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Redirected Utopias: The Politics of Self-Reflexive Autobiographical Documentary in Albertina Carri's *Los rubios* and Ufuk Emiroglu's *Mon père, la révolution, et moi*

Released in 2003 and 2013 respectively, Argentine director Albertina Carri's *Los rubios* and Turkish filmmaker Ufuk Emiroglu's *Mon père, la révolution, et moi* are self-reflexive, autobiographical documentaries concerned with the place of memory in politically inflected filmmaking.¹ Yet these directors deliberately incorporate fictions and fantasies into their autobiographical stories by relying in part on accounts known to be untrue or partially true, versions of events that these directors emphasize through playful aesthetic approaches.² That these directors take an irreverent approach to the very serious subject of their respective fathers' revolutionary commitment emphasizes the complexities of memory. These directors seek to understand—and scrutinize—the utopian ideals of the revolutionary movements to which their fathers belonged in 1970s Argentina and Turkey, respectively. Throughout these documentaries—produced a decade apart and in different countries—the directors bring the tensions between family and revolutionary commitment to the fore in ways that repeatedly complicate ideas about both memory and filmmaking. Carri and Emiroglu rely on metonymic narrative structures and animation to scrutinize how memory, autobiography, and filmmaking relate to one another.

While Carri's film has been the subject of significant critical analysis, *Mon père, la révolution, et moi* has attracted relatively little scholarly attention. Yet, whether critically acclaimed or not, a comparative consideration of both documentaries sheds light on the politics and aesthetics of memory in global documentary filmmaking. Carri and Emiroglu use playful documentary forms to transmit stories about themselves and their families in ways that show how these personal stories sit uncomfortably with prevalent narratives about recent history and

politics. These two recent creations by women from countries that are often marginalized in film studies break new ground in documentary productions situated at the intersection of politics and personal self-expression, especially through their use of metonymy and animation.

Emiroglu's and Carri's humorous and playful approaches to their inherited memories of the anything but trivial 1970s revolutionary politics both question their respective fathers' commitment to the revolution and scrutinize revolutionary politics as a whole. Rather than romanticize or reify revolutionary ideals, by incorporating fantasy and play, these documentaries emphasize the unreliability of memory as well as the problems of making heroes out of complex revolutionary figures. Indeed, fantasy and play are necessary and useful aspects of the films' aesthetics because their directors are not fully able to reconstruct their own childhoods accurately and objectively. Carri cannot speak to her parents about her childhood because they were killed years ago by dictatorial agents. In Emiroglu's case, the years of exile and estrangement from her native country—coupled with her father's disillusionment and change over time—confound any attempts to piece together her family's history accurately. Yet precisely this need to resort to imagination in their documentaries also makes room for complexities that raise questions about historical accuracy. These directors' aesthetic approaches to their subject matter therefore mirror the ambivalent functioning of memory in human experiences. Where political commitment and personal memory both fall short of offering a cohesive narrative, Emiroglu and Carri fill in the spaces with fiction to tell their individual and family stories. Despite the playfulness of these aesthetics, both films also convey the pain and difficulty of their childhood experiences, such that there is at the heart of both of these documentaries a painful and traumatic kernel of lived experience with which these directors are reckoning.

Carri's film begins with shots of the Argentine countryside and then cuts to Playmobil recreations of a childhood home scene. She then follows actress Couceyro as she acts out Carri's conversations with family friends and her attempt to film the documentary about her childhood. The film includes a moment in which Couceyro reads aloud a letter from the Argentine National Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts *Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales* (INCAA) rejecting her film on the basis that it needs to be revised with "further documentary rigor on the basis of testimony." Although the film eventually received financial support from the INCAA, their assertion that it lacked documentary rigor hinged on what the institute perceived as the need to bolster her parents' virtues and actions because they were noble, heroic figures associated with the revolution. The film follows Couceyro—and Carri herself—as they act out the steps of making this documentary, including visiting former neighbors, visiting the former detention center (nicknamed "The Sheraton") where Carri's parents were detained, and having her blood drawn by the Forensic Anthropology team to match her DNA with that of her disappeared parents.

For its part, *Mon père, la révolution, et moi* begins with Emiroglu arriving in Istanbul by boat. She recounts her childhood and her father's political activities during that time, activities that compelled the family to go into hiding and, eventually, exile in Switzerland, where her father became a currency counterfeiter involved in an international crime operation. Confused as to what became of her father's revolutionary commitment and why he turned from what seemed to her a virtuous heroic life to one of crime, the director begins to search for various understandings of utopias throughout the world, including a commune in the US, since the utopia in which her father once believed is no longer available. Emiroglu recognizes that, for her father, the revolution signified utopia and, in an effort to understand her father and her own childhood

better, she seeks out her own utopia in a filmic endeavor in homage to his utopic search but differentiated from his pursuits.

