CHAPTER 12

Autofiction and Film: Archival Practices in Post-millennial Documentary Cinema in Argentina and Spain

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*What kind of common point can there be among the principal forms of
resistance in the current audiovisual scene? I think—basically—the
answer is memory.*

—José Luis Guerín, “Work in Progress”

This chapter discusses some of the theoretical insights on autofiction gained in the context of the international research project “Rethinking the Real: Autofiction and Critical Discourse in Spain and Argentina.” Coordinated by Ana Casas (University of Alcalá), the project is currently being conducted by an interdisciplinary group of scholars with the support of a research grant awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (FFI2017-89870-P).

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This chapter examines three autofictional documentaries produced in Argentina and Spain in the past decade that share a distinctive “archival impulse” (Foster 2004; Derrida 1995): not a will to totalize so much as a will to relate to, and explore, a misplaced past or present time. These archival cinematic works propose an order and a meaning in a very specific political sense, which will be read here in relation to the contexts of the Iberian financial crisis and to the memories of political violence during the last dictatorship in Argentina (1976–1983). We will address the strategies through which the filmmakers use autofictional modes to “re-stage” the archive, so to speak, by adopting an aesthetics of ambiguity that intermittently destabilizes the evidential paradigm of the modern archive.

In the domain of literature, the autofictional turn that took place in the late 1970s, originating in France, was driven at least in part by the desire to render undecidable conventional dichotomies such as life versus text, historical versus literary discourse, life narration versus the writing body, and autobiographical writing versus the novel (López-Gay 2020, 25–33; 2017).¹ In film studies, several concepts are currently in use when referring to autofictional or autobiographical films, such as “subjective cinema” (Rascaroli 2009), “the cinema of me” (Lebow 2012), and “first-person documentary” (Piedras 2014), to mention just a few. As Matthias Christen suggests, the field of autobiographical film is vast and multifaceted, and cannot easily be outlined:

It ranges from narratives centered on a filmmaker’s life, in an established documentary or diaristic mode, to the display of a personal sensibility in the avant-garde and experimental film and broaches on the hybrid forms of web-based life-writing. The mode of authorship and subjectivity as well as the degrees of temporal coverage and personal presence of the filmmakers vary accordingly. (2019, 451)

Informed by its literary origins, we understand autofiction as a contemporary cinematic mode that challenges, and at times subverts, the generic limits of documentary and fiction film from a self-reflexive position. As a result of its transgeneric status, autofictional cinema creates a space in-between which includes, but cannot be reduced to, documentary and/or fiction cinema. Autofiction is based on what Spanish theorist Manuel Alberca has described as an “ambiguous pact” established between author and audience (2007). Ambiguity not only permeates the form of the films

that we will analyze in this chapter; it also suffuses the poetics of memory that they deploy.

The act of archiving the real through the malleable trope of personal memory raises a number of questions that invite the audience to become active interpreters of a historical past or present. The term “archive” refers to both the act of archiving and its product. In autofictional literature and the visual arts, including film, the term evokes the notion of a trace or an ordered ensemble of traces, as well as the repository where such traces are organized and preserved, following an artistic process of selection and aesthetization (López-Gay 2020, 17–23). In this chapter, the notion of the archive will encompass various kinds of objects, records, and documents, and more broadly, recorded images of a given historical reality, in addition to referring to the documentary films themselves.

A decentered conception of the archive as something that is incomplete and thus open to diverse interpretations permeates the production of Argentine director Albertina Carri. In her autofictional documentary trilogy on recent Argentinian history—*Los rubios* (*The Blonds*) (2003), *Restos* (*Remains*) (2010), and *Cuatrerros* (*Rustlers*) (2016)—Carri gathers and mobilizes archival documentation in her personal search for her parents, Ana María Caruso and Roberto Carri, who are among the estimated 30,000 people kidnapped and disappeared by the military during the last dictatorship in Argentina. The trials of the members of the military responsible for these crimes against humanity continue today, as does the painful search of many Argentine families for the remains of their relatives. Since the turn of the millennium, the artistic work carried out by the so-called second generation has reshaped the early narratives of the memories of dictatorship in Argentina that were articulated in the 1980s and 1990s. These children of the disappeared have abandoned expectations of certainty in testimonial writing and conventional documentary film in favor of an autofictional mode that experiments with generic boundaries, and thus privileges ambiguity and uncertainty (see, e.g., Blejmar 2016). By means of staging archival material alongside fictional reproductions, meta-reflexive commentaries, and formal experimentation, Carri’s oeuvre challenges its viewers to take an active part in the never-ending process of memory construction. Similarly grounded in a sentiment of uncertainty, Mercedes Álvarez’s *Mercado de futuros* (*Futures Market*) (2011) and Víctor Erice’s *Vidros partidos* (*Broken Windows*) (2012) illuminate the impossibility of documenting absolute origins, be it the origins of

