Vladimir Rosas-Salazar (University of Warwick)

(Auto)biographical Documentaries as Audiovisual Microhistories of Pinochet's Chile

Abstract

Historians work with documents as sources to research the past and elaborate a narrative. This article proposes that documentary filmmakers perform a similar practice, excavating the past by working with audiovisual documents to produce a documentary film, thus allowing stories of anonymous people to emerge. I elaborate on historian Carlo Ginzburg's approach to microhistory and propose to study this type of documentary as *audiovisual microhistories*. That is to say, as an experimental practice that pays attention to small-scale research units to access previously unknown stories and explore how they interrelate with the wider historical context. Here, I analyze three Chilean documentaries that focus on the recontextualization of home videos produced during the late 1980s and the 1990s, covering events spanning from the end of General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship to the transition to democracy: Story of my Name (*Historia de mi Nombre*, Karin Cuyul, 2019), Adriana's Pact (*El Pacto de Adriana*, Lissette Orozco, 2017), and *Guerrero* (Sebastián Moreno, 2017). To do so, I borrow historian Rudolf Dekker's notion of ego-documents and suggest that amateur videos work as first-hand testimonies that reveal the experiences of these anonymous people and their pasts.

Keywords

audiovisual microhistory, home video, amateur filmmaking, Chilean documentary, transition to democracy

Introduction

On October 5th, 1988, Chilean people went to polling stations in a historic referendum. In this vote, they had to choose between SI (YES) or NO. SI meant General Augusto Pinochet would remain in power for another eight years, in addition to the 15-year-long dictatorship he had led since the 1973 coup when Armed Forces overthrew Socialist President Salvador Allende. On the other hand, a NO vote represented a return to democracy. At the end of a very tense day, the military junta conceded the election, and the opposition to Pinochet took to the streets in celebration. The victory triggered a presidential and a parliamentary election the following year. In an atmosphere charged with voters' hope that change was coming, Patricio Aylwin led the new democratic government, a centre-left coalition of parties known as the *Concertación* composed mainly of Socialists and Christian Democrats. It was only over time that it became evident that the military regime and the *Concertación* had struck a deal later called the *salida pactada.* This deal included a transition that would keep many of the neoliberal policies started by the dictatorship, the Constitution approved by Pinochet's dictatorship in a rigged referendum in 1980, and a political scenario that over-represented the right-wing in Congress for over a decade. It was President Aylwin who coined the disheartening phrase "verdad y justicia en la medida de lo posible" ("truth and justice as far as possible"), referring to the demands for justice in cases of human rights violations.

The transition to democracy, whose end remains unclear to date, has proven to be a frustrating period for those who have demanded timely reparation and justice. The disappointment and bitterness that stem from dealing with the traumatic events of the dictatorship became pivotal in creative acts of resistance. They denounce how some opposition discourses were overlooked, given the preference for the mainstream narrative of national reconciliation in which recalling human rights violations has seemed problematic. From this period on, a number of documentary filmmakers have addressed not only Pinochet's regime in regard to its repressive policies but also the personal and intimate stories about the disappeared and their families, the exiled, and those people forced to move to far-away villages within the country (such as Patricio Guzmán, Ignacio Agüero, or Carmen Castillo, to name a few). A significant number of this type of documentary have been studied in literature both in Spanish and English, exploring trauma,[1)] cinema in exile,[2)] family relations with perpetrators,[3)] and video resistance.[4)] Ultimately, these documentaries have contributed to unearthing neglected personal stories from victims of political repression. They have collected and activated archival material that stresses the struggles the

1) Antonio Traverso, "Dictatorship memories: Working through trauma in Chilean post-dictatorship documentary," *Continuum* 24, no. 1 (2010), 179–191.
2) Elizabeth Ramírez Soto, "Journeys of Desexilio: the bridge between the past and the present," *Rethinking History*18, no. 3 (2014), 438–451.
3) Fernando Canet, "Documenting the legacies of the Chilean dictatorship: Questioning the family relationship in the documentary films El pacto de Adriana and El color del camaleón," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 15, no. 2 (2019), 125–142.
4) Paola Lagos Labbé, "Videoactivismo, denuncia y (contra) memorias: Resistencia política en los colectivos documentales durante la dictadura chilena," *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, no. 73 (2017), 139–155.

many Chilean oppositions faced against the regime, thus elaborating counter-narratives of those left behind by the transition, that indeed challenged the aforementioned transitional narrative of national reconciliation.

In this article, I conduct textual analysis of three Chilean documentaries that address events related to Pinochet's dictatorship, the transitional period, and the complicated relationship between the documentaries' protagonists and their respective relatives who actively took part in action for and against the regime. These documentaries are: *Story of my Name* (*Historia de mi Nombre*, Karin Cuyul, 2019), *Adriana's Pact* (*El Pacto de Adriana*, Lissette Orozco, 2017), and *Guerrero* (Sebastián Moreno, 2017). *Story of my Name* delves into the filmmaker's exploration of a hidden story involving her parents, who were members of a guerrilla group aiming to overthrow Pinochet; *Adriana's Pact* is the story of the relationship between the filmmaker and her aunt, an alleged agent of Pinochet's secret police who escaped to Australia; finally, *Guerrero* unpacks the biographical story of Manuel Guerrero junior, whose father was a renowned victim of Pinochet's dictatorship. From the textual analysis, I establish some comparisons in these documentaries' archival strategies used for repurposing amateur video footage from different sources, mainly recorded in the home mode[5] and the counter mode.[6] I argue these three documentaries respond to microhistorical approaches in bringing stories of anonymous people to the fore, using said videos as sources.