For both of these directors, filmmaking—understood and represented here as both the final product and the process itself of making documentary film—is, fundamentally, an attempt to identify and to understand utopia. Like the non-place or ideal to which “utopia” refers, the substance of the previous generation’s utopic pursuits constantly evades these directors. Just as the utopic idealism of their fathers’ politics, for these directors, relates more to utopia’s meaning of non-place than an ideal place, memory evades these filmmakers and constantly prompts them to “redirect” their search and their filmmaking. Because of these constant redirections, the films become more about the process of making a film about their fathers than about their fathers themselves. Through their self-reflexive approaches, both films scrutinize the political meanings of the function of memory in autobiographical documentary.

Memory and Politics in 21st-Century Turkish and Argentine Film

Both films were released at a time at which memory politics were particularly pervasive in both Turkey and Argentina. Carri’s film was released in the early 2000s, an era in which Argentina’s dictatorship and the political tumult of the 1970s were becoming increasingly common subjects of filmmaking. Such films include María Inés Roque’s *Papá Iván* (2000) and David Blaustein’s *Botín de guerra* (2000). *Los rubios*, despite being focused on similar themes and responding to the same political context, differs enormously from these other films in that it, in Garibotto and Gómez’ terms, “goes beyond the memory format” (108). Existing criticism of the film has focused on Carri’s expansion of modalities of cultural memory (Kohan 2004, Macón 2004, Garibotto and Gómez 2006), the elements of postmemory in the film (Macón 2004,

Nouzeilles 2005, Sarlo 2006), and forgetting in the film as a cultural function of neoliberal policy in 1990s Argentina (Martín Cabrera 2011).

In both Turkey and Argentina, parent-child relationships (specifically motherhood) have played an important part in cultural conversations surrounding memory and recent political history. Argentina's *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* began marching every Thursday in 1977 to make a claim for the release of the whereabouts of their disappeared children. In Turkey, the *Saturday Mothers* similarly began marching every Saturday in 1995 to protest their children's disappearance during the 1980s, reportedly influenced by the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*.³ Indeed, the *Madres* are the immediate subject of David Blaustein's documentary *Botin de guerra*. Similarly, parent-child relationships are prevalent in Turkish film about memory, as I discuss further below.

Like Argentina, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Turkey has experienced a renewed interest in issues of cultural memory, particularly when it comes to the country's 1980s coup and the revolutionary fervor in the years before. Onur Bakiner noted in 2013 "an unprecedented interest in the country's recent and distant past" (691). To explore this unprecedented interest in recent history, Bakiner invokes Argentine sociologist Elizabeth Jelin's suggestion that hegemony canonizes collective memory and represses rival interpretations of the past. Bakiner distills Jelin: "Under repressive regimes, alternative memories might be suppressed or self-censored. They might survive as private memories, circulated among families or communities, but not shared in the broader public" (693). This reference to Jelin underscores the degree to which Argentina and memory have become co-constitutive in cultural studies, and is likely why there has been such an increase in critical focus on Carri's *Los rubios*. Bakiner notes a "plurality of memory narratives and frameworks is likely to render the new hegemonic project

out of step with social reality” (696). That is, warring interpretations of the recent past afflict present-day Turkey in ways that are similar to the ongoing memory politics of Argentina. Thus, despite the contextual and geographical differences between these two films, the directors have similar relationships to their birth countries’ political spheres and the ways in which their nations’ political realities have been understood within collective memory. Specifically, they both engage with stories that have already been told as a way to create a truer form of self-expression.

Emiroglu breaks from established traditions within her country’s filmmaking by approaching the subject of revolutionary action and memories of it in a way that does not focus on nostalgia. As film critic Asuman Suner notes, films focused on nostalgia in Turkey’s recent history are so numerous as to constitute a “subgenre.”⁴ The tone of Emiroglu’s film differs drastically from these nostalgic approaches to the recent past. Suner concludes that because they draw upon “a romantic fantasy of belonging, popular nostalgia films cannot handle such a facing up to the past. This challenging task is taken up by new political films” (49), such as Emiroglu’s. Similarly, Eylem Atakav seeks to “signal the need to continue to examine the relationship between depoliticization and cultural memory in the context of recent and contemporary films” (159). Indeed, Emiroglu’s film takes up the “challenging task” that Suner lays out by and examining “the relationship between depoliticization and cultural memory” that Atakav notes is necessary to study. Turkish filmmaker and film critic Didem Pekün categorizes Emiroglu’s film among a small but growing corpus of first-person films that “intend to undo what official records state, to present molecular narratives, and to re-inscribe their histories into the collective psyche...the films are a first attempt at reclaiming identities that were suppressed for the sake of a single Turkish nationalism” (44). For Pekün, first-person filmmaking is a way of contesting