capitalism as it was experienced by the first working classes or the origins of the ongoing financial recession. While these two cinematic autofictions are markedly self-referential, by calling obliquely for practices of counter-memory of the crisis that focus on the creative appropriation of space by citizens, Álvarez and Erice draw attention not only to the status of these works as cinematic text, or art, but also to the need to move beyond the text and take political action.

The autofictional sensitivity of documentary cinema that these Argentine and Spanish filmmakers highlight challenges the assumption that Bill Nichols (1991, 154) famously ascribed to the genre, the idea that “what we see is evidence of historical occurrences, not fictional simulations of them.” While their autofictional films are documentaries whose propositions, tacit or explicit, target contemporary history, they suggest nevertheless that there can be no direct access to the past, and at times approach history through fictional, scripted simulations of human experiences, overt performances, and personal storytelling. The autofictional mode disrupts one of the fundamental principles in which documentary cinema is grounded: the presumption that each audiovisual trace is the direct, indexical imprint of a spontaneous, tangible reality. The films from Argentina and Spain that we will explore unsettle in distinct, original ways the modern paradigm of the archive as static evidence of a given reality. They revolve instead around a newer conception of the archive as a self-reflective process, as an event that becomes the subject matter in its own right.

“BUT THE IMAGES ARE NOT THERE”: ARCHIVAL EXCESS IN ALBERTINA CARRI’S *CUATREROS*

Albertina Carri’s filmic production on political violence in Argentina and her personal search for her disappeared parents expands in a seemingly inconclusive manner, without a clear beginning or an end. Carri’s rhizomic cartography of political violence in Argentina began with the groundbreaking documentary *Los rubios* (2003) and continued more recently with *Restos* (2010) and *Cuatreros* (2016). The first film formally and thematically narrates the inquiry that Carri undertakes into the fate of her parents: the story in *Los rubios* is pieced together through the self-reflexive staging and reorganization of a series of archival objects such as photographs, videotaped interviews, and toys. Carri makes the relationship

between reality and construction ambiguous by means of metalepsis and reenactment (Forné 2017). In *Restos* she resumes the (re)search initiated in *Los rubios*. However, on this occasion, Carri does not follow the traces of her disappeared parents but undertakes instead to track down the remains of the militant cinema of the 1960s and 1970s in Argentina. The specific film she seeks is *Los Velázquez* (1972), directed by Pablo Szir and based on an essay by Roberto Carri (the director's disappeared father) entitled *Isidro Velázquez: Formas prerrevolucionarias de la violencia* (*Isidro Velázquez: Pre-revolutionary Forms of Violence*) (1968). Like its director, this never-released film disappeared during the dictatorship. The material remnants of the audiovisual archive are incorporated and staged in *Restos*, putting together a spatio-temporally complex narrative on the militant cinema of the 1960s and 1970s and the devastating political violence of the dictatorship. Imaginary vestiges are manufactured to replace the lost pieces in a way that draws attention to the porous boundaries between fact and fiction (Forné 2020).² *Cuaterros*, just like *Restos*, revolves around the disappeared film of Pablo Szir, whose script was based on Roberto Carri's abovementioned essay on the mythical figure of the rural bandit to whom these two works owe their name: Isidro Velázquez. Behind the character of Velázquez, and the narrative of the symbolic role he played for militant intellectuals in Argentina in the 1960s and 1970s, is the figure of the filmmaker in search of material traces of her disappeared parents.

