¿DE QUÉN SON ESTAS MEMORIAS?:
LOS RUBIOS, MEMORY, AND HISTORY

Mary Beth Woodson, Film and Media Studies, University of Kansas

In April 2010 news media reported that Argentine courts had convicted and sentenced the last dictator to hold power during the country’s 1976-1983 military junta, which is known today for its gross human rights abuses. Immediately following the dictatorship’s fall, Argentine filmmakers began addressing the recent past and as time passed, a new generation of filmmakers began to break from the methods of these earlier filmmakers. Within this El nuevo cine argentino [New Argentine Cinema] (NAC) filmmakers, such as Albertina Carri, have attempted to find thoughtful approaches to presenting their personal and national history and memory. Using a non-traditional documentary style in her 2003 film Los rubios [The Blonds], Carri highlights the fallibility of memory and “official” narratives of history and what such fallibility means for children of la guerra sucia [the Dirty War], such as herself.

In 1955 Argentina’s military overthrew Juan Domingo Perón, in office since 1946. Perón went into exile, his party was banned, and the military remained in power for almost twenty years. Then, in March of 1973, the country elected Peronist Hector Campora as president, but he resigned only six months later. Perón, who had returned to Argentina earlier in the year, became president that September; he ruled for less than a year, because he died in 1974. Perón’s wife, Isabel Martínez, served as his successor and her time in office was marked by unrest and increasing repression. On March 24, 1976 the military, led by General Jorge Videla, again seized power. Seven years of dictatorship followed, during which the government waged a war of fear on the populace in what is now known as the Dirty War. As Susana Kaiser explained, “The systematic abduction, torture, and killing of [alleged] activists, as well as the kidnapping of babies born in the torture chambers, characterized the reign of terror imposed by the military juntas.” Weakened by several factors, including the Falklands/Malvinas War, the dictatorship finally fell in 1983 with the election of Raúl Alfonsín. Under Alfonsín the Comisión Nacional para la Desaparición de Personas [National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons] (CONADEP) investigated the desaparecidos, or disappeared people, released its findings as Nunca más [Never Again], and brought charges against some of the dictatorship’s
military officials. However Alfonsín’s government also approved laws that provided the military with impunity. In 1986 Ley de Punto Final [Full Stop Law], Law No. 23492, went into effect, which allowed a statute of limitations for military personnel. And in 1987 Ley de Obediencia Debida [Law of Due Obedience], Law No. 23521, acquitted military officials “on the basis that they were obeying orders.” Therefore many of those responsible were not held accountable for their roles in the dictatorship’s violence and repression and returned to “normal” life.

Under the dictatorship filmmaking in Argentina declined due to reasons including state censorship and lack of funding. The situation differed from other arts that, while limited by permissible topics, did not require sums of money as large as those often spent to create a film. David William Foster notes that due to the exaggerated decline of filmmaking, the artform “gathered momentum in Argentina after the return to democracy constituted a newly defined cultural component…. In this sense, film production was more closely coterminous with the process of redemocratization than were other cultural manifestations, lending it a greater symbolic aura.” Argentine films made during the redemocratization of the 1980s that dealt with the dictatorship tend to contain several common characteristics. One such characteristic, or cultural code, as Fernando Reati notes, is the equation of reason with violence and passion with the victims of that violence. Filmmakers also repeatedly used the motifs of a blindfold, hood, or similar “blinding” accessory in costuming and small, enclosed spaces to “refer to [both] the historical reality of the secret detention camps where dissidents were tortured and killed, [and] also, in a broader sense, to oppression in contemporary life.” Less tangible but still a common theme was the use of allegory to provide a second meaning to the surface story; to some extent filmmakers and other artists used this form to provide deeper meanings for their works during the dictatorship.

Examples of films made during redemocratization include María Luísa Bemberg’s Camila (1984) and Luis Puenzo’s La historia oficial (1985). Camila is a lavish costume drama based on the true nineteenth-century story of Camila O’Gorman, the daughter of wealthy supporters of Juan Manuel de Rosas, who was the Buenos Aires province Governor from 1829-1832 and 1835-1852. During his second time in office, Rosas demanded absolute power and it was not uncommon for opponents to be imprisoned, exiled, or...
killed. In 1852 Rosas was overthrown and went into exile in Southhampton, England. Camila fell in love, ran away with, and became pregnant by her confessor priest, Ladislao Guitérrez, who was also from a well-connected family. The couple ultimately was found, imprisoned, and executed by the military; Rosas political opponents used the affair to propel their campaign against his government. Although set in the 1800s and utilizing the melodramatic genre, *Camila* is easily read as a commentary and critique of Argentina’s more recent past through the film’s themes and motifs. Broadly Camila and Ladislao are brutally punished for defying the authorities in a way poignantly reminiscent of the treatment of the disappeared, especially that of expectant mothers. Furthermore the passionate Camila becomes the victim of both a calculating government, in the guise of both Church and State, and a coldly rational father. Camila’s father supported the repressive state leader from a position in the upper class that was secure under that leader. Camila’s father represents those who were bettered by and worked with the junta. The lovers are led to their death in the film’s last scene, and Camila is blindfolded for the second time. Here she wears a black blindfold in contrast to a white one worn earlier when she first meets Ladislao during a game of blind man’s bluff. Also in the last scenes the military soldiers confine the couple to small spaces—holding cells and, ultimately, the coffin—again in direct reference to the 1976-1983 dictatorship’s detention centers.

These literal spaces are not the film’s only enclosures, for Camila’s pre-Ladislao lifestyle also confines her. She attempts to escape, or at least rebel against, that confinement several times. For example she frequents a bookshop where the seller provides her with banned reading materials. Through the character of the bookseller, Bemberg creates another link between the film’s nineteenth-century era and the recent dictatorship. During the night faceless men on horseback ride through the streets as they shout, “Long live the Federation!” The bookseller’s head is found the next morning spiked on a gate outside of the church. It would not be difficult for an Argentine audience to recognize these motifs and to connect “Rosas’s *mazorca* (cut-throat) gangs of state terror...[with] the anonymous killers in the dirty war, in their unmarked Ford Falcons.” Bemberg commented that *Camila* was received so well in Argentina because it gave audiences a chance to explore both the “roots of repression in Argentine history” and their own recent past.8
John King notes that both *Camila* and *La historia oficial* “allowed the Argentine audience a form of collective catharsis, enabling them to experience, in public, emotions that had remained private during the years of the dictatorship.” \(^9\) *La historia oficial* depicts the dictatorship’s last days during March 1983. Over the course of the film Alicia, an upper-class history teacher, awakens to the reality of what is happening around her and to her family’s involvement and complicity with the dictatorship. Alicia has lived comfortably through the terror. Her husband Roberto, a businessman who supported the military junta and was thus rewarded, worked hard to provide Alicia with a lush lifestyle. Like Camila’s father in *Camila*, Roberto represents those who benefited from the repressive leadership. By the film’s end Alicia is no longer naïve of her family’s benefits from the junta’s actions. Roberto, who always knew the inhumanity of the junta’s practices, scrambles to save himself as the professionals above him begin to pass the guilt onto others in order to save themselves. As the junta’s power wanes, those in exile begin to return, including Alicia’s school friend Ana who fled following her abduction and subsequent release. One night, amongst other “girl talk,” Ana confides in Alicia and tells her about the torture, rape and fear that she experienced when she was abducted; again this experience involved being hooded. For the audience Ana represents both those who were taken and returned alive as well as the almost 30,000 who were taken and did not return. Ana’s story becomes one of the forces that sets Alicia on a road of inquiry, a road that converges at her own daughter, Gaby.

Early in the film viewers learn that Alicia could not have a child. One day Roberto brought Gaby home with little explanation of the child’s origins. Through her investigations Alicia realizes, almost certainly, that Gaby is a child of the disappeared. While at the hospital in an attempt to gather more information, Alicia meets Sara, whose daughter and son-in-law were among the disappeared. The women meet later in a café and Sara shows Alicia a picture of her daughter; the resemblance to Gaby is unmistakable. When Alicia confronts Roberto about Gaby, Roberto quickly and viciously snaps. He resorts to physical abuse in order to force answers from Alicia, an action which links him even closer to the cruel junta that he supported. *La historia oficial* closes on a shot of Gaby sitting in a rocking chair at her grandparents’ home and waiting for Alicia and Roberto. She sings “*En el país de Nomeacuerdo*” [“In the Land of I-Don’t-Remember”], a song by children’s singer Maria Elena Walsh, who was censored during the 1976-
1983 dictatorship. It is unclear what will happen to Gaby and, in this regard, she represents Argentina’s uncertain future after the Dirty War. Gaby also symbolizes the children of the disappeared. Stephen Hart argues that an early scene of Gaby’s birthday party strengthens the link between the fictional character of Gaby and the real-life children she represents. The children, especially Gaby, become upset when a magician sticks a rabbit with a pin when performing a trick. Hart explains, “This is a displaced image of the torture of [Gaby’s] parents, which exists, as