dominant narratives of nationalism that pervade present-day Turkey. Through her self-reflexive approach to documentary filmmaking, Emiroglu underscores this shortcoming of nationalistic nostalgia in filmmaking by scrutinizing her father's political activity. Through the film's themes and aesthetics, Emiroglu breaks new ground in the realm of Turkish film centered on the memory of the 1980 coup. In this way, like Carri, Emiroglu creates a filmic engagement with her nation's present and its recent past that contests accepted understandings about national identity.

Fiction and (Post-)Memory in Documentary Film

These films form part of a broader constellation of global documentary film that blurs the lines between fiction and memory. In recent documentaries from around the world, questions of familial relationships have had particular significance for the topic of memory in filmmaking. Moreover, self-reflexive approaches to documentary forms often highlight the complexities and contradictions of memory and intrafamilial relationships. Canadian actress/director Sarah Polley's acclaimed 2012 documentary *Stories We Tell* (included in the 2015 list of Top 10 Canadian Films of All Time) chronicles Polley's endeavor to learn the truth about her deceased mother's extramarital affair with the man who—she comes to learn over the process of making the film—was her biological father. In the film, Polley interviews her family members, including her half-siblings, the man who raised her and was married to her mother (whom, until mid-way through this filming, she believed to be her father), men she suspects might be her biological father, and her actual biological father. Responding to the discrepancies among the various “storytellers” (the term she uses in the credits for the interviewees), Polley states in a voiceover: “I’m interested in the stories that we tell about our lives. About the fact that the truth about the past is often ephemeral and difficult to pin down. And many of our stories...end up with shifts and fictions in them.” Akin to Polley's emphasis on “shifts and fictions” in autobiographical

documentaries, Carri and Emiroglu emphasize discrepancies and unknown elements in the stories that they and others tell about their own lives, particularly their childhood years. To recount these fictions, the directors use playful media forms to recount memories in different registers.

Unlike Polley, however, Carri and Emiroglu are recounting family histories in which memory is further complicated by the complexities of their respective fathers' political activities, activities that were often secretive and not fully known. In addition to bearing directly on their family stories, these political activities are integral to their sense of national belonging and to the filmmaking industries of their respective countries. Within this framework, I show that the mechanisms through which fiction permeates personal memories problematize narratives about politics in Turkey and Argentina. These two directors' explorations of their relationships to their fathers are inextricable from the political causes with which their fathers aligned themselves (and by extension their families), as well as with the present-day legacy of these revolutionary movements.

For very different reasons, Carri and Emiroglu are both forced to fill in the missing pieces of their fathers' revolutionary actions. Emiroglu notes that once her family was in exile, "there was nothing revolutionary left" in her father and that, "Having arrived as political refugees, [they] became simple immigrants." Yet the director also points out, though her father no longer embodies the same political principles as before: "the rest of our lives would be an instrument of his utopias," suggesting that her father's utopic beliefs would always somehow determine the course of her life. In this regard, Emiroglu's film is strikingly similar to Carri's. In the latter's, the legacy and meaning of her father's revolutionary commitment overwhelm her daily life. Critic Gabriela Nouzeilles has noted that Carri's film distances itself from other narratives by

children of disappeared militants who, in Nouzeilles' words, "assume their [parents]' essence, the utopia" (272). What Nouzeilles goes on to note about Carri's film, and what also holds true for Emiroglu's film, is that the directors do not simply gloss over or ignore their fathers' utopic principles, even though the directors do not wholly share these ideological commitments. Instead, these directors craft innovative narratives about their relationships to their fathers that situate them uniquely in regard to the politics of filmmaking in their respective nations.

Because of their treatment of how memory works, Carri's and Emiroglu's aesthetic approaches may be understood in terms of postmemory. Postmemory has been related in many cases to the politics of memory, particularly in Latin American (and, specifically, Argentine) contexts, given the applicability of the concept to discuss the atrocities and trauma that characterized dictatorial repression at the hands of 1970s/1980s military regimes. While postmemory has been interpreted and debated in many contexts, here I consider postmemory in three central ways: first, postmemory as the intergenerational transfer of memory; second, postmemory as self-reflexive treatments of the mechanisms through which memory is transmitted; third and finally, postmemory as the ways in which memory engages with political paradigms. These three elements are, of course, central to both the themes and aesthetics of these two documentaries. Geoffrey Maguire took up this issue in his book *The Politics of Postmemory*. There, he called for "a politics not simply of memory, but one which also encompasses generational identity [and] historical representation" (3). In Maguire's estimation, memory, intergenerational dynamics, and politics are intimately linked to questions of historical representation.