Cuaterros opens with the voice-over of Albertina Carri, who for three minutes reads from the prologue of *Isidro Velázquez: Formas prerrevolucionarias de la violencia*. Even though its viewers are promptly informed about the origin of the recited text, the initial information on the research conducted by Roberto Carri could also be understood as a comment on Albertina Carri's own archival collection and its staging in *Cuaterros*:

A small research project in the field, conversations with locals, the reading of newspapers and other periodicals that dealt with the case, exchange of correspondence with friends who live in the area, constitute the "empirical" basis of this work. Obviously, the material used can be questioned by serious researchers, but I have no problem declaring that this is of very little concern to me. The real crux of this problem lies not always in what Velázquez and Gauna did for a long period of their wanderings in the countryside, but what the vast majority understood Velázquez meant to them. (01:04–01:42)³

Cuatreros is an investigation into what happened to Szir's film, and much like Roberto Carri's book, it makes use of "empirical" archival material, but does so in a highly fragmented way, dismissing observational, narrative-realist cinema from the start. In *Cuatreros*, Carri does not limit herself to suggesting the inaccessibility of the past and the impossibility of an immediate indexical imprint of "the real," but also formally evokes the unreachability of the real, abandoning conventional documentary ocular-centrism. The rapid pace of the voice-over, the multiple, parallel, and simultaneous screens, which show internally disconnected fragments of found footage, and the asynchronicity between sound and image, turn this film into a highly demanding exercise for the viewer. Moreover, the visual absence of the narrator-protagonist further increases the ambiguity of the film. Whereas in *Los rubios*, (referential) historical material is gathered and staged, albeit in a fragmented way, and in *Restos*, archival material in the form of found footage is manufactured, in *Cuatreros*, referentiality is unequivocally suppressed, foreclosing the possibility of a precise historical record (Fig. 12.1).

Fig. 12.1 Albertina Carri, *Several parallel but thematically disconnected screens of found footage in Cuatreros*

In an interview by Horacio Verbitsky, Albertina Carri describes *Cuatreros* as a frustrated road-movie with no script but with a conventional structure, whose originality lies in its entirely archival and recycled character: “Somehow the script is not original at all, rather it is a genre film with a classical structure. So what makes it original is that not a single new image has been generated for that script to become a film” (Carri 2018). Indeed, in *Cuatreros*, Carri plays with the fact that the audiovisual medium is still more opaque and disruptive than written documents even as it appears, deceptively, to be more tangible as well as more transparent: “They seem ‘closer’ to the past they represent and are potentially seductive in their seeming transparent textuality: and although every trace, written or otherwise, is open to interpretation, indexical audiovisual recordings are especially resistant to full comprehension or interpretation” (Baron 2014, 4). Despite the excess of audiovisual documents staged in *Cuatreros*, every possible referential anchor vanishes when sound and image present two different narratives and the images are intermittently multiplied and decontextualized. This multiplicity of screens, according to the filmmaker, is not primarily an aesthetic device, but rather an ethical and political one, designed to awaken passive spectators who are accustomed to the grammar and semantics of conservative contemporary cinema (Carri 2018).

Although it is visually fragmented as well as sonorously layered, *Cuatreros* displays a series of discontinuous but recurring storylines—militant cinema, archives, political violence, disappearance—which all connect back to the entangled rhizome of the filmmaker’s production. These narratives repeat endlessly, never rounding up to provide certainty or a sense of veracity, as would be expected in a conventional documentary. The sole approximately stable referent to be found in Carri’s film is the enunciating “I” of the filmmaker. As a consequence, *Cuatreros* does not seem to present a plurality of viewpoints, nor an opaque figuration of the identity of the director—two of the essential characteristics that Pablo Piedras (2014, 90–94) identifies in contemporary first-person documentary made in Argentina, together with a broken linearity, a fragmented temporality, and narrative distance. Although not visually present in the film, the identity of the filmmaker is clearly articulated in the narrative of *Cuatreros* and the point of view verbally presented is distinctively subjective. Albertina Carri is a central figure in the Argentine cultural landscape and her intellectual lineage (as well as her ancestry) is well known, facts which are inserted into the narrative. Consequently, in *Cuatreros*, the narrator seeks to accurately represent herself, while the ambiguity of the representation, proper to

autofiction, lies precisely in the tension created between the personal memory and the public archive. This tension translates aesthetically as the friction between sound and image, that is, between the assertive narrative voice of the filmmaker and the arbitrary montage of film clips found in archives.

