's ship, and excerpts from a stop-motion film showing animals fleeing with nowhere to run. Upon their return, the city of Santiago is a darkened landscape; this is followed by footage of the streets as they are today. In other words, this strange place is approached in a dreamlike, unreal







Images 19-21. Images of returning in *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010)

state. Next, we see superimposed nocturnal silhouettes from *Tableaux d'une exposition* (Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker, 1972), an animated film made using the pinscreen technique. The voice-over concludes that "sleepwalkers must not be woken up because they will never move again" (00:44:45). The homecoming requires not just the reconstruction of a homeland, but also a collective reflection on the processes of exile, the temporary nature of the host countries and the claim to the country of origin (Benedetti, 1984).

CONCLUSIONS

El eco de las canciones is an illustrative example of a work of postmemory that straddles the line between autofiction and metafiction (Quílez Esteve, 2015). It thus constitutes a radical allusion to the very mechanisms of discursive construction. Various techniques are brought into play in this film. First, the use of metonymy and fragmentation give this film the quality of an interstitial production. Rossi weaves a genealogy, collecting archival materials that she picks apart and patches together using the collage technique. On the other hand, every remnant and vestige presented is imbued with a subjective perspective, because she is aware of the forces of destruction involved in every act of preservation. She recycles discarded elements and vests monosemous versions of the past with new meanings on a personal, sensory level. In this way, she explores illusions and speculations in a thwarted attempt to recover an irretrievable past. It is thus possible to identify a poetic turn in the association of images, with the recurrence to certain tropes. The allegorical disruptions of the segments can be centrifugal (in the chain of associations) or centripetal (within the shot itself). Rossi thus explores the potential of a collage technique beyond superimposed images—sound collage and cross-cutting—and combines its material variations. This fragmentary technique reflects the dispersed nature of memory and the emotions associated with it, creating a mosaic that shifts back and forth between the personal and the collective. We are thus drawn into a dislocated identity that the story reconstructs and deconstructs repeatedly. Rossi captures dissonant voices to put together a collective memory, delving into the experiences of others in order to understand her own. One final point of reflection involves the filmmaker's investigation and experimentation. Based on the meticulous examination of home movie archives, an unfocused practice, Rossi transforms these private records into a public aesthetic discourse that speaks of loss, alienation and nostalgia. This process gives the everyday a new meaning, with a symbolic weight within the film narrative, while also foregrounding it in a pastiche approach involving the recreation of a home movie aesthetic.

In short, *El eco de las canciones* is a rambling evocation made up of fragments, bursts of light and complex soundscapes, a filmmaking exercise that transcends the conventional documentary narrative to become an audiovisual poem about memory, rootlessness and identity. ■

NOTES

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1 Various sequences from *Gulliver's Travels* appear in the film. This choice is especially significant because it reflects the filmmaking process and the experience that Rossi sought to capture in her project: "in one of the conversations the story of Gulliver [a book that one of the people interviewed had read as a child in exile] came up. I thought about it and noticed a connection between the character and my personal experience, the feelings of estrangement and alienation I felt. Gulliver is a nomad, a stranger who observes every new world he finds from a distance and who is ultimately expelled to a place completely foreign

to him. The animations illustrated these feelings and possessed great visual power" (A. Rossi, personal communication, 20 June 2024).

2 A. Rossi (personal communication, 20 June 2024).

3 A. Rossi (personal communication, 20 June 2024).

4 A. Rossi (personal communication, 20 June 2024).

5 A. Rossi (personal communication, 20 June 2024).

6 A. Rossi (personal communication, 20 June 2024).

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ARCHIVAL MIGRATIONS AND "POETIC NOMADISM" IN *EL ECO DE LAS CANCIONES* (ANTONIA ROSSI, 2010)

Abstract

This article presents an analysis of a film that reflects on the "post-memory" of Chilean exile and return, *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010). The study attempts to map the way Rossi draws on archives to develop an evocation of an episode of political violence, shifting the referential use of these sources towards a contingent, poetic and open approach. At the same time, it explores the capacity of the documentary to extrapolate subjective experience and generate a notion of a community of memory. The analysis involves a review of some of the narrative strategies developed in a first-person documentary that is in fact constructed in the plural, as well as a consideration of paratextual elements that enter into a dialogue with the film's diegetic universe.

Key words

Postmemory; Exile and Alienation; Archive; Poetic Language.

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MIGRACIONES DE ARCHIVO Y «NOMADISMO POÉTICO» EN *EL ECO DE LAS CANCIONES* (ANTONIA ROSSI, 2010)

Resumen

El presente trabajo analiza una obra que reflexiona en torno a la «posmemoria» del exilio y el retorno chileno, *El eco de las canciones* (2010), dirigida por Antonia Rossi. Se intenta cartografiar el modo en que esta cineasta trabaja la evocación de un episodio de violencia política desde el archivo, desplazando su uso referencial hacia uno contingente, poético y abierto. Por otro lado, se subraya la capacidad del documental de extrapolar la experiencia subjetiva y generar una noción de comunidad mnémica. Para llevar a cabo el análisis, se revisan, primero, algunas de las estrategias narrativas desarrolladas por un documental en primera persona, que es, en verdad, construido pluralmente, para, con posterioridad, detenerse en elementos paratextuales que dialogan con el universo diegético.

Palabras clave

Posmemoria; Exilio y desarraigo; Archivo; Lenguaje poético.

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