In the case of our two films, memory is necessarily intergenerational and tied to politics, specifically the utopic politics that the directors' fathers embraced in the 1970s. In the words of

Marianne Hirsch, who first introduced the term “postmemory,” “‘Postmemory’ describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (“An Interview With Marianne Hirsch”). By engaging with stories, images, and behaviors that pervaded their early childhoods but that they did not experience themselves or were experienced at an age too young to remember, both directors depict the filmmaking process as a search for self-expression. These stories became integral to their self-understanding both as artists and as citizens of their respective nations. Positively, postmemory unlocks those stories, images, and experiences for these two filmmakers. Yet postmemory also has its limits and challenges. Jordana Blejmar has suggested that to consider *Los rubios* outside the framework of postmemory makes the film seem more closely aligned to the political endeavors of groups that seek to extoll revolutionary action, in contrast to Nouzeilles’ reading of the film that I discussed above in which she shows that Carri does not “assume her father’s utopia.” Thus, postmemory and inherited utopias exist in tension with one another.

Self-Reflexivity and Subjectivity

Like postmemory, self-reflexivity is part and parcel of these films’ explorations of the politics of documentary. In his 1983 article “The Voice of Documentary,” Bill Nichols noted, “the self-reflexive documentary addresses the limitations of assuming that subjectivity and both the social and textual positioning of the self (as film-maker or viewer) are ultimately not problematic” (27). The same could be said of our two documentaries. Their self-reflexive nature questions assumptions about the directors’ social positioning on the basis of their parents’ political stances and their own attendant “assumed utopias” (to borrow Nouzeilles’ term).

Nichols concludes that, “It is very heartening to see that the realm of the possible for documentary film has now expanded to include strategies of reflexivity that may eventually serve political as well as scientific ends” (29). Indeed, self-reflexivity in documentary can serve political ends. Certainly in Carri’s and Emiroglu’s approaches to their documentaries, we see that self-reflexivity has an important and particular relationship to political preoccupations, specifically through aesthetics that scrutinize the functions of both memory and political affinities.

The political violence that characterized both Turkey and Argentina during the years of political activism in which the directors’ fathers engaged, meant that the directors’ childhood years were consumed by revolutionary action. Turkey’s and Argentina’s subsequent dictatorships and the repression of memory necessitated a process of reconciliation with the respective directors’ fathers and with national politics decades later, which they achieved through their film making. Both films were released in the twenty-first century yet reflect on the directors’ early childhoods and the years leading up to their births in two tumultuous contexts: the years immediately before the 1976 dictatorship in Argentina and those preceding Turkey’s 1980 coup. Carri’s and Emiroglu’s fathers were both victims of state violence: Carri’s parents were kidnapped and killed, and Emiroglu’s father was persecuted, prompting the family’s exile to Switzerland after being entrenched in the communist party in late 1970s Turkey.

Gender plays a central yet ambiguous role in these women filmmakers’ approaches to stories about their relationships to their fathers. *Los rubios* is often included among analyses of the works of Argentine women filmmakers, yet gender and sexuality are barely foregrounded in this film, particularly in comparison to Carri’s other works.⁵ Nonetheless, the performance of gender is implied throughout the documentary.⁶ In the case of Turkish filmmaking, as Suner has

noted, “new wave Turkish cinema appears to have a rather masculinist outlook...in fact, it would not be an overstatement to suggest that the absence of women is one of the defining characteristics of new wave cinema” (163). Emiroglu’s film emerged three years after Suner’s book and helps to offset the dearth of women’s perspectives that had characterized Turkish filmmaking until that time. In this regard, Emiroglu’s self-reflexive depiction of her process of filmmaking and her journey to becoming an artist and filmmaker offers an important consideration of gender and women’s belonging as cultural agents and as political subjects. Yet it is also fundamental to note that both films emphasize the central role that the directors’ fathers played in revolutionary politics, leaving their mothers a bit more on the sidelines of these political stories.

