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## **Facing the Perpetrator's Legacy: Post-Perpetrator Generation Documentary Films**

Javier Moral, Gerd Bayer and Fernando Canet

Although since the end of the Second World War public attention to the Holocaust has focused primarily on the victim, the perpetrator has also from early on played a role in the process of raising awareness of the atrocities committed by Nazis. Public events like the Nuremberg trials (held between 20 November 1945 and 1 October 1946), the publication of memoirs like *The Goebbels Diaries* (1948), books about the perpetrators like Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), and documentary films like *The Sorrow and the Pity* (Marcel Ophüls, 1969) have also contributed to the construction of the account of Nazi barbarism that evolved during the second half of the twentieth century. We can underline this presence of the perpetrator in cultural products as the precursor to the twenty-first century growth of global interest in the figure of the perpetrator, as we have seen in the introduction to this special issue.

This 'turn toward the figure of the perpetrator' (Crownschaw 2011, 75) has occurred simultaneously with two related developments: the progressive disappearance of the witnesses and, consequently, the increased importance of the historical legacy. New generations have been gradually taking over the process of dealing with the traumatic past from those who actually experienced it. Concepts like 'postmemory' (Hirsch 1997), 'inherited memory' (Lury 1998), 'vicarious memory' (Young 2000), or 'prosthetic memory' (Landsberg 2004) have emerged to characterise this new relationship with history. For example, Marianne Hirsch's postmemory 'describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they "remember" only by means of stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up' (Hirsch 2008, 106). Cultural memory, on the other hand, defined as 'a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural, identity' (Assmann 2008, 110), can help explain the bond established by second and third generations with their legacy and how they come to terms with it: by exploring the horrors of their inherited past, new generations can heal their society's wounds.

Within this new trend, the presence of documentary films about Nazi perpetrators is especially remarkable because of the sheer horror and historical significance of the atrocities concerned. Scholars have given a voice to the children of both Holocaust survivors and perpetrators (Rothschild 2000; Berger and Berger 2001) while also exploring how second-generation Holocaust literature has dealt with the legacies of both groups (McGlothlin 2006). A particularly valuable study of the second-generation Holocaust documentary films is offered by Susanne Luhmann (2011), who focuses on the legacies of the Nazi atrocities through the analysis of three films: Malte Ludin's *2 or 3 Things I Know About Him* (2005), Jens Schanze's *Winter Children: The Silent Generation* (2005), and Michael Gaumnitz's *Exile in Sedan* (2002). Ludin's film is also the object of study in a chapter of Brad Prager's *After the Fact: The Holocaust in Twenty-First Century Documentary Film* (2015). David Evans's *What Our Fathers Did: A Nazi Legacy*, released in 2015, is a more recent example of a perpetrator documentary film and has apparently only been addressed in three film reviews (Lichtig 2015; Macnab 2015; Liebman 2016). Finally, another film worthy of note is the Israeli documentary film *Hitler's Children* (Chanoch Ze'evi 2011) (see Liat Steir-Livny 2019).

Beyond the Nazi acts of perpetration, filmmakers have also explored other traumatic legacies, particularly those of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships. The Chilean case is dealt with in two films released in the same year: *El color del camaleón* ('The Color of the Chamaleon', Andres Lubbert 2017) and *El pacto de Adriana* ('Adriana's Pact', Lissette Orozco 2017). The Argentine legacy is examined in the films *70 y Pico* ('70 and Pico', Mariano Corbacho 2016) and *El hijo del cazador* ('The Son of the Hunter', Germán Scelso and Federico Robles 2018). These four documentary films are studied in the two articles in this special issue on the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, respectively.<sup>1</sup> The two Chilean films have also been studied by Fernando Canet (2019) in his recent article focusing on how the second-generation documentary filmmakers' exploration of their legacy affects their family relationship. Moreover, Antonio Traverso's interview (2018) with these two filmmakers offers numerous insights into their experience. One of these filmmakers, Federico Robles, is also responsible for the documentary film *Apuntes para una herencia* ('An Inheritance Notes', 2018), which deals with another national conflict that ended with the rise of a dictatorship: Robles's grandfather was a Nationalist soldier during the Spanish Civil War, prior to the establishment of the Francoist dictatorship.

The aim of this article is to address a transversal topic within perpetrator studies: it asks how subsequent generations deal with the legacy of their perpetrator ancestors, pursuing this question through the exploration of six recent documentary films, all produced between 2015 and 2018. We call this new cinematic tendency the ‘post-perpetrator generation documentary film’, which is comprised of non-fiction films that explore how the immediate descendants of those who committed or collaborated in atrocities deal with their legacy. Our selected sample covers four different contexts: Nazi Germany, the Spanish Civil War, and the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships.<sup>2</sup> Through a comparative and transcultural methodological approach, our focus will be not so much on identifying differences between these four traumatic legacies as on finding similarities that define this global trend regardless of context. We attempt to find these common features through the exploration of two closely related phenomena:<sup>3</sup>

(1) Personal responses and social responsibilities. Under this category, we consider the following questions: How do subsequent generations respond to their problematic legacies? How do their answers depend on their relatives’ levels of involvement in or responsibility for an atrocity, and on whether the conflict is still unresolved?<sup>4</sup> How do their answers depend on the interplay between dispositional and situational factors? How do they deal with the inherited responsibility of their relatives’ actions in both personal and social spheres?