In *Cuatreros*, the (hi)story of militant cinema is absorbed into, and then expelled once more from, the filmmaker's "damaged navel" in the sequence where Carri narrates her visit to Cuba. The disappointment she experiences while she is there, when the utopian dream of revolution for which her parents died is shattered, is difficult to accept as a daughter of revolutionaries. In this short episode, Carri tells the story of her visit to the archives of the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry, in search of Szir's film on Velázquez. The various sound levels—Carri's voice, the tick-tock of a clock, the breaking of glass, the clicking noise of an old film projector, the crackling of the fire—which are superimposed onto a series of disconnected archival images of a clock, a crater, fire, and bottles, among other items, accompanies the voice-over narrative on the importance of Enrique Juárez's documentary *Ya es tiempo de violencia* (*Now Is the Time for Violence*) (1969) for Albertina Carri.⁴ The separation of images and sound is absolute when Carri informs the attentive viewer that this particular documentary reconciles her with the choices, despite their disastrous consequences, that her parents made:

Every time I watch it again, I'm reconciled with my dead parents. What's more, every so often I watch it to remember this feeling that made me bitter the first time I saw it. If I had been old enough at that time, I would have done the same as them, as Juárez, as Szir, as Mom and Dad. I would have belonged to a subversive cell, without a doubt. But times are different, and I got this one. It gave me a such a sore belly button that I'm not able to get away. (Carri 2016, 24:32–24:59)

As well as its seemingly redemptive function in Carri's self-figurative narrative, the documentary also has an impact on the fragmented and ambiguous aesthetics of *Cuatreros*. It is as if Carri's formal experimentation draws intertextually on Juárez's documentary—"the best Argentine movie that she had ever seen" (22:35)—which heterogeneously combines expository representation with avant-garde experimentation when staging different kinds of archival material (Luchetti 2015). Notwithstanding the entirely archival nature of *Cuatreros*, which is composed from found footage alone,

the pronounced ambiguity and opacity of the film forcefully disrupts the evidential paradigm of the modern archive. As Carri maintains (Carri 2018), the medium of cinema always unsettles time and is hence an “oneiric machinery” which resists any autobiographical truth. Indeed, the autofictional mode that Carri adopts in *Cuatreros* defies the main purpose that Bill Nichols (1991, 30–31) famously assigned to the mainstream documentary genre: the gratification of the viewer’s “desire to know.” Instead of filling in the voids of history, the staging of the archive in *Cuatreros* engages its viewers by means of its inconclusive narrative and ambiguous aesthetics. In the final sequence of the film, Carri articulates the gaps that not even the material excesses of her archival recollection and staging are able to fill: “But the images are not there, the bodies do not appear, the trial does not arrive, and I cannot forget” (1–20:31–37).

“YOU ARE THE ONE WHO HAS NO MEMORY!”
 AUTOFICTIONAL CINEMA IN RESPONSE
 TO THE IBERIAN CRISIS

This section puts two autofictional films about the current Iberian crisis into conversation: the long feature *Mercado de futuros* (*Futures Market*) and the short film *Vidros partidos: Testes para um filme em Portugal* (*Broken Windows: Tests for a Film in Portugal*) by Spanish directors Mercedes Álvarez and Víctor Erice, respectively.⁵ Álvarez and Erice join a wide range of directors new and old who have explored the crisis in their cinema, including Isaki Lacuesta in *Los pasos dobles* (*The Double Steps*) and *El cuaderno de barro* (*The Clay Diaries*) (2011), Sergio Oksman in *A Story for the Modlins* (2012), José Luis Guerín in *En construcción* (*Under Construction*) (2002), and Joaquim Jordà’s entire oeuvre. These filmmakers have experimented at the margins of the Spanish documentary film industry by openly intruding on their object of cinematic inquiry, proposing a self-reflective form of cinema, and showing a careful authorial preoccupation with the aesthetic component of their artistic work. Through the medium of autofictional cinema, presenting their work simultaneously as documentaries and fiction films, these directors break with the illusion that presupposes an unproblematic relation between the visual trace and its origin, personal memory and its referent, what is presented as real and reality itself.