Audiovisual Microhistory

To understand what I mean by audiovisual microhistory, first, it is necessary to explain what microhistory is and how I engage such a notion in regard to non-fiction audiovisual production. However, a comprehensive definition of microhistory has not yet been reached, and due to its experimental work methods, this fluidity may form the core of microhistory as a practice. Microhistory, born within the field of history, was developed by a group of Italian historians in the 1970s under the name of *microistoria*, primarily through the work of Carlo Ginzburg[7] and Giovanni Levi.[8] For Levi, the change of scale of observation to explore historical events is the driving force of microhistory. It allows neglected elements to emerge, as Levi argues: "Phenomena previously considered to be sufficiently described and understood assume completely new meanings by altering the scale of observation".[9] This focus on the "small" has permitted researchers to gain insight into communities and anonymous people, predominantly overlooked in the writing of history.

5) Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1987).

6) Tom Slootweg, "Home Mode, Community Mode, Counter Mode: Three Functional Modalities for Coming to Terms with Amateur Media Practices," in *Materializing Memories: Dispositifs, Generations, Amateurs*, eds. Susan Aasman, Andreas Fickers and Joseph Wachelder (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

7) Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2013).

8) Giovanni Levi, "On microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

9) Ibid., 102.

Ginzburg coined the term *evidential paradigm*,[10] proposing to research small units looking for signs in the sources and detecting hidden clues in the text. In other words, taking different perspectives on a subject (and seeing them from a divergent point of view) will unveil previously undetected traces and provide better investigation results. On the one hand, these findings can unfold through polyvocal voices, for instance, in books such as Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times* (1999) or Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttmann's *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (2017), both based on testimonies from anonymous people about their life experience under challenging historical circumstances. On the other hand, Ginzburg's *The Cheese and The Worms* (1976), about a medieval miller nicknamed Menocchio, and Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1985), demonstrate to us that, in unearthing unknown aspects of everyday life from the past, microhistories can also develop anchored in a biographical approach.

In order to investigate the past, historians, or microhistorians in this case, rely on archival documents that are not found exclusively in official archives or libraries. In this regard, Phillip Rosen has argued that 'historiography […] expands its evidentiary basis, from the written document to the more inclusive realm of the documentary in general, in the sense that any artifacts, written or not, could be used as historical evidence',[11] thus considering non-written documents as sources to research too. Here I borrow Rudolf Dekker's notion of *ego-document*,[12] namely first-hand testimonies that reveal the experiences of people involved in the past. For Dekker, ego-documents can range from, for instance, public records about ordinary people to diaries detailing personal experiences. This understanding of the ego-document as eminently about (anonymous) people engages with José van Dijck's notion of *mediated memory*, insomuch as memory produces media, which functions as a way to retain those memories. She argues that "many people nurture a shoebox in which they store a variety of items signaling their pasts: photos, albums, letters, diaries, clippings, notes, and so forth. Add audio and video tape recordings to this collection as well as all digital counterparts of these cherished items, and you have what I call 'mediated memories'".[13] I argue that van Dijck's argument suggests that mediated memories can be valued as ego-documents too, as they are records of a past worth remembering. This point is relevant for this article, as I propose videos recorded within the home and counter mode work as documents of bottom-up stories in the context of the Chilean transition. That is, they are ego-documents that allow the documentary filmmaker to access traces of everyday life.

Amateur videos do not operate secluded from society. Indeed, they are created within a particular social and historical context. Amateur videos, privileged for their content in accessing records of everyday life, can help the researcher -in this case, the filmmaker- study history from below. The expression *history from below* encompasses many practices,

10) Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 96–115.

11) Phillip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 114.

12) Rudolf Dekker, *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context Since the Middle Ages* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002), 13–37.

13) José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Standford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.

but it is associated especially with "enlarging and democratizing the subject matter of history, with collecting new sources and materials and has often been implicitly or explicitly set up in opposition to professional, official, or otherwise authorized versions of the past".[14] Thus, while it has been mostly related to social history rather than audiovisual media, history from below ultimately resists institutional structures. Media scholars such as Patricia Zimmermann[15] have proposed examining amateur media as evidentiary sources for the elaboration of audiovisual versions of history from below by treating the examination of this type of footage as historical evidence with social history. Exploring more personal or communal accounts opens up the potential unveiling of stories of, say, ordinary people in extraordinary times, situations that have remained unknown to most of the public until recently. Hence, I argue in this article that this is precisely what some documentary filmmakers in Chile have done in unpacking events around Pinochet's dictatorship and the transition to democracy, especially those that took place between the late 1980s and early 1990s. In this regard, and repurposing David Ludvigsson's notion of *historian-filmmakers*, or "professional historians who became historical documentarists, who however continue to call themselves historians",[16] I sustain that the documentary filmmakers studied here play the role of audiovisual microhistorians in their approach to their subject and the selection of sources, without abandoning their filmmaking positionality.