(2) Family dynamics. This category covers the following questions: How is the legacy of perpetrators addressed within the family? How do family members manage possible discrepancies between pieces of historical evidence and the official family narrative? What are the consequences of such confrontations?

However, before exploring these questions a brief account of how each film frames its topic is required.

### **Brief notes on the documentary films**

*My Nazi Legacy* contains echoes of other recent cinematic works that address how the legal legacy of Nazi Germany still interests viewers today, with many of these films directly addressing Germany’s most famous post-Nuremberg trials: namely, those led by Fritz Bauer in Frankfurt (see Ward 2019). This topic has been the subject of various made-for-TV feature films that also display a clear pedagogical function in that they

aim to inform a contemporary audience about the matter of intergenerational justice and national responsibility. David Evans's film is less overtly pedagogical, but its Lanzmann-inspired cinematic style (at least in the interview sections) clearly aims to present a somewhat neutral documentary take on the way that atrocities are remembered. While it eschews the kind of overt engagement with the psychology of evil that characterises Stefan Ruzowitzky's *Das radikal Böse* ('Radical Evil', 2013; see Kobrynsky 2015) and that was famously addressed in the Goldhagen debate, it nevertheless raises the very points associated with the discourse on perpetrators in Holocaust Studies (McGlothlin 2009), contributing to a breaking of the silence that surrounded the perpetrator for too long and which, as Luhmann has shown (2011), has by now moved from an exploration within *Väterliteratur* to a quite fascinating and sometimes disturbing cinematic encounter with perpetrators and their offspring.

*My Nazi Legacy* consists mostly of direct on-screen dialogue between the three main characters. One of them is an international lawyer, Philippe Sands, who interviews the sons of two major figures in the Nazi political hierarchy. Niklas Frank is the son of the Governor-General of Eastern Europe; and Horst von Wächter's father, Baron Otto von Wächter, was in charge of Galicia and thus a direct subordinate of Hans Frank. Sands's grandfather was the only survivor of a family of about 80 people who were all killed during the Nazi regime, and Sands's own professional experience as a lawyer in The Hague clearly informs his interest in the judicial side of genocide and the resulting questions of guilt.

Similarly, both *El pacto de Adriana* and *El color del camaleón* contain echoes of other films that address the aftermath of the Pinochet era in the twenty-first-century (see Canet 2019). However, what makes *El pacto de Adriana* and *El color del camaleón* quite distinct from these other films, as well as from *My Nazi Legacy*, is the fact that the perpetrator is a relative of their respective filmmakers. *El pacto de Adriana* is the first film by the Chilean filmmaker Lissette Orozco; it tells the story of her aunt, Adriana Rivas, known within her family as 'Tía Chany'. Orozco's aunt is initially described as the strongest woman in the family, but as the filmmaker begins to uncover evidence of Tía Chany's active collaboration with the Chilean secret police (DINA) during the Pinochet era, her feelings for her aunt shift from admiration to disapproval.

*El color del camaleón* presents Andrés Lübbert's efforts to understand his father, Jorge, and the reasons behind his self-destructive behaviour (Traverso 2018, 9). As viewers

learn during the film, this behaviour is the product of his painful back-story: in 1978, Jorge was captured by DINA and forced to train as a secret agent. Caught between the two opposing roles of perpetrator and victim, Jorge turned away from his family in his struggle to deal with his past. Lübbert's film exemplifies one of the main objectives of second-generation artists, i.e. 'to represent the long-term effects of living in close proximity to the pain, depression, and dissociation of persons who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma' (Hirsch 2008, 112). Going through such an experience, Jorge finds healing, while Andrés can come to terms with his 'trauma transferred'. After the filmmaker finds his father's testimony about how DINA coerced him to become a secret agent, we can hear him in a voice-over: 'It's like your trauma was somehow passed onto me. A trauma that is not mine that I have not experienced. Maybe that's why I need to reconstruct it with you, to channel it into something, to interpret it'. Contrary to *El pacto de Adriana*, where the filmmaker breaks with her aunt, Lübbert's investigation ends with a reconciliation with his father.