The title *Vidros partidos*, or “broken windows,” alludes to the name used by the current residents of Guimarães, in Northern Portugal, to refer

to the Vizela River Factory. When it opened its doors in 1845, the factory brought electricity and trains to the region. Half a century later, at the time when Louis and Auguste Lumière in France made the first short motion picture, it had become the second-largest textile manufacturing company in Europe. With their memorable, silent black-and-white documentary, *La Sortie de l'usine à Lyon* (*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*) (1895), the Lumière brothers had filmed a group of workers leaving their place of work. When making his documentary in a twenty-first-century context, Erice asked a group of men and women to reoccupy the empty canteen of the Vizela Factory.⁶ Erice's documentary is best described as a participatory autofiction: it takes the form of a visual archive of staged testimonies given by former workers who have remained unemployed during the financial crisis. From its subtitle, *Testes para um filme em Portugal*, the film presents itself as an unfinished work, a series of screen tests for a documentary to come. As they pose in front of the camera, the newly converted nonprofessional actors attest to the end of their working lives: "I'd like to work again ... They told me I was too old. I'm 56 years old, and it's all over for me" (1:00:38–53). On the canteen wall hangs a large group portrait in which we see hundreds of people who worked at the factory at the end of the nineteenth century (Fig. 12.2).

Fig. 12.2 Victor Erice, *Workers from the Vizela Factory*: Close-up of Photograph in *Vidros partidos*

The men and women from *Vidros partidos* look at the large black-and-white photograph, which was taken in the very location where they are being filmed. They perceive it as an archived trace of a world that no longer exists: “I find it difficult to look at these people ... I can’t recognize anyone”; “These people trouble me. They’re looking at us, and it seems like they want to tell us something. But I’m not sure what it is. I don’t know. I don’t know” (1:09:40–59, 1:12:10–34). *Mercado de futuros* proposes a similar discourse of memory about a more recent past. Álvarez’s voice-over warns us, at the beginning of the film, that “one day all the newspapers began to speak of a great financial crisis [...], they would try to explain the path that had led us here. *But the path had disappeared*” (1:27:09–1:28:24, our emphasis). Through documentary cinema, a cinematic genre that is conventionally associated with the ideas of evidence and truth, Álvarez and Erice illuminate the impossibility of archiving definite origins, be it the origins of capitalism as it was lived by the old working class or the origins of the current financial crisis.

The contemporary subjects of *Vidros partidos* do not only tell us about their relationship with the past. By describing their new relation to the future, they also reveal their connection to a present of crisis: “The factory closed, like many others. That’s why the generations of workers from here feel lost now. What are they going to do? Where will they go? Most of them don’t know”; “Things are different today ... [In the past, factory workers] had their own ideals, and they also had *some hope for the future*” (Erice 2013b, 1:02:28–48, 1:11:20–35, our emphasis). *Mercado de futuros* and *Vidros partidos* are symptomatic of the prolonged and widespread sentiment of social indeterminacy evoked by the former workers of the Vizela Factory, a sentiment which has grown in the Iberian Peninsula since 2008. In the autofictional cinema they propose, Álvarez and Erice *reflect upon* the ongoing crisis which at times they document openly through the lens of fiction. Additionally, by virtue of the transgeneric mode of filmmaking they adopt, their films also *formally reflect* the sense of ambiguity that orients the social imaginaries of that crisis.

In both documentaries, the urge for temporal anchoring is inseparable from another pressing need, that of spatial anchoring. In *Mercado de futuros*, the discourse on the loss and malleability of memory in the voice-over contrasts with footage which documents the drastic transformation of Barcelona’s landscape during the period of the real estate bubble that preceded the 2008 economic crisis in Spain. Many indoor scenes are shot in undistinctive “non-places,” that is, spaces which “cannot be defined as

relational, or historical, or concerned with identity” (Augé 1995, 77). The scenes shot in malls and international real estate fairs held in Barcelona before the financial crash are markedly ambiguous, insofar as the spectator cannot tell whether these are, or are not, the result of intended performances. By repeatedly showing what Sophie Mayer (2012) has described as “elaborate, life-size promotional photographic backdrops and light-up architectural models [that] implicitly indict mainstream cinema,” Álvarez highlights the creative artificiality, and consequently the inevitable fictionality, of documentary cinema.