Spanish scholar Efrén Cuevas[17] has championed the correspondence between microhistory and documentary cinema, which the main argument of this article is built on. However, his work has mainly focused exploring small-gauge amateur film and, more often than not, on events around the Second World War. While acknowledging the differences between the fields of documentary filmmaking and microhistory, Cuevas, in line with Ginzburg and Levi, considers the reduction of the scale of observation as the backbone of microhistory. Additionally, while revealing previously unobserved factors through microanalysis might be common ground for microhistorical research strategies, Cuevas also incorporates human agency as vital to microhistory. Emphasis on anonymous people as active individuals has been highlighted in written microhistory of different depths and has gained increasing importance as the discipline develops.[18] In his work, Cuevas harnesses the notion of human agency to explain the crucial role it plays in analysing how a documentary's protagonists have room for individual action "as a way of learning broader

14) Kevin Myers and Ian Grosvenor, *Collaborative Research: History from Below* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2018), 10.

15) Patricia Zimmermann, "The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings," in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmermann (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

16) David Ludvigsson, *The Historian-Filmmaker's Dilemma: Historical Documentaries in Sweden in the Era of Häger and Villius* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Uppsala, Sweden, 2003), 18.

17) Efrén Cuevas, "Change of Scale: Home Movies as Microhistory in Documentary Films," in *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, eds. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014); Efrén Cuevas, "Microhistoria y Cine Documental: Puntos de Encuentro," *Historia Social* 91, no. 1 (2018), 69–84; Efrén Cuevas, *Filming History from Below: Microhistorical Documentaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

18) Brad Gregory, "Is small beautiful? Microhistory and the history of everyday life," *History and Theory* 38, no. 1 (1999), 100–110; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István Szijártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013).

historical contexts, compared to macro-historical approaches where personal action is diluted".[19] Human agency, Cuevas argues, is especially accentuated in home movies and autobiographical documentaries, suggesting that it is in these modes of moving image-making practices where actions of anonymous people find better expression. Moreover, agency must also be considered in regard to the relevance of memory practices. Anonymous people's agency is rescued and elaborated by both microhistorians and filmmakers (or filmmaker-microhistorians, to complicate Ludvigsson's notion) in their final text. In addition, it is demonstrated in anonymous people's micro-archiving habits, that is, the creation of mediated memories such as pictures or videos. Ultimately, these ego-documents are also sources that imply agency in preserving the past.[20]

The filmmaker's elaboration of a narrative feeding off archival sources, or ego-documents, reveals the possibilities of archiving as a practice. Although space constraints prevent me from fully exploring archival studies, it is necessary to understand the discourse; by studying archiving as a practice, new opportunities arise to reassess the past. Scholars such as Julia Noordegraaf[21] and Susan Aasman,[22] for example, argue that film footage are not passive objects locked away in repositories, but they get meaning in their activations and use. For instance, Catherine Russell defines archival practices in film as *archiveology*, that is, the "reuse, recycling, appropriation, and borrowing of archival material that filmmakers have been doing for decades. It is not a genre of filmmaking as much as a practice that appears in many formats, styles, and modes".[23] This reworking of archival footage could unveil new ways of making history, allowing critical perspectives to emerge. These reassessments are one driving force behind the documentaries I analyze here. However, as we will see, these documentaries activate their archival footage in different ways.

Story of my Name (Historia de mi Nombre; Karin Cuyul, 2019)

Story of my Name is the directorial debut of Chilean filmmaker Karin Cuyul (1988). It is an autobiographical documentary that delves into the filmmaker's story of why she was named Karin, which pivots around her parents' story as former members of the guerrilla group Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez or FPMR (Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front) that aimed to overthrow General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. Following a non-chronological narrative, Cuyul incorporates herself in the story as an explorer who, in looking for an answer, elucidates secretive dynamics present in her family, unbeknown to her as a

19) Cuevas, "Microhistoria y Cine Documental: Puntos de Encuentro," 76.

20) Martin Pogačar, *Media Archaeologies, Micro-Archives and Storytelling* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 64–65.

21) Julia Noordegraaf, "Remembering the Past in the Dynarchive: The State of Knowledge in Digital Archives" (Paper submitted for the conference Media in Transition 7, *Unstable Platforms: The Promise and Peril of Transition*, Boston, MIT, May 13–15, 2011).