The close relationships of these filmmakers to relatives involved in violence acts have a decisive impact on the narratives of their individual projects: the films demonstrate that emotional engagement requires a more personal point of view. In contrast with the objective and expository mode represented by *My Nazi Legacy*, both *El color del camaleón* and *El pacto de Adriana* adopt subjective, poetic modes. For example, as Lissette begins to discover the cracks in Adriana's testimony, we can see a projection of her aunt over the wall against which she is leaning, reflecting how Adriana is trying to manipulate her. The use of an actor to read and perform Jorge's therapy sessions recorded and transcribed by his brother, Orlando Lübbert, goes in the same direction: distance and reflection are presented as necessary components when giving shape to deeply personal matters.

A similar poetical tone is found in one of the two Argentine films analysed here: *70 y pico*. Mariano Corbacho's first feature film adopts a first-person perspective to tell the story of his grandfather Héctor Mario Corbacho, nicknamed 'Pico', who collaborated with the dictatorship while holding a privileged position as Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning (FAU) at the University of Buenos Aires from 1976 to 1982. At the same time, he was working as a professor of technical drawing at the infamous Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA), where around 5.000 people were

kidnapped and tortured by the armed and security forces, and from where more than 115 students from the Faculty of Architecture were ‘disappeared’.

The complexity of Corbacho’s task is made explicit in his voice-over during the opening of the film, just before the beginning of the chapter titled ‘My Family and Pico’: ‘How is an image built? How many meanings can the same image contain?’ The narration of *70 y pico* is developed to explore this polysemic image: it presents Pico as he relates to his family and to the filmmaker himself; Pico with his former architectural students; and, especially Pico in connection to the viewers, who are left to draw their own conclusions. In this sense, the counter-narration offered by survivors and witnesses of the dictatorship era contrasts with the reluctance of family members to undermine familial bonds. Significantly, Mariano does not find answers in his own family context: his grandfather is evasive and neither his mother nor his siblings want to delve too much into the family past. Mariano’s family represents the common pact of silence maintained by families of perpetrators in Argentine society.

While *70 y pico* explores how third-generation relatives deal with their legacy, *El hijo del cazador*, the other Argentine documentary film analysed here, deals with the second generation. And unlike *70 y pico*, which deals with the filmmaker’s own journey, the two filmmakers behind *El hijo del cazador* have no direct relationship to the character and are therefore not as closely connected to the story being told. These differences have consequences for the discursive construction: *El hijo del cazador* has more in common with *My Nazi Legacy* than with first-person post-perpetrator generation films. Indeed, Scelso and Robles’s film adopts a more expository and observational model that focuses on the figure of Luis Alberto Quijano, who denounced his father, Luis Alberto Cayetano Quijano, and testified as a witness against him in the ‘La Perla’ case, a megatrial held in July 2015 for crimes against humanity committed in the Argentine province of Córdoba.<sup>5</sup> The narrative blends sequences showing Luis Alberto’s everyday routines alongside his wife, feeding and taking care of his dogs, etc., with his testimony facing the camera, as he narrates in detail the abuses he suffered at the hands of his family and especially his father, the crimes he witnessed in the clandestine detention centre and the tasks he was forced to perform as a teenager.

Federico Robles, one of the co-directors of *El hijo del cazador*, is also responsible for the only post-perpetrator generation film about the Spanish Civil War and Franco’s dictatorship from the perspective of the victors, *Apuntes para una herencia*. Despite the

efforts of different social groups and several political attempts to review Spanish war crimes (like the Historical Memory Law enacted in 2007), the collective memory of recent national history remains highly controversial. As a result, there are hardly any Spanish documentary films addressing the figures of the perpetrator or collaborator. Apart from an astonishing examination of Franco's executors directed by Basilio Martín Patino as early as 1977 (*Queridísimos verdugos*, 'Dearest Executioners'), where the filmmaker presents testimonies by the last three executioners of the Franco dictatorship, we have not found any films focusing on the perpetrator apart from *Apuntes para una herencia*. Robles's film is actually an Argentine-Spanish co-production that explores the life of the filmmaker's grandfather, César Robles, a Nationalist soldier in the Spanish Civil War and subsequently a member of the Civil Guard for several years until he immigrated to Argentina. Like other first-person narratives, *Apuntes para una herencia* takes an essayistic, poetic approach: Robles delves into his family legacy in an effort to make sense of the history that he knows, mainly, through his father. In order to understand his grandfather's motivations and his social responsibility, Robles travels to Spain and compares the official family narrative against historical documents and the testimonies of descendants of Civil War victims.

## **Personal responses and social responsibilities**

### ***From personal to social responsibility***

The burden of history determines the collective memory which, as noted above, is passed onto subsequent generations that had no direct experience of the traumatic events but were nevertheless deeply affected by them. As McGlothlin has asserted, the members of the second generation do not inherit 'the wound itself (the direct experience of trauma and physical damage), but the mere mark of the wound, the signifier for an experience not personally experienced' (2006, 8-9). Their relationship with the past is thus mediated by their ancestors, who transferred the weight of history to them through their personal traumatic experiences. In other words, the survivors' children must deal with an inherited horror, transferred affectively and amorphously rather than rationally, as both Hirsch (2008) and Hoffman (2005) have noted. This is why second and third generations have a hard time reconciling with their own history: only by overcoming the trauma transferred from the first generation could they turn these troubling 'phantom pains' (McGlothlin 2006, 5) into life experiences.