Metonymy

These films use metonymy both to question the reliability of memory and to underscore the fissures within their individual family structures. In Carri’s case, the title “The Blonds” is used to refer to the fact that her family, despite attempting to assimilate into the working-class neighborhood in Argentina to which they moved as a way of escaping anti-socialist persecution, was perceived by the neighbors as “blonds.” In Argentina, blondness is often a marker of social class. In this case, while Carri and her family are not, in fact, blond, the neighbors remember them that way because they were so obviously out of place in the neighborhood. In addition to remembering the family as blonds, neighbors also came to associate the family metonymically with the sound of Roberto Carri’s typewriter, a sound that also signaled to the working-class neighbors that the intellectual couple was out of place in that neighborhood. To highlight this discrepancy, Carri includes images of Couceyro trying on and wearing blond wigs. For her part, Emiroglu draws from her father’s account of a near miss with the police in the early days of the

Turkish dictatorship in which he recalls that the police were looking for “a man in a green shirt” as the shooter who had fired in an insurgent operation. Emiroglu’s father recalls looking around for who was wearing a green shirt only to realize that he, in fact, was the man in the green shirt. The director pairs the father’s voice recalling this moment with an animated reenactment of the scene. For a brief instant, and in the retelling of the story, the self becomes a fiction for Emiroglu’s father—a story he hears about a man in a green shirt for whom the police are searching. Where Carri’s use of metonymy questions the reliability of second-hand accounts, Emiroglu’s underscores the function of trauma through her father’s forgetting for an instant what he was wearing and even who he was, as he looks around for the man in the green shirt as if he were someone else.

The films’ uses of metonymy relate both to memory and identity, insofar as metonymy evades approaching memory directly, likely as a function of trauma but also as a way of innovating with form. Metonymic treatments of memory underscore the complexities of these filmmakers’ identifications with their own families and their national identifications. Conceptually, metonymy also relates to the films’ shared focus on utopia in the sense of the non-place and non-existence of the objects of representation that would ideally (“utopically,” we might say) be at the core of the stories for which they are searching. In this way, metonymy takes on particular meaning in relationship to autobiography, for these filmmakers tell their own stories, in part, by telling stories of those close to themselves. This approach to autobiographical documentary aligns with Latin American film critic Gonzalo Aguilar’s question, “if the inscription of personhood does not principally relate to the difference between documentary and fiction, if personhood is not only a question about inflecting the first person but also appears in ‘third-person films’ ...if the self is not the origin but a fold and derivative: what is it that brings

us the indexical image?" (207-08). In rather a complementary way, these films use third persons (such as their fathers and neighbors) as a way of inscribing their directors' personhood into their respective family histories as well as into their respective national film industries. For Carri and Emiroglu, the metonymic redirection to someone else serves as a way to index the self.

Another key example of metonymy in both of these films is their reliance on neighbors' accounts of the directors' early childhoods rather than their own. Carri and Emiroglu both interview neighbors who lived near them in the years that their families were living in hiding. Emiroglu includes her neighbor's recollection of what she was like as a child and of what, to his understanding, her father's work consisted. In contrast, Carri interviews neighbors without telling them who she is, so they respond by discussing the Carri family in the third person (including the characterization that the children in the family were all blond, a statement that is belied visually by the presence of both the dark-haired director and the presence of her on-screen alter ego, also dark-haired, in the scene). Both directors include accounts from nearby adults to fill the holes in their knowledge about their own childhoods. Their oblique approaches to memory and family history are metonymic insofar as they are mediated through individuals tangential to their families as opposed to through family members themselves.

Moreover, the metonymic structures of the works mimic the filmmakers' fraught relationships to their parents' revolutionary commitment. Rather than a direct parent-child transmission of principles, Emiroglu and Carri question their parents' revolutionary principles by rejecting the generational legacy that their parents' political action might offer them. Thus, their shared reliance on neighbors, parents' friends, and other cultural agents underscores the complexities of intergenerational transmission of memory and offers possibilities for more collective identification. The films' triangulation of inherited family memory is also another

shared element with Hirsch's model of postmemory. In this case, the children's triangulation of memory onto non-family members might be thought of in inverse terms to Hirsch's "heteropathic" child witness. Hirsch uses the term to discuss child witnesses of atrocity who are exogenous to the atrocities.⁷ In the case of Emiroglu and Carri, whose parents were victims of repression, this heteropathic triangulation seems to function inversely as they invoke the neighbors' accounts of their families' experiences.

Animation

Emiroglu's mention of her father as the man in the green shirt, in addition to associating him metonymically with the act that he himself committed, evokes another key aesthetic that the films share in common: their use of animation to convey violent and traumatic memories. Rather than reenactment, Carri and Emiroglu use animation to depict the nuances of memory. They are, of course, not the only documentary filmmakers to use animation to tell their stories. Recent documentaries such as *Point and Shoot* and *Bowling for Columbine* have also used animation as a way of telling painful, traumatic stories in documentary film format. Likewise, the Oscar-nominated film *The Missing Picture* (dir. Rithy Panh, 2013) uses still clay figures to stand in for reenactments and specifically to recount moments of trauma and rupture in memory and history. Critic Leshu Torchin has noted that *The Missing Picture*,

bears witness to and combats the multiple erasures of the Khmer Rouge—its killing of people and their voice. The film functions as testimony, particularly as Panh's personal experience is positioned within a collective process. At the same time, through its form, content, and reflections, it foregrounds the challenges of bearing witness and more broadly calls attention to the processes of memory and the construction of history. (35)