22) Susan Assman, "Saving private reels: Archival practices and digital memories (Formerly Known as Home Movies) in the digital age," in *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web*, eds. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

23) Catherine Russell, *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 1.

child. In doing so, she connects the dots between personal and historical aspects to explain better what is behind her name choice and, most importantly, to reveal her parents' story. To achieve this, Cuyul attempts to interview her parents, Sergio and Yaniré, two people who have cultivated a low profile in the different cities they have lived in and who will give elusive answers for the most part of *Story of my Name*. Anticipating this, the film structures its narrative through archival videos from different sources in order to fill the gaps. Such videos will prove themselves triggers for her soul-searching process and as a way to raise questions for Sergio and Yaniré that emerge from Cuyul's confrontation with the past.

In *Story of my Name*, Cuyul had few family ego-documents at her disposal to dig up. However, she is able to harness third-party amateur videos for that purpose. She acknowledges the incorporation of videotapes external to the Cuyul Contreras family, recorded in the home mode, helped her raise questions regarding events that she remembers only partially. The home mode, coined by anthropologist Richard Chalfen in relation to records of daily life set in the domestic sphere, describes "a pattern of interpersonal and small group communication centred around the home".[24] The incorporation of these communications from a different family to question her own, I argue, is where the documentary's originality resides. The function of such repurposing is not exactly to foreground the image's evidentiary value but to evoke (from the filmmaker's point of view) a past from which only a few images are available. Thus, these videos are reworked to overcome Cuyul's fallible memory and show how these events dialogue with the historical context in which said memories are situated. Ultimately, the reworking of archival video footage is crucial in Cuyul's project in re-evaluating her own past and understanding her story as a specific example of how the transition to democracy affected her family and by proposing an alternative way of showing what happened to a family disappointed by the transition.

One set of home videos that does not belong to the Cuyul Contreras, recontextualized in the documentary, is the one showing a gathering of friends after the 1988 referendum mentioned in this article's introduction, singing protest songs and carrying a NO flag, in reference to the NO campaign that challenged Pinochet. These extracts placed both at the beginning, and the end of *Story of my Name* are reused to pinpoint the divergent perspectives found within the left regarding said referendum: especially between those who wanted to restore democracy and saw the referendum called by Pinochet as an opportunity to achieve that goal, and those who considered any agreement involving the regime would be a compromise that would ultimately legitimize the dictatorship institutionally, both nationally and abroad. As in the opening images of a person holding a NO flag in front of the camera, the original audio track reveals this discussion. Thus, an unidentified man in the background states "that's why we were deluded on October 5th… we deluded ourselves," making clear such differences of appreciation, even within a group of friends who seemingly had the same goal. Cuyul's parents, like many in the FPMR, belonged to the latter group who did not want any political pact between Pinochet's regime and the opposition. One key aspect about the production of this video suggests that it was recorded among friends and possibly circulated within trusted networks of people: no one protects their

24) Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 8.

identity by covering their faces — even so, none of those present is individualized by name, at least in the documentary's final cut. This is crucial, as pointed out by authors Fernando Camacho Padilla and Laura Ramírez Palacio, active members of the opposition to Pinochet tried to avoid being photographed or leaving any visual evidence that could be traced by Pinochet's secret police.[25)]

The second time these images are used is in the concluding section of the documentary, although different extracts are shown. Here, the video depicts the same group of friends singing a protest song in its entirety. As James M. Moran argues, home videos generally change their meaning over time, especially in light of critical assessments challenging their original purpose.[26)] Accordingly, unlike the editing previously analysed where Cuyul demonstrates divergent positions amongst Pinochet's opposition, in this part, she devotes more time to the sense of disappointment felt by members of the said circle who saw the transition to democracy as a compromise — a suspicion confirmed to them in hindsight. She sees this disappointment now in her parents as they grew older, but only now understands the reasons behind it. In addition, as mentioned above, nobody in the video is named. Thus, this anonymity helps Cuyul use the video (and this segment in particular) as a tool to recall the everyday life of active members of the opposition more generally. In particular, it shows them in private spaces, meeting in secrecy to discuss politics in a society where the feeling of danger in expressing revolutionary political ideas was still very much present. The way the film treats these images shows that Cuyul does not mean them to be representative of the experience of any particular opposition group but rather as a way to imagine what the filmmaker's parents must have gone through in these meetings. In light of this sequence, Cuyul reflects: "I asked my parents what they felt when they voted for the 1988 referendum. They told me they didn't vote. They didn't believe that was a viable solution because things would remain the same." In their interviews, laced with constant silence and ambiguity, Sergio and Yanire drop breadcrumbs for their daughter to laboriously follow when piecing together their story, which is only understood in retrospect in the documentary.

Later in the documentary, Cuyul discloses that one of her siblings recalled that an aunt from Santiago had visited them in Queilen, in the south of Chile, in the mid-1990s and had brought a camcorder to videotape her holidays. These images are unique in depicting a family prone to elusiveness; they offer a rare opportunity to examine their interaction with their extended family within the private space. The activation of the aunt's videos in *Story of my Name* allows Cuyul to introduce Sergio and Yaniré (whom we easily recognize as we have already seen them in the interviews), herself, her brother and her sister, all having dinner. In presenting herself, instead of freezing a frame where she appears, Cuyul decides to slow down the video and repeat the short fragment she is in. The repeated fragment continues in slow motion, showing that the original shot was, in fact, a pan ending with Cuyul's sister sitting next to her. But Cuyul disrupts this precisely by focusing on herself and extending the time she is on screen in the original short pan and, in doing so, she

25) Fernando Camacho-Padilla and Laura Ramírez-Palacio, "Fotografía y memoria visual de la dictadura militar: Reflexiones desde la historia," *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 34 (2018), 54–55.