However, the role their ancestors played in the events has a harsher emotional impact on the perpetrators' children compared to the children of the victims. 'Caught between the guilt of their parents and their innocence' (Pettitt 2018, 1), the perpetrator's offspring must struggle with conflicting reactions that deeply mark their identity: guilt/innocence, blame/exoneration, remembering/forgetting. But the effects of this painful wound are not merely emotional. The personal sphere is subordinate to the social realm because another part of the legacy is responsibility. This is pointed out by Wenceslao Álvarez Obblanca, the Spanish historian in *Apuntes para una herencia*, and it is also suggested in *My Nazi Legacy* when, as the story comes to a close, we are explicitly reminded that when we remember the Holocaust in the context of the perpetrators, the question of guilt and responsibility cannot be avoided.

This inherited responsibility produces one of two possible responses in the perpetrators' descendants: they can either deny their ancestors' responsibility or accept the part they played. The first option eliminates any possibility of overcoming the traumatic event and acting in the present, while the second opens up the chance of personal healing and social commitment. The characters in *My Nazi Legacy* represent both of these opposing options: Horst von Wächter rejects his social responsibility while Niklas Frank accepts it clearly and explicitly. One of the most moving moments in the film takes place after the latter remarks that his father deserved to die because of all he had done. Looking at photos of his family and holding the last picture of his father after he was hanged, he adds: 'Germans know exactly what can happen if you are losing civil courage. If you are losing democracy, it leads to camps... it can lead to extermination camps'. In this sense, Niklas operates as the role model that Sands and the others maker of the film want to present to their audience: a person who is willing to step beyond filial loyalties and assume the obligations associated with an ethics of encounter.

By contrast, Horst repeatedly rejects his father's guilt and in doing so denies any opportunity of understanding what happened and of applying that understanding to the future. This character clearly represents those members of society who resort to denial when faced with the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime, reflecting attitudes that were aired in Germany during the "Historikerstreit" (historians' dispute) and the scandal surrounding a speech given by Martin Walser (see Niefanger 2009; Welzer et al. 2002). Indeed, the final scene of the film in particular serves as a signal of Horst von Wächter's insistence that his father had a good character and would never have actively

participated in any atrocity, and that he should therefore not be held accountable for what he was politically and legally responsible for as a senior administrator. In this sense, Ukrainian soldiers at a military commemoration remember Otto von Wächter as somebody who supported Ukrainian national unity. They view him as a positive figure in their struggle against Soviet control, connecting thus this film to the sometimes controversial commemorations held in Eastern European countries during the Cold War (Haltorf 2018). The fact that various people attend the event in German war uniforms and at least one person publicly wears a swastika does not seem to trouble Horst von Wächter's visible happiness. He feels his father is finally exonerated.

### ***Responsibility in the past, responsibility in the present***

But excusing his father's actions in the past because of situational factors also means exempting himself from any social responsibility in the present. This points to the tensions between the characters of *My Nazi Legacy* and how complex can be the respect for difference and plurality in political life (Arendt 1958) when we talk about assumption for responsibility of a legacy of violence. In fact, the on-screen dynamic between the protagonists changes increasingly as the film progresses. While throughout the film the three men behave cordially and even kindly towards each other, the film's conclusion suggests that the friendship will not be able to survive if one of them refuses to acknowledge his basic moral responsibilities. In the sequence of the military burial in Ukraine noted above, Frank suggests that his counterpart could potentially become a Nazi, seeing in such a development as serious threat to the continuation of their friendship. Clearer still is the discussion between Horst and Sands in Zolkiew Synagogue, where most of Sands's family died in July 1941. To lawyer's question: 'How could it be that such things happened in the past and continue to happen nowadays?' Horst answers: 'We have no way of stopping them; we have to accept it'. This unquestioning acceptance of atrocities and the concomitant refusal to allow questions about responsibility and guilt are the keys to understanding why Horst would rather risk repeating history than accept his inherited responsibility. Arguing insistently against any possibility of his father's agency within the military structure, Horst not only denies his father's culpability but also rejects any personal response to social pressure: neither in the past nor the present.

However, the balance presented in Evans's film between denial and acceptance of the legacy is not apparent in the other post-perpetrator generation documentary films

analysed here. Except for Horst, all of the descendants featured in these films feel responsible for their ancestors' acts and feel a commitment to address the past and, especially, to account for committed crimes to subsequent generations: concern for the future is the ethical motivation of the post-perpetrator generation.