Carri and Emiroglu likewise use animation to bear witness in their filmmaking, even as (and perhaps, precisely because) this form of storytelling highlights the challenges of incorporating memory and testimony into documentary filmmaking.⁸

Emiroglu uses animation to emphasize the intergenerational transfer of memory of state violence and police repression. To tell the story of the “chemise verte,” Emiroglu first superimposes a colorized black-and-white photo of her father on the cover of a leather-bound book with his photo surrounded by a star above the title *Chemise verte*. After introducing this storybook, she superimposes the colorized photo of her father onto a still photographic image of the building in Turkey where his encounter with the police took place (in color and presumably contemporary, rather than from the late 1970s when the incident occurred, unlike the black and white photo of her father himself). Emiroglu also places two black-and-white cutout images of other people on the scene. Her use of color in representing her father further highlights the importance of the color green as a story of a memory that has been passed down to her by her father. As this sequence progresses, the director ingeniously has the cutouts roll out photographs of the posters that they were putting up in memory of a slain comrade in the revolutionary struggle, followed by the arrival of police cars. As with the metonymy of the “green shirt,” by using such substitutions the animation in this sequence reimagines the trauma of the inherited memory of her father’s repression at the hands of the police forces.

Elsewhere, Emiroglu uses animation to convey the fancifulness of her father’s utopic pursuits. Towards the film’s end, the director includes images of a photograph of her father’s face on a drawing of a horse that is advancing towards moving images of modern-day windmills against a photographic background of mountains and sky. Simultaneously, we hear her voiceover coupled with the sound of a horse’s gallop. Though Emiroglu does not explicitly use the term “quixotic” to describe her father, she uses this animation to convey that characteristic. As her voiceover states, “In my father’s world, there were no limits, not even scientific. The heritage that he really left me was his stubbornness.” Next, the drawing of the father moves too close to

the windmill and is knocked back. Emiroglu adds, “to fight for your ideals, whatever they are,” as her Quixotic father moves back toward the windmill on his horse, only to be knocked back three more times. The film then transitions to another sequence, the final one, in which she attends a reunion for revolutionaries in Turkey in honor of those who lost their lives for the cause. The references to Quixote again emphasize the utopic ideals that are integral to the intergenerational connection between father and daughter. The director neither celebrates nor condemns her father’s principles themselves, but she does extoll his determination (or stubbornness) and the fact that he was willing to risk his life for a cause in which he believed, regardless of whether she agreed with the cause.

Similarly, throughout her documentary Carri uses Playmobil toys to animate childhood sequences. There are several such scenes and they depict quotidian subjects such as household conversations and a neighborhood party. The final animated sequence, however, depicts a couple driving in an SUV who are then abducted by a UFO. The couple first drives through an ESSO gas station and then returns to the highway. The woman is first abducted and emits a shriek, followed by the man. The UFO zooms out of the frame. After the UFO takes away the couple, three blonde Playmobil figures walk up to the abandoned vehicle and then walk out of the frame, evoking again the false idea that Carri and her sisters were blonde. This is how Carri represents the trauma of her parents’ disappearance. The animated Playmobil sequence in which the couple disappears makes clear that the previous animated segments were of Carri’s family life before the disappearance of her parents, a life marked by everyday conversations between family members and neighborhood friends. Carri’s juxtaposition of these almost bucolic animations and the arrival of the UFO conveys the trauma of her parents’ disappearance in a way that, within her film’s own economy, emphasizes the magnitude of her loss of her parents.

Carri's choice to recount their disappearance through the image of abduction by a UFO recalls Paul Vester's 1994 short documentary *Abductees*, specifically the sequence in which a couple driving a car stop suddenly when they come across an unknown object in the street. In Vester's short, this animated sequence is paired with a voiceover in which an expert describes traumatic memory: "screen memory, in the classic psychological sense, means that the person sees a traumatically frightening event, and then softens it by inventing some other story" (*Abductees*). In Victoria Grace Walden's estimation of Vester's film: "The artwork attempts to both illustrate the interviewees' memories and question the reliability of the past with interjections of iconic fantasy images... This approach is also particularly useful for confronting trauma" (83). For similar reasons, Carri and Emrioglu incorporate animation into their documentaries as a way of approaching traumatic memories of the past in a way that is a further step removed from reality. Their respective use of animation distills two aspects of memory that are central to their stories—trauma and fantasy. Inventing a fantasy—a different story, or at the very least, different signifiers that are fanciful and playful to recount the story—soften the terror of what happened. It is through this aesthetic mode of storytelling that these directors most starkly depart from established precepts of filmmaking in their respective nations.