26) James Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

reminds the viewer that this is her story. Thus, the introduction is a visual device that reminds us of Cuyul's authorial voice. In the absence of more mediated memories of her as a child, this image (and its reinterpretation) propels further meanings at a personal and general level. Cuyul's aunt's video follows the premise most documents recorded in the home mode have, namely of often privileging celebratory memorialization of the family.[27] Indeed, Cuyul comments on the joy and happiness she and her siblings shared during the two years they lived in Queilen during their childhood. Such recollection, as selective as the videos' depictions, is supported by images of both her extended and her nuclear family in an outdoor setting — sometimes in a group, but she ends this sequence by selecting shots that show only the Cuyul Contreras children. However, this montage has been done intentionally to reinforce Cuyul's recent awareness that this was not a happy time for her father Sergio, as the filmmaker acknowledges.

Home videos, as mediated memories of people recorded in the home mode, have a strong relationship to autobiography, as they "provide a narrative format for communicating family legends and personal stories".[28] However, in studying home videos as ego-documents, Cuyul delves deeper into the layers of social dynamics present in the relationship between members of her family from a personal perspective. By merging home videos and the autobiographical documentary form, Cuyul also strengthens the personal as a starting point from which to elaborate a better understanding of Chile's recent history. Most importantly, this approach permits the filmmaker to show an intimate perspective of a rather public development in Chile's transition and reflect on, from a bottom-up, domestic scope, those disappointed with how the Chilean transition to democracy went.

Adriana's Pact **(El Pacto de Adriana; Lissette Orozco, 2017)**

Adriana's Pact is an autobiographical documentary that discusses Chile's problematic recent past from the perspective of anonymous people, very much like *Story of my Name*. However, in *Adriana's Pact,* filmmaker Lissette Orozco unpacks the story of her aunt Adriana Rivas, who worked as an agent at the *Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia* or DINA (National Intelligence Directorate), Pinochet's secret police, until 1976. In telling her aunt's story, Orozco negotiates the perpetrator's point of view but she stops short of making her aunt an empathetic protagonist.[29] Adriana, who moved to Australia in 1978, often visited her family in Chile, and her involvement in DINA was a family secret, even to younger family members like Orozco. In 2007, while in Chile, Adriana was arrested and accused of kidnapping Pinochet opponents. The revelation of the secret is the trigger for Orozco to delve into her dear aunt's story in trying to understand her mindset. For the documentary, Orozco interviews Adriana both face to face in Chile and through Skype in Australia,

27) Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*; Maria Pini, "Inside the home mode," in *Video Cultures*, eds. David Buckingham and Rebekah Willet (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 23–50.

28) Moran, *There's No Place Like Home Video*, 61.

29) Claudia Bossay, "Filmmakers to the Rescue of Chilean Memory: Representations of Chile's Traumatic Past in Contemporary Documentary," in *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century*, eds. Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020), 283.

but she also broadens her scope by getting in touch with some of Adriana's former associates, in particular, a secret agent who worked with Adriana and reveals having witnessed her participating in tortures (this, to Orozco's astonishment). Thus, the documentary's title reminds us of the pacts of silence, or *pactos de silencio*, that many agents of the Chilean Army and other police services put into practice to disrupt human rights trials during the 1990s and 2000s. Ultimately, Orozco relies on archival ego-documents such as family photographs and home videos that originally present Adriana in quotidian activities as a close family member, thus complicating the label of perpetrator.

The documentary opens with a birthday video and then a wedding video, both of unidentified family members, that help Orozco introduce her personal story and the story of her family. Here, she pays special attention to Adriana or aunt Chani, "the one who taught me to say what I think, without fear," as Orozco's voiceover states. These home videos merge with pictures of the same wedding party and then of the airport, showing one of Adriana's many trips from Australia. These images, portraying happy family moments, are disrupted by the unveiling of Adriana's hidden past as the documentary continues. Ten minutes into the film, Orozco explains that Adriana "tells me that she's being wrongly accused of kidnapping and murder," a moment edited in juxtaposition to a repeated segment from the wedding party video of a couple dancing, where now it is evident that the woman in the images is Adriana. Thus, *Adriana's Pact* challenges the filmmaker's family narrative in light of new information and delves into a change of perspective from an eminently family story to a complicated narrative about Chile's recent past. Finnish historian Matti Peltonen reminds us that a key aspect of microhistories is how they negotiate the treatment of a specific subject with the structures in which it is situated. Hence, he argues that microhistories arise "only on the condition that reduction of the scale of observation reveals social structures that are relevant on a larger scale than the person or locality under view".[30] Although we have discussed that microhistory aims to study anonymous people and ordinary lives, the reduced scale of observation is not enough to approach research from a microhistorical perspective. It also needs to engage with the historical and social context as well, which Adriana's story aims to do.