We can observe clearly this impulse in *Orozco*, which concludes her investigation by talking about her concern about the future of Chilean society. The filmmaker expresses her moral duty by speaking the truth to subsequent generations, or at least offering them the pieces of a puzzle that she cannot put together herself because of her closeness to the perpetrator. Her final words, in voice-over, clarify this point: 'I become aware of this historical puzzle, with more desire for the future than for the past. The puzzle is incomplete but my possibilities are exhausted. I hope this is the starting point for others, who deserve to find those hidden pieces, to heal'. Similarly, in *El hijo del cazador* Quijano offers two reasons for denouncing his father and telling the truth: on the one hand, he hopes to clean his family's name so that his daughter need not feel ashamed because of her grandfather's actions; and on the other hand, he aims to bring to justice 'the people who fought for the other side', that is, those he names 'seditious' and who are actually dissidents to dictatorships.

### ***From second to third generation***

We can observe a relevant difference between second and third generation related to this concern for the future: while the father's actions may determine the offspring's response, a greater distance—temporal and emotional—from events facilitates a decisive shift of focus from personal response to social responsibility. The second generation's engagement with the events is heavily mediated by emotion and blood ties. As Federico's sister suggests in *Apuntes para una herencia*, it must be hard to give up your idealised image of your father; you would probably 'prefer not to dig too much'. And she concludes: 'it seems like a defence mechanism'. The position of the third generation is a different matter: grandchildren are further removed from the events and familial bonds exert less pressure, allowing them to interrogate their legacy with fewer restrictions. Because of such a gap, it is easier for them to broaden the focus and place their ancestors' story in a wider sociohistorical context.

Indeed, the third generation tends to privilege the social sphere over the private, as we can observe in Robles's film. The conflict between two points of view—son versus grandson—is a central theme throughout the narration and exposed in particular in a key

sequence. César's son justification of his father's actions rests on situational factors: his father was just an involuntary soldier, someone who lived in a village where the rebels simply took him with them. If he had lived in another village under republican control, the story would have been different. This justification allows him to reject any social responsibility for his father's actions. Moreover, when the grandson/filmmaker tries to reflect on how we construct history, the son becomes visibly annoyed. When Robles wants to discuss social responsibility, his father responds by insisting that they stop filming.

Conversely, while Robles agrees that his grandfather was a soldier of no rank and that his choice to join the rebels was largely random, he also knows that he participated in several firing squads, and that after the war he was in the Civil Guard during the toughest years of repression. As Federico attests, 'I am clear who my grandfather was. But I can't stop thinking that he validated the regime'. In his search for proof of his ascendant's implication, Robles takes the testimony of two former soldiers who knew his grandfather. Asked directly whether César was a willing Francoist, they confirm the fact without hesitation. In fact, they add that there were many others who changed sides because they could not accept the Francoist ideology.

*70 y pico* is the film that exhibits the greatest commitment to social responsibility from a third-generation point of view. Like Robles, Corbacho is able to separate the two 'Pico(s)' (his grandfather): the private and the public. And like Robles, he can examine both from a critical perspective. But more than his relationship with his grandfather, Corbacho explores the historical resonances of the Argentine dictatorship as the only way to contextualise his grandfather's responsibility. This is why *70 y pico* goes beyond the period when Pico was faculty dean in the late 70s: only by exploring the different cultural, political and revolutionary agendas of the era can he understand how the dictatorship was established thanks to support and involvement of many Argentines like Pico.

In contrast with Robles's father's arguments about situational factors that exonerate his father from responsibility in the Spanish Civil War (similar to Horst denying his father's culpability), Corbacho argues, like Robles himself and like Frank in *My Nazi Legacy*, that situational factors cannot eliminate personal agency. Moreover, the third generation are aware that going beyond individual actions and widening the focus to the historical context can shed light on how ideological background is essential to understanding the

close relationship between dispositional and situational factors in influencing any perpetrator's actions. In fact, it is just such an ideological background that allows Pico to justify his actions under the dictatorship, as he explains to his grandson that he is still proud to be 'the only one who confronted the *'montoneros'* inside the university'.<sup>6</sup>

## **Family narratives, bonds of loyalty and historical evidence**

### *Family dynamics*

Individual responses of post-perpetrator generations are heavily conditioned by their family context. In this sense, extending Eric Santner's suggestions about the post-Nazi generation, transmission of trauma takes place 'at the sites of the primal scenes of socialization, that is, within the context of a certain psychopathology of the post-war family' (Santner 1993, 35). In other words, the family fabric is rarely in a good condition in post-perpetrator families because of the atrocities that lurk in their past. All the descendants of Nazi perpetrators in *Hitler's Children* express the same idea: the world of those who lived with or are descendants of perpetrators and accomplices is complex and full of guilt, secrets and shadows. Orozco sums up this condition in the opening titles of *El pacto de Adriana*: 'every family has at least one secret' and hers 'is not the exception'.

*70 y pico* reflects widely on the most common attitudes within the family of a perpetrator: silence, denial or forgetting. In the first segment of the filmmaker's exploration, significantly titled 'My Family and Pico', Corbacho confronts his family members about their memory of Pico. His mother says she lived in a bubble and knows nothing about his father and the period he was a dean at the University of Buenos Aires, while his brother describes himself as a conformist, someone with no interest in the past, despite his knowledge that people had tried to kill his grandfather. His sister is similarly disinterested in the politics and intrigues of this period of her childhood: 'I never asked', she states simply. And when asked what she thinks the filmmaker is seeking to do with this film, her reaction is far from encouraging: she thinks her brother is picking on her grandfather by digging into things that have nothing to do with the family. For her, Pico is just her grandfather, and she has no interest in his professional life.

Orozco suggests that *El pacto de Adriana* ‘was like a bomb that deeply fractured my extended family’ (quoted in Traverso 2018, 14), while Robles recalls that almost no one in his immediate family wanted to talk about it, thereby shutting down numerous possible sources of information: ‘It was like just bringing it up was a kind of accusation’. Even for those who were coerced into collaborating with the perpetrators, like Jorge in *El color del camaleón*, a defensive shield blocks access to the past: fear and shame overshadow his life and his family, especially his son’s childhood and youth. When he was young, Andrés Lübbert could only sense that something was wrong with his father because of certain symptoms and gaps in the family story, not because his father (or his mother) told him what happened.

### ***Bonds of loyalty***

The family could be considered crucial in such situations because it becomes a site where ‘communicative memory’ organises the ‘affective ties that bind together families, groups, and generations’ (Assmann 2008, 2011). This communicative memory then operates actively to build and preserve what Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark call ‘invisible loyalty’, that is, ‘invisible but strong fibers which hold together complex pieces of relationship “behavior” in families as well as in larger society’ (1984, 39). In short, family memories with their gaps, justifications and silences operate as the cement that binds the group together in families of perpetrators.

Although *My Nazi Legacy* avoids probing into the deeper dynamics of the family’s way of thinking, Horst and Niklas constitute a perfect representation of two opposing approaches to allegiance within the family: acceptance and denial. On the one hand, Horst represents a remarkable example of blind family loyalty. We have already noted his recollections of a happy childhood in a perfect family while looking at family albums. In the public conversation between the three protagonists in London, Horst remarks: ‘I felt it’s my duty as a son to put things straight with my father’. But there are also indirect signs of the important role his mother plays in the construction of the family narrative, when he reports on his mother’s unrelenting support for Nazism. Her attitude becomes clear when, confronted by Allied Forces after the end of the war, she readily admitted to having been a Nazi. The manner in which her son tells this anecdote also implies that he takes pride in her steadfast commitment to what, essentially, appears to be an unwavering family conviction that Nazism was an ideology worthy of positive commemoration. On the other hand, Niklas’s view constitutes a clear refutation

of family loyalty. As Sands notes in one of their conversations, Niklas ‘didn’t like to miss any opportunity to attack his father and to do so publicly’. Throughout the film, Niklas talks about the absence of love in his family and between their parents. Indeed, whatever familial affection the perpetrator’s son feels is directed at his beloved nursemaid, Hilda. ‘Everything that is human in me,’ he says, ‘came from Hilda, not from my mother’.

Although there are characters in other films who uphold the family narrative as Horst does, like the filmmaker’s sister in *2 or 3 Things I Know about Him*, in the post-perpetrator generation it is more common to find family members who challenge it and sometimes flatly reject it. Such outright rejection is common in those cases where the ancestor’s involvement was more direct, as expressed by the five interviewees in *Hitler’s Children* or the protagonist of *El hijo del cazador*. In the latter film, Luis Alberto Quijano repeatedly disavows his family ties in terms similar to those we hear from Niklas in *My Nazi Legacy*: neither his father nor his mother behaved feelingly towards their son and neither of them is free of guilt.

However, the first-person documentary films offer more complex positions in relation to family loyalty. Robles, Corbacho and Orozco accept a more complicated situation because, as Orozco suggests, ‘the link cannot be destroyed, it is transformed’. None of the filmmakers can reject family loyalty outright but none can accept it either, so they examine the family narrative in order to understand what happened and to change those ‘strong fibres’ of invisible loyalty, viewing it as the only way to heal their families. In other words, they break the pact of silence regarding the past of their perpetrator ancestors and, in doing so, force themselves—and their own relatives—to deal with this unpleasant family legacy.

Indeed, the fact that these films adopt a position that interrogates family loyalty produces tensions in the family fabric for post-perpetrator generations. Because the family narrative fails to convince the perpetrators’ offspring, the filmmakers have to dig for the truth themselves. As the granddaughter of the victim of Francoist repression suggests to Robles in *Apuntes para una herencia*, he probably started his investigation because he rejected the story his family clung to, and so, just like she had, he began searching for the truth on his own.