Intertextuality

In addition to their self-reflexive aesthetics, *Los rubios* and *Mon père, la révolution, et moi* are both tacitly self-reflexive through depictions of intergenerational exchanges about other texts and media related to memory and the recent past. In Carri's film, Couceyro reads aloud from Carri's father's book *Formas prerrevolucionarias de la violencia*. Couceyro seems largely disaffected as she reads the words, underscoring her distanced, mediated relationship to her father's revolutionary commitment. Similarly, a scene in *Mon père, la révolution, et moi* shows

Emiroglu surrounded by books, posters, and kitschy memorabilia depicting Che Guevara as she attempts to learn more about the revolutionary principles that her father once embraced. She also uses other media associated with recent events in order to have discussions with her father about Turkish politics and his relationship to political movements. For example, Emiroglu purchases a coffee-table book for her father that has photographs of Turkey's recent history, and includes footage in the movie of her sharing the book with her father and the two of them discussing it. The images in the book fill in the periods of Turkish history that have been elided in the film and that correspond to the time Emiroglu and her family were exiled in Switzerland. In this way, the film's narrative incorporates other forms and genres of memory and thus further questions how memory is formed, sustained, and transmitted.

Elsewhere, Carri includes poetry from Olga Orozco to imply her fraught relationship and identification with her parents. "no creo que mi familia sepa nada / y lo más probable es que seas hija de tus padres / yo también creí ser hijo del rey Salomón / de Rasputín / de Mata Hari / y nada / ya lo ves / resultó que soy hijo de mis padres. [I don't think my family knows anything / and the most probable thing is that you are your parents' daughter / I also thought I was the son of King Solomon / of Rasputin / Of Mata Hari / Of nothing / now you see / It turned out I was the child of my parents]." She invokes another's poetry to convey a sense of reconciliation and coming to terms with her own identity. Her inclusion of Orozco's mention of Rasputin resonates with her earlier inclusion of another militant's account of her parents in which the interviewee, sociologist Alcira Argumedo, describes her mother as "un poco Rasputín," a bit of a Rasputin, creating yet another metonymic association between Carri and her parents' generation. Using poetry is another form of using fantasy to explore the true story of her own childhood and to retrieve memories. The verses that she quotes deepen the film's scrutiny of utopian ideals by evoking a

sort of non-place through the non-family, that is, by identifying through Orozco's verses the people of whom she is *not* the progeny in a Freudian family romance.

Redirected Returns to the Land and Self

In addition to accepting that they are the daughters of their fathers, both directors also seek reconciliation as daughters of their respective nations. As films that are preoccupied with utopian —literally no place— beliefs and national politics, it comes as little surprise that both films should be visually characterized by a strong emphasis on the land or place. Emiroglu's film begins with her on a boat arriving in Istanbul, while Carri's begins and ends with images of the Argentine countryside. The films' images of Argentina and Turkey create an idea of national identity that is as vexed as these filmmakers' relationships to their own families. Both filmmakers present the process of creating these films as a sort of homecoming (despite, in Carri's case, actually having lived in the country in the intervening years between childhood and making this film). Their depictions of the land and the nations in which they were born inscribe these filmmaking subjects squarely within the national political projects with which they have grappled throughout their lives and throughout the filmmaking process.

In Carri's case, her film begins and ends with footage of Couceyro both standing and walking in Argentina's iconic farmlands. In addition to being quintessentially bucolic Argentine landscape, this place, Carri informs viewers, is where she and her sisters went to live after her parents' disappearance. At other moments in the film, footage of the farmlands focuses on cattle, an important icon of national identity in the context of the country's beef industry. The imagery of the cows also evokes 1960s revolutionary filmmakers Pino Solanas and Otavio Getino's seminal *La hora de los hornos*, which prompted a revolutionary call to arms for Argentines such as Carri's parents (who, indeed, were close friends and companions in the struggle with Solanas).

Solanas and Getino's film famously includes footage of slaughterhouses borrowed from Ríos's 1961 *Faena*. Carri, in contrast, affirms, "I don't like dead cows; I prefer pretty architectures," an utterance which she pairs with bucolic images of cattle ranches. Small wonder that film critic Ana Amado begins her analysis of *Los rubios* by asking, "What can one say about a film that shows a herd of cattle more frequently and more closely than the figure of the parents, whose disappearance and absence is purportedly at the core of the project?" (70, my translation). Amado's discussion of the film again evokes Carri's use of metonymy through the director's evasion of the ostensible core substance of the film. The film ends with Carri walking away from the camera in the countryside as Argentine singer Charly García's song "Influencia" plays. The song is a translation into Spanish of Todd Rungren's song "Influenza." The Spanish version that García recorded, "Influencia" translates the rest of the lyrics of the song about influenza but leaves the almost homophonic "influenza" as "influencia" so that "influence" takes on the meaning that "influenza" had in the original English version. The song fits Carri's endeavor to inscribe herself—as she does visually in this final sequence—in the land as well as in Argentina's filmmaking industry by recognizing how she has been influenced by other Argentine filmmakers.

Like *Los rubios*, Emiroglu's film also concludes with a scene that inscribes her squarely as a part of the national identity. Yet, unlike Carri, who eschews her parents' revolutionary causes in the way that she ends her film, though she maintains her skepticism towards the utopic principles of her parents and their peers, Emiroglu concludes her film by showing deference to the idealism of her parents and their companions. Complementing its beginning shots of Emiroglu returning by boat to Turkey after years away, *Mon père, la révolution, et moi* ends with the director's visit to the revolutionaries' reunion. During this scene, several people tell her

stories about caring for her as a child and their friendships with her parents. She concludes that, even though she does not identify with her parents' revolutionary ideals and even though she has not identified her own political fight, she has found a family among these erstwhile revolutionaries in Turkey and that she finally knows who she is: She is all of these people. She is their dreams that did not come true.

Through these filmic endeavors, the subject of the filmmakers' searches—their respective fathers' utopias—is always just out of reach. Even as they may seek to question and distance themselves from the principles to which their fathers dedicated their lives, the iterative processes of circling back towards the substance of revolutionary commitment seems always to evade them. As such, these directors become redirected—to utopic communities in the United States, to Quixotic images, to idyllic footage of cows in the countryside, to animation, and to fiction—as they approach what is ultimately an asymptotic understanding of their parents and revolutionary politics. While these directors both approach their filmic pursuits in a way that acknowledges that the subject matter they pursue is utopic, even a cynical approach to the non-place of utopia remains elusive as a subject of conventional documentary inquiry. Fiction, paradoxically, becomes the only way for Carri and Emiroglu to tell their truths and to tell their stories, knowing that the latter and the former are not always one and the same. Their utopic pursuits thus become redirected to the present and, ultimately, to the Argentine and Turkish land on which they find themselves.

¹ By “politically inflected filmmaking,” I am referring to filmmaking that explicitly recounts or engages with political events—in both of these cases, revolutionary political movements and dictatorship.

² In this regard, the films exemplify Michael Chanan's characterization (2007) of twenty-first-century documentary: “documentary has shifted its ground and become more personal. There are still film-makers who practice rather strict forms of observational filming or third-person narrative—*Être et avoir* and *En construcción* are both examples—but many new-wave

documentarists are given to flouting the traditional documentary stance of impersonality, and frequently insert themselves into their own films in a variety of ways” (6). For his part, Michael Renov has noted, “current documentary self-inscription enacts identities—fluid, multiple, even contradictory—while remaining fully embroiled within public discourses” (178).

³ Ayfer Genç Yılmaz’ article (2014) focuses on the inspiration that Turkey’s Saturday Mothers drew from Argentina’s Madres de la Plaza de Mayo.

⁴ Suner discusses the nostalgia for home and the loss of childhood innocence as integral themes to such films as Çagan Irmak’s *Babam ve Oglum* (2006), also centered on the country’s 1980 coup, as is Emiroglu’s film. In a sense, *Mon père, la révolution, et moi* inverts Irmak’s nostalgic portrayal of the main character’s involvement in the insurgency against the wishes of his traditional father. Irmak’s fictional film is characterized by its melodramatic approach to the topic of family strife within the context of political insurgency.

⁵ Carri’s oeuvre has included such feminist and queer-affirming films as *Barbie también puede estar triste* (2002), a stop-motion film that depicts Barbie dolls in same-sex encounters and her most recent film, *Daughters of Fire* (2018), has been categorized as “political pornography.” Carri also founded and began the Asterisco LGBTQIA film festival in Buenos Aires in 2014.

⁶ See Forcinito.

⁷ Hirsch (2012) submits: “in the particular case of postmemory and ‘heteropathic recollection,’ where the subject is not just split between past and present, adult and child, but also between self and other, the layers of recollection and the subjective topography are even more complicated” (166)

⁸ Testimonial language in documentary film has been explored in the context of the Foucauldian notion of the “regime of truth.” (“Exposing Mechanisms of Memory”)

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