Halfway through the documentary, there is a sequence of home videos showing Adriana's life in Australia, trivial events such as drinking coffee in a café, reading the newspaper, and enjoying sightseeing. This segment is edited in conjunction with an audio track of an Australian TV news report uncovering her judicial case and announcing her extradition to Chile. One could argue that these images, as they are not produced in Chile, might not be considered for scrutiny in light of Orozco's examination of her family story, nor be relevant to explore a microhistorical microcosm contextualized in the Chilean transition to democracy. But first, Chalfen's understanding of the home mode is not reduced to the physical home but expands in symbolic forms of communications around the home. And second, Adriana's story can only be understood when grounded in Chile's recent history and from its exceptionality in that historical and social context. Ginzberg and Poni developed the notion of exceptional normal in microhistory, or *eccezionalmente normale*, from

30) Matti Peltonen, "What Is Micro in Microhistory?" in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing*, eds. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Lieden: Brill, 2014), 114.

Italian historian Edoardo Grendi,[31] as one that focuses on singular, unique events as well as individual persons. These normal exceptions are then extraordinary elements that can reveal a hidden or overlooked reality.[32] No matter how trivial these pieces of evidence might appear, the microhistorian's call (and, in this case, the filmmaker's call) is to pay attention precisely to these unusual elements as starting points.

Finally, one relevant consideration in Orozco's use of footage is that it consciously disregards widely known archival images of La Moneda Palace's bombing during the 1973 coup or of the dictatorship's victims in the aftermath of the coup — which have been used repeatedly in documentaries and TV reports about the Chilean dictatorship. As a documentary elucidating the story of her aunt as a secret police agent, Orozco attempts to tell Adriana's story without reappropriating images that, overall, do not belong to those committing violent acts. In turn, *Adriana's Pact*'s archival reimagining relies on family home videos and pictures, displaying quotidian events. The violent images about the coup, depicting air strikes bombing the presidential palace, and Allende's aids being taken prisoners, encapsulate much about the consequences of the dictatorship for the victims. Subverting their original purpose of explaining the culprit's side would have diminished Orozco's message. In this regard, *Adriana's Pact* does not work as a platform for the perpetrators but seeks to complicate what has been said about the dictatorship and the transitional period from a family secret. Ultimately, both Cuyul's and Orozco's work, albeit from diametrically opposed political subjects, relate to the trauma inflicted by the historical and political events around Pinochet's dictatorship, but most importantly, with the ordinariness of such trauma, that is, how such experiences permeated their respective domestic lives regarding their subjects' secretive roles in the public space.

Guerrero (Sebastián Moreno, 2017)

Unlike *Story of my Name* or *Adriana's Pact*, *Guerrero* is not autobiographical; instead, it is a biographical documentary directed by filmmaker Sebastián Moreno about Manuel Guerrero junior. Manuel's father, a member of the Chilean Communist Party, was assassinated by the dictatorship's secret police in 1985 after returning from exile in the mid-1980s in a case that would become widely known amongst the Chilean opposition as the Caso Degollados (Slit-Throat Case). The documentary's storyline, however, goes back to the 1973 coup to explain the Guerrero family's story of exile in Hungary and later in Spain. Moreno's film aims to tell the Guerrero family's story chronologically, aided mainly by family pictures and, to a lesser extent, by moving images. Moreover, the moving images reworked in *Guerrero* are not what could usually be defined as home videos, like in *Story of my Name* or *Adriana's Pact*. Only a handful of the videos in *Guerrero* could be classed as from obscure sources (or, at least, obscure to Chilean audiences), such as a sequence tak-

31) Edoardo Grendi, "Micro-analisi e storia sociale," *Quaderni storici* 12, no. 35 (1977), 512.

32) Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, "The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace," in *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, eds. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 7–8.

en from a children's TV program in Hungarian where Manuel Guerrero junior, along with other exiled children, talk about their experiences. Much of the archival footage *Guerrero* displays comes from documentaries about the dictatorship, such as *Chile: When Will It End?* (*Chile: Hasta Cuando?* David Bradbury, 1986), made on film. They also come from video projects such as *Teleanálisis* (1984–89), a monthly TV news report made by the opposition to Pinochet, recorded on tape and distributed on VHS, with first-hand images of protests against the regime and police violence. Both sources show the struggle members of the opposition to Pinochet who lived in Chile faced on a daily basis due to political repression and economic hardship.