In his introduction to *Vidros partidos* at Madrid’s *Cineteca*, Erice (2013a) recalls that documentary cinema is indeed constituted through fiction, not only because the real must be altered at times in order to be more accurately documented, as has been the case from the very origins of documentary film,⁷ but also because the filmmaker’s gaze is embedded in every film, albeit visible to varying degrees. Throughout *Mercado de futuros*, the voice-over adopts an intimate, and at times nostalgic, tone which persistently reminds the spectator that the documentary is itself a subjective cinematic construct. In *Vidros partidos*, conversely, the worldview proposed by the filmmaker rests on an equally subjective work of scriptwriting, but one that is collective. After conducting a long series of interviews with former workers of the Vizela Factory, Erice interwove their personal testimonies into the film script. In the second phase, the acting crew—nine people chosen from the larger group of interviewees—collaborated with the director in a process of collective script rewriting (Erice 2013a). Erice asked each of them, and one professional actor who joined the crew, to pose in front of the camera as if reciting a part for a screen test. One by one, each subject in this participatory autofiction directs their gaze toward the director positioned behind the camera, whose ghostly figure thus also infiltrates the film.

Unlike mainstream fiction films, *Vidros partidos* and *Mercado de futuros* treat the real not as an effect to be produced for entertainment but as a territory filled with obscure traces to be explored.⁸ As cinematic autofictions, *Vidros partidos* and *Mercado de futuros* are clearly distinct from contemporary comedies and dramas that make the Spanish crisis their principal focus, such as Alejandro Marzoa’s *Somos gente honrada* (*We’re Honest People*) (2013) and Pedro Almodóvar *Los amantes pasajeros* (*I’m So Excited*) (2013). They also distinguish themselves from the Spanish new wave of overtly political documentaries, like Basilio Martín Patino’s *Libre te quiero* (*Free is How We Love You*) (2012) and Stéphane Grueso’s

15M: Excelente. Revulsivo. Importante (*15M: Excellent. A Wake-Up Call. Important*) (2012), among many others. Yet, while the autofictional films generated by Álvarez and Erice do not seek to transmit an openly political message, they become political in an oblique fashion as they document, and at times propose, alternative orders of memory that are intrinsically linked to transgressive uses of space.

Notably, in *Mercado de futuros*, a series of scenes serve to record and make visible symbolical practices, tactics by which citizens momentarily occupy public spaces and thereby create memories of, and for, their city, Barcelona. For instance, we see lively interactions in Barcelona's *El Encants* street market (today relocated to a modern shopping mall), a man taking care of a community garden beneath a noisy highway, or a group of people doing parkour surrounded by graffiti art (Álvarez 2005, 00:39:16–47:45, 1:02:48–1:07:34, 1:27:09–28:24). These outdoor scenes serve to document what Michel De Certeau (1988, 41) famously described as “an art of the weak, [...] a proliferation of aleatory and indeterminable manipulations within an immense framework of socioeconomic constraints and securities: myriads of almost invisible movements, playing on the more and more refined texture of a place that is even, continuous, and constitutes a proper place for all people.” In contrast to other scenes shot in “non-places,” these images interrupt the visual succession of non-specific spaces (such as newly constructed malls or international real estate fairs), which contribute to the global homogenization of the urban landscape, and the growing assumption that its cultural memory is in decline. In *Vidros partidos*, in turn, the reoccupation of space by former workers of the Vizela Factory was carefully planned and set up in order to be documented. The script incorporated the former workers' personal testimonies and was later submitted to them for revision and approval. Each of the nonprofessional actors did not necessarily recite what would have been their own “real-life” part. This participatory autofiction should be understood, therefore, as the enactment and recording of the creative process by which collective memory was reconstructed for the unemployed community of the Vizela Factory. Additionally, *Vidros partidos* includes a performance by a professional actor, Valdemar Santos. After claiming to know by heart every one of the parts that he has played throughout his career, Santos explains his choice to recite a fragment from *O Capital* (1896), by the Portuguese socialist playwright António Ernesto da Silva:

Memory! You want to know if I have a memory. Of course, I do! Because an actor without memory is nothing (....). And I'm an actor. A real actor. I certainly do have a memory. What I don't have is a job! But I remember every part that I've played in my life. Every one. From the first to the last. I was Carlos Marques in *O Capital*, by the great Ernesto da Silva! I see you don't know what I am talking about. You! You're the ones who have no memories. (1:12:50–13:57)

It was the first socialist known to have defended the potential use of theater as a pedagogical tool, Luís de Figueiredo, who asked Ernesto da Silva to write a play to be performed on May 1, 1895, *O Capital*.⁹ In Erice's *Vidros partidos*, a film where “nothing was left to improvisation,” as María Filomena Molder (2017, 247) has rightly noted, the reference to *O Capital* serves as a reminder of a forgotten tradition of European workers who used to perform socialist plays in factories and theaters as a way of vindicating their working rights. As Beatriz Peralta García recalls (2011, 37–45), while for Marx, art, including theater, was an instrument of analysis among many others, this was far from being the case in the Portuguese socialist circles at the end of the nineteenth century. Today, through a form of participatory autofictional cinema which is generated collectively, in times of crisis, the unemployed assert their right to be visible. Ultimately, Santos's final performance reminds the audience that *we* are the ones prone to forgetting them. By physically re-occupying the empty space of the factory, sharing their stories with each other and with the viewer, and becoming the actors and thus the agents of this cinematic autofiction, the former workers of the Vizela Factory create a new symbolic space of collaboratively constructed memories.

Víctor Erice's *Vidros partidos* and Mercedes Álvarez's *Mercado de futuros* go beyond lamentations over the loss of memory or the impossibility of determining absolute origins. By displaying their own fictionality at multiple levels, and becoming self-reflective archives of constructed memories, these two documentaries about the crisis counteract the proliferation of “new fictions of globalization” (Morán Rodríguez and Gómez Trueba 2017, 22) whose covert intent lies in the manipulation of beliefs, opinions, social attitudes, and emotions. The full force of the lyrical yet political cinema produced by Álvarez and Erice lies ultimately in the original modes of artistic and social resistance that both autofictions document, and at times enact, within the context of the ongoing Iberian financial crisis.

POST-MILLENNIAL AUTOFICTIONAL CINEMA FROM ARGENTINA AND SPAIN

Contrary to the tendency to associate autofiction with the narcissism and political apathy of the “culture of the spectacle” of the 1990s, the post-millennial films discussed in this chapter interrogate realities that concern the filmmaker not just as an individual but also as a historical and political subject and a member of a given society. These contemporary filmmakers from Spain and Argentina do not seek to entertain their audience with a mode of escapist fiction, nor do they intend to solely *inform* them of the consequences of political violence, the cause of the current recession, or the social movements of protest to which it has given rise. With *Mercado de futuros* and *Vidros partidos*, Álvarez and Erice abandon the univocal, self-enclosed, “centripetal” model of cinematic autofiction, which foregrounds the psychological soliloquy of the self with the self, as in Erice’s *La morte rouge* (*The Red Dead Woman*) (2006), or Pedro Almodóvar’s *Dolor y gloria* (*Pain and Glory*) (2019). Instead, these films embrace a model of autofiction that is recurrently “centrifugal.” They invite the contemporary spectator to question their own relationship with a historical present of crisis through the interrogation of dark archival traces that do not allow for a stable interpretation on the part of the film’s narrator, or indeed on the part of the viewer. Likewise, in *Cuadreros*, the archive is not only the subject matter but also the representational mechanism implemented to involve viewers in mobilization and repurposing as a way of rewriting history. In *Cuadreros*, Carri returns to the self, to *herself*, in a centripetal movement as she arranges the fragmented pieces that make up the film’s archival narrative. This narrative does not solely concern her as an individual; it is also the (hi)story of her generation, the children of the disappeared in Argentina. A productive tension between the centripetal and the centrifugal thus occurs, which we propose is a central trait of autofiction as a transgeneric cinematic mode, as it has been articulated in-between documentary and fiction cinema since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In *Cuadreros*, *Mercado de futuros*, and *Vidros partidos*, the autofictional functions as a mode of creating and making sense of individual and collective memories. In aesthetic terms, the modes of representation employed in these films run counter to mainstream documentary strategies, in the light of the self-reflexive, ambiguous, and open-ended poetics of memory they stage. As the filmmakers seek to reestablish a commitment with their