Perhaps the most explicit example of this interrogative position can be found in *El pacto de Adriana*. The film starts by introducing the filmmaker, her family and her beloved

and admired aunt, Adriana, who lives in Australia. When the whole family went together to pick up Adriana from the airport, Orozco remembers waiting anxiously for her turn to 'hold her'. But the last time the family went to pick Adriana up, they were confronted with the striking sight of her being arrested by the police. Although the filmmaker at first thought that there had been some mistake, her family's silence led her to realise that there was more to the story. Finally, she discovered that her aunt 'never really worked for the air force as I was always told. Instead, she was part of DINA'.

At this point the filmmaker becomes aware of the shadows that loom over her family: 'I delved into my aunt's past and came face-to-face with the dark history of my country, a side that my family had never shown me'. This revelation is what drives Orozco's investigation and her quest for the truth: she interviews former co-workers of Adriana, as well as various specialists who confirm her aunt's direct involvement in atrocities. As a result of her narrative journey, the filmmaker shifts from family loyalty to rupture with her aunt and a re-evaluation of her family bonds. The last sequence is truly eloquent in this sense: while we hear Orozco's voice-over explaining how she has changed and how her aunt deceived her, we see her grandmother looking at a computer screen, watching the last Skype call between the filmmaker and Adriana, a call marked by Adriana's hostility towards her niece. In the end, Orozco asks her grandmother if she wants to talk about it. By way of an answer, she gives her granddaughter a big hug, and the screen fades to black. With the filmmaker's voice-over talking about the need for healing, the film's ending suggests that the family fabric has been partially restored by Orozco's investigation.

### ***The family narrative vs. the historical evidence***

The filmmaker's awakening also reveals the relevance of historical evidence as one of the main instruments for challenging the family narrative: post-perpetrator generation documentary films usually bring 'these two institutions of memory' (Luhmann 2011, 120), i.e., family memory (communicative memory) and collective memory (cultural memory), into conflict. Personal archives, pictures, home videos, photographs and testimonies, are contrasted against historical evidence: public archives, incriminating documents, and voices of authority like witnesses and historians.

As noted above, such historical evidence becomes an important tool for disabusing those who deny their ancestor's involvement in the atrocities. Indeed, Horst's insistent denial in *What Our Fathers Did: A Nazi Legacy* is based on his refusal to recognise



such evidence: the absence of any document signed by his father allows him to reject any question of his culpability. Despite the overwhelming succession of documentary evidence presented by Sands and corroborated by Frank, Horst takes refuge in the fact that his father was never officially sentenced ('all the guilty ones have been judged', he argues) and in incidental details that he thinks exonerate his father, such as the fact that an order for a particularly gruesome killing bore not his but his assistant's signature, or the fact that there is no clear evidence of his father's physical presence at a particular killing site.

But the efforts of the post-perpetrator generation to confront family memory with collective memory has deeper significance for them, as Luhmann has highlighted with respect to post-Nazi documentary films. Extending Luhmann's reflections, we can say that every post-perpetrator generation documentary film 'constitutes an attempt to make families engage with historical evidence so as to reconsider familial memories' (2011, 120). In this sense, second and third generation filmmakers are engaged in an ethical endeavour to heal the wounds revealed in the family narrative and to re-engage that narrative with history.

Their responsibility to future generations also includes their own family and their descendants. Perhaps the most explicit attempt at such family healing can be found in Luis Alberto's reflection in *El hijo del cazador*. In contrast with some of the interviewees in *Hitler's Children*, like Bettina Göring, who changed her surname to end the family line, Luis Alberto feels that his father's guilt should not destroy the family legacy. He remembers when he denounced his father and 'they offered to change my last name and I said no because the last name is very important to me. The fact that my father didn't honour it is a different story.' In other words, his father is viewed as a stain on the legacy, just one point in the long family timeline, but despite his actions, the Quijano surname will endure, 'cleansed' through her daughter because, as he says, he has effectively 'washed the shame of all this from him'. In other words, only by accepting the ancestor's culpability and reintegrating the family memory into history can future post-perpetrator generations overcome the guilt and shame. And in doing so, they are working together towards a healthy society.

## Conclusions

Although there are some differences between the recent documentary films that we have classified here as ‘post-perpetrator generation documentary films’, a comparative and transcultural methodological approach has allowed us to identify several commonalities in this global trend, which shed light on issues of relevance to the field of perpetrator studies.

From a thematic point of view, responses from second and third generations to such legacies oscillate between rejection and acceptance. Those who deny the culpability of their relatives emphasise situational factors to explain their behaviour and to exonerate them. For example, Horst repeats insistently in *My Nazi Legacy* that his father was only following orders and even goes as far as suggesting that his father tried to help Jews escape the Nazis. Similarly, in cases where the subject is really more a collaborator than a perpetrator, situational factors are the most common excuses for denying culpability. César Robles’s son in *Apuntes para una herencia* thus clings to an argument similar to Horst’s: his father was just a person who ended up on the wrong side, an involuntary soldier who was taken by the rebels because he lived in a village controlled by them. However, most of the perpetrator’s offspring confront the legacy by accepting their relative’s responsibility: as Niklas states explicitly in *My Nazi Legacy*, situational factors cannot eliminate personal agency. In *Apuntes para una herencia*, Federico Robles offers a similar argument: he knows his grandfather’s choice to join the rebels was largely random, but he also knows that there were many others who changed sides because they rejected the Francoist ideology.

Another important outcome is that by accepting their relatives’ involvement, the perpetrators’ offspring are able to recover their personal identity, and also to reintegrate their personal experience into a broader historical context. Indeed, the social sphere is an important focus in post-perpetrator generation documentary films, because a major part of the perpetrators’ legacy involves social responsibility. It is a responsibility to the past, but especially to the future: concern for future generations is the ethical motivation of the post-perpetrator generation.

In this sense, the pedagogy of horror is a crucial key for post-perpetrator generation documentary films. Niklas warns us about what happens when democracy collapses;

Orozco calls on future generations to find the pieces of a puzzle that she can't complete; and Quijano explains that he denounced his father so that his daughter would not have to feel ashamed about her grandfather's actions.

But the intensity of this social concern shared by post-perpetrator generation documentary films depends on the distance—temporal and emotional—from the events. Because of the immediacy of the events and blood ties of direct offspring, the second generation may have problems connecting their relationship with the legacy to a broader social context. As Robles' sister suggests in *Apuntes para una herencia*, a defence mechanism keeps you from digging too much into your father's history. However, the third generation can expand the focus to social responsibility because they are further removed from the events and the familial bonds exert less pressure on them. *70 y pico* is the most representative documentary in this sense: Corbacho's film examines the political-ideological conflict during the '60s and '70s in Argentina as the only way to contextualise and understand his grandfather's ties to the repressive dictatorship.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that family bonds play an important role in the responses of the perpetrator's offspring. In fact, whether the descendants accept or reject the legacy, post-perpetrator generation documentary films always adopt a position that interrogates the family narrative. Contrasting the family memory with historical pieces of evidence thus becomes the main instrument for challenging the 'strong fibres' of invisible loyalty. Besides disabusing those who deny their forebear's culpability, this confrontation allows second and third generations to re-connect their own family narrative with history. Quijano's decision not to change his surname despite his father's actions is one of the clearest examples of the reintegration of family memory into history in the recent post-perpetrator generation documentary film.

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<sup>1</sup> See Daniela Jara's 'Haunting Perpetrators and Cinema Production in Post-dictatorial Chile' and Lior Zylberman's 'Against family loyalty: documentary films on descendants of perpetrators from the last Argentinean dictatorship' in this special issue.

<sup>2</sup> The relationship between such political contexts is complex: Latin American authoritarian regimes in 20th Century can't be considered as direct copies of Nazism, Italian fascism or Francoism (Payne 1980; Trindade 1982). In fact, Chilean and Argentine past analysed here are painful examples of dictatorship waves across Latin-America during the 60s and 70s as a result of Cold War and active interferences of the US in order to avoid communism influence. Nevertheless, European totalitarian ideology played an important role in Latin American dictatorships taking place during the 30s (Malloy 1977; Costa Pinto 2019), as well as those following the Brazilian coup d'état in 1964 (Cueva 1976; McConahay 2018). Chilean, Uruguayan or Argentine authoritarian regimes adopted numerous strategies from European totalitarian Regimes, especially related to structural violence as well as engagement of collaborators against dissidents. For more information about historical Chilean and Argentine contexts see Jara and Zylberman's articles respectively in this special issue.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to length limitations, the theoretical distinctions between the dimensions considered in our analysis (personal, family and social) is not addressed. Besides, all of them are complementary and interdependent, so the distinction made in this article has been for structuring purpose.

<sup>4</sup> Recent debates about perpetrators are moving beyond Raul Hilberg's differentiation in a 'victim, perpetrator, bystander' triad (1992), seeking instead to address the complexity of the 'grey zone' described by Primo Levy. In this sense, Rothberg's idea of 'modes of implication' (2019, 2) is a relevant factor for explaining the directions of subsequent generations' responses to their legacy.

<sup>5</sup> His father was subject to 158 charges of aggravated false imprisonment, 154 charges of aggravated torture, 98 charges of first-degree murder, 5 charges of torture leading to death, and 1 charge of abduction of a child under 10 years.

<sup>6</sup> The *montoneros* was a leftist urban guerrilla group active during the 60s and 70s that was subject to extreme repression under the Argentine military dictatorship.