While in my previous analyses I focused on textual scrutiny of how those documentaries reworked home videos, in examining *Guerrero,* I want to concentrate on the type of source the film harnesses and especially the mode in which they are produced. As mentioned above, Cuevas states that human agency is accentuated in home movies and autobiographical documentaries. In this section, however, I argue that, while home movies and autobiographical documentaries can talk about the I, other amateur images can also be produced by and for anonymous people, usually to talk about the We (to borrow from Alisa Lebow's Cinema of Me)[33] to circulate through non-mainstream networks. More importantly, these amateur videos become relevant ego-documents about what the opposition to Pinochet went through. To expand on this type of footage, I draw on Tom Slootweg's notion of the counter mode[34], a mode of amateur media making enacted by social and political activists who used video mainly as an oppositional practice to overcome mainstream media's neglect of certain themes. While Slootweg unpacks his definition by focusing on the case of a Dutch video collective, the counter mode gains traction in the context of a dictatorship that persecutes its opponents. Images from *Teleanálisis* are crucial in providing visual evidence of a community disregarded in the public discourse during the dictatorship, thus creating what Nancy Fraser calls subaltern counter-publics, that is, "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs".[35] This role has been played by video projects not only in Chile but by grassroots video projects across Latin America, especially in the 1980s, when a number of countries were ruled by dictatorships.[36] Hence, the following question arises, can images made in modes other than the home mode help unearth stories of anonymous people and produce microhistorical narratives?

In following a strand of suspicion from one's learnt story, where films such as *Story of my Name* and *Adriana's Pact* succeed, Guerrero does not. Ultimately, *Guerrero* reaffirms the story of Manuel Guerrero senior as a political activist who was assassinated by the dictatorship. Manuel Guerrero junior tells his story as a child in exile in Hungary and how his

33) Alisa Lebow, ed., *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

34) Slootweg, "Home Mode, Community Mode, Counter Mode".

35) Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interrnptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 67.

36) Patricia Aufderheide, "Latin American grassroots video: beyond television," *Public Culture* 5, no. 3 (1993), 579–592.

parents' marriage was torn apart (to the Chilean Communist Party in exile's disapproval). In doing so, Sebastián Moreno's film reasserts the image Manuel has about his family in the private space, feeding off family pictures and complementing them with his father's counter-public image at the same time through video images. It is true that the documentary unveils unknown aspects of a victim of police repression and shows the viewer personal aspects of a family highly entrenched in the political process in Chile. However, the uncritical scope it takes does not mean that Guerrero is less microhistorical than *Adriana's Pact* or *Story of my Name*, as it deals with a bottom-up perspective that allows us to enrich our understanding of a historical period. But in my view, the difference in the treatment of archival sources, and subsequently in the narrative, highlights the memory work that Cuyul's and Orozco's documentaries develop as a research strategy, specifically in the realization that what they thought they knew is challenged.

Conclusion

Microhistory invites us to interrogate the past we thought we already knew, as Levi states.[37] By changing the scale of observation and researching into smaller units, new stories arise, providing us with comprehensive knowledge about such a past and new types of protagonists: the lives and experiences of anonymous people. However, a change of scale is not enough. These stories do not take place in a vacuum; they interact with their social and historical context. More importantly, for microhistorians, the individual's agency impacts the course of actions and not the other way around — regardless of the outcome. As Levi explains, "all social action is seen to be the result of an individual's constant negotiation, manipulation, choices and decisions in the face of a normative reality which, though pervasive, nevertheless offers many possibilities for personal interpretations and freedoms".[38] *Story of my Name*, *Adriana's Pact*, and *Guerrero*, all to a different extent, deal with the individual's agency, central to Cuevas' argument on microhistory and documentary filmmaking. Ultimately, one key part of the research strategy for microhistories (and audiovisual microhistories, in this case) is what I define as ego-documents, the tangible outcome of people's intuitive archival desire, a chance to say that one experienced a moment worth remembering. Moreover, as Jacques Derrida[39] reminds us, archives are not about the past: they are about the future. The re-reading of these ego-documents, then, can talk about the future as well.

In line with personal memory transcending to the public sphere, historian Pierre Nora has argued that *democratization of history* can occur if emancipatory versions of the past surface: "Unlike history, which has always been in the hands of the public authorities, of scholars and specialized peer groups, memory has acquired all the new privileges and prestige of a popular protest movement".[40] However, it is important to bear in mind that "history from below is not emancipatory per se, nor does the use of oral history or testi-

37) Levi, "On microhistory".
38) Ibid., 94.
39) Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
40) Pierre Nora, "Reasons for the current upsurge in memory," *Transit* 22, no. 1 (2002), 6.

monial witnesses automatically imply a polyphony of voices".[41] The story of Adriana Rivas, for instance, teaches us that the background to anonymous individuals' narratives on a micro-level (family, community, village), can be rather problematic too. Nevertheless, the role the documentary filmmaker plays as a microhistorical audiovisual researcher is crucial in reworking the sources at their disposal in a manner that allows them to create a narrative where such stories can emerge. It is much more complex (and at the same time, nuanced) than "giving voice to the voiceless" or empowering disenfranchised groups. It means understanding the past through a different lens.

Bibliography

Aufderheide, Patricia. "Latin American grassroots video: beyond television," *Public Culture* 5, no. 3 (1993), 579–592.

Assman, Susan. "Saving private reels: Archival practices and digital memories (Formerly Known as Home Movies) in the digital age," in *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web,* eds. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

Brunow, Dagmar. *Remediating Transcultural Memory: Documentary Filmmaking as Archival Intervention* (Germany: de Gruyter, 2015).

Bossay, Claudia. "Filmmakers to the Rescue of Chilean Memory: Representations of Chile's Traumatic Past in Contemporary Documentary," in *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First-Century*, eds. Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2020).

Canet, Fernando. "Documenting the legacies of the Chilean dictatorship: Questioning the family relationship in the documentary films El pacto de Adriana and El color del camaleón," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 15, no. 2 (2019), 125–142.

Camacho-Padilla, Fernando and Laura Ramírez-Palacio. "Fotografía y memoria visual de la dictadura militar: Reflexiones desde la historia," *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 34 (2018), 53–70.

Chalfen, Richard. *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1987).

Cuevas, Efrén. "Change of Scale: Home Movies as Microhistory in Documentary Films," in *Amateur Filmmaking: The Home Movie, the Archive, the Web,* eds. Laura Rascaroli, Gwenda Young, and Barry Monahan (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

Cuevas, Efrén. "Microhistoria y Cine Documental: Puntos de Encuentro," *Historia Social* 91, no. 1 (2018), 69–84.

Cuevas, Efrén. *Filming History from Below: Microhistorical Documentaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

Davis, Natalie Zemon. *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Dekker, Rudolf. *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context Since the Middle Ages* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2002).

41) Dagmar Brunow, *Remediating Transcultural Memory: Documentary Filmmaking as Archival Intervention* (Germany: de Gruyter, 2015), 6.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Fraser, Nancy. *Justice Interrnptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Ginzburg, Carlo. *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

Ginzburg, Carlo. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2013).

Ginzburg, Carlo and Carlo Poni. "The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace," in *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, eds. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

Gregory, Brad. "Is small beautiful? Microhistory and the history of everyday life," *History and Theory* 38, no. 31 (1999), 100–110.

Grendi, Edoardo. "Micro-analisi e storia sociale," *Quaderni storici* 12, no. 35 (1977), 506–520.

Lagos Labbé, Paola. "Videoactivismo, denuncia y (contra) memorias: Resistencia política en los colectivos documentales durante la dictadura chilena," *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, no. 73 (2017), 139–155.

Lebow, Alisa, ed. *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

Levi, Giovanni. "On microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

Ludvigsson, David. *The Historian-Filmmaker's Dilemma: Historical Documentaries in Sweden in the Era of Häger and Villius* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Uppsala, Sweden, 2003).

Magnússon, Sigurður Gylfi and István Szijártó. *What Is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013).

Moran, James. *There's No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

Myers, Kevin and Ian Grosvenor. *Collaborative Research: History from Below* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2018).

Noordegraaf, Julia. "Remembering the Past in the Dynarchive: The State of Knowledge in Digital Archives" (Paper submitted for the conference Media in Transition 7, *Unstable Platforms: The Promise and Peril of Transition*, Boston, MIT, May 13–15, 2011).

Nora, Pierre. "Reasons for the current upsurge in memory," *Transit* 22, no. 1 (2002), 4–8.

Peltonen, Matti. "What Is Micro in Microhistory?" in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing*, eds. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Lieden: Brill, 2014).

Pini, Maria. "Inside the home mode," in *Video Cultures,* eds. David Buckingham and Rebekah Willet (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 23–50.

Pogačar, Martin. *Media Archaeologies, Micro-Archives and Storytelling* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Ramírez Soto, Elizabeth. "Journeys of Desexilio: the bridge between the past and the present," *Rethinking History* 18, no. 3 (2014), 438–451.

Rosen, Phillip. *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

Russell, Catherine. *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

Slootweg, Tom. "Home Mode, Community Mode, Counter Mode: Three Functional Modalities for Coming to Terms with Amateur Media Practices," in *Materializing Memories: Dispositifs, Generations, Amateurs,* eds. Susan Aasman, Andreas Fickers, and Joseph Wachelder (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

Traverso, Antonio. "Dictatorship memories: Working through trauma in Chilean post-dictatorship documentary," *Continuum* 24, no. 1 (2010), 179–191.

van Dijck, José. *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Standford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

Zalc, Claire and Tal Bruttmann, eds. *Microhistories of the Holocaust* (New York; Berghahn Books, 2017).

Zimmermann, Patricia. "The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings," in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmermann (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008).

Filmography

Adriana's Pact (El Pacto de Adriana; Lissette Orozco, 2017)
Chile: When Will It End? (Chile: Hasta Cuando?; David Bradbury, 1986)
Guerrero (Sebastián Moreno, 2017)
Story of my Name (Historia de mi Nombre; Karin Cuyul, 2019)
Teleanalisis (Teleanálisis; Augusto Góngora, 1984–89)

Biography

Vladimir Rosas-Salazar is a Chilean journalist and researcher. He received his MA in Film and Screen Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, and is currently undertaking a PhD in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. Rosas-Salazar' research interests include amateur filmmaking and video aesthetic. (Vladimir.Rosas-Salazar@warwick.ac.uk)