historical context through cinematic autofiction, they do not necessarily denounce social and historical injustice. In creatively distinct ways, Carri, Álvarez, and Erice assert their commitment to rethinking social practices of memorialization through the audiovisual archive, in relation to the ever-expanding narrative reconfiguration of personal and collective identities. As they organize and reorganize traces of historical realities, each director subscribes to an autofictional cinematic sensitivity that goes well beyond the documentation of past or present times of crisis. Post-millennial films like *Cuatreros*, *Mercado de futuros*, and *Vidros partidos* propose new possible orders of the documentary genre. Aiming to create a shared historical present through their deployment of autofictional strategies, these films also invite the viewer to believe in the possibility of new social and political orders to come.

NOTES

1. Scholars such as Patricia Mamayo, Luz Herrera Zamudio, Francisco Javier Gómez Tarín, Agustín Rubio Alcover, Elios Mendieta Rodríguez, and Mario de la Torre Espinosa have extrapolated the concept of autofiction to the visual arts, including film studies. For more information on the proliferation of theoretical approaches applied to autofiction specifically within Hispanic Studies, across different fields of expertise, see Ana Casas (2014, 7–21). With regard to the growing interest in autofiction beyond France, Latin America, and Iberia, see Hywel Dix, *Autofiction in English* (2018).
2. In a key scene in *Los rubios*, Analía Couceyro, playing the role of Albertina Carri, reads Roberto Carri's essay on Velázquez. Furthermore, in 2013, Albertina Carri returns to the historical character of Isidro Velázquez and the topic of the political armed militancy of the 1960s and 1970s in the performance *El affaire Velázquez* (*The Velázquez Affair*), included in the series *Mis documentos* (*My documents*) by director Lola Arias. (<http://lolaarias.com/proyectos/mis-documentos-2/>), as well as in the audiovisual installation *Operación fracaso y el sonido recuperado* (*Operation Defeat and the Recovered Sound*) (2015).
3. Our translation. All quotations originally in a language other than English are our own translations.
4. *Ya es tiempo de violencia* belongs to what Pablo Piedras calls the third stage of Argentinian political documentary made between 1956 and 1974, when “film is understood as a weapon that targets viewers of a certain group or class. The filmmaker is no longer in front of the subjects but with them, participating in the conflict and seeking to change reality” (2013, 30).

5. Erice (b. 1940) is the director of other internationally acclaimed feature films such as *El espíritu de la colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*) (1973), *El Sur* (*The South*) (1983), and *El sol del membrillo* (*The Quince Tree Sun*) (1993). Álvarez (b. 1966) is the director of another long feature, *El cielo gira* (*The Sky Turns*) (2005). The artistic sensitivity and meticulous working methods that both filmmakers share have not gone unnoticed; see, for instance, Octavi Martí (2005) and Erice (2014).
6. Like Erice, who hired jobless men and women to act in *Vidros partidos*, Álvarez and the visual artist Francesc Torres hired unemployed people to take part in their artistic project, "The 25% project," which was the entry from Catalonia at the 2013 Venice Biennale of Art. Curated by Jordi Balló, this initiative was conceived as a reflection on the role of art within the current context of crisis.
7. In his presentation, Erice reminds his audience that when Robert Flaherty made the first feature-length documentary, *Nanook of the North* (1922), he encountered great difficulty in filming indoor scenes owing to spatial limitations and the lack of natural light. As a result, most of the indoor scenes which were to make a significant impression on the history of documentary cinema were shot in a three-walled igloo built specifically for the film. For a discussion of the fictionality of *Nanook of the North*, see also Barnouw (1993, 34–36).
8. When we mention that *Vidros partidos* and *Mercado de futuros* "do not treat the real as an effect to be produced," we are following an understanding of fiction cinema based upon Aristotle's concept of fable (Rancière 2006, 158).
9. In addition to six other social plays, da Silva wrote *Teatro Livre e Arte Social* (1902), in which he outlines and analyzes the basic rules with which socialist militant theater should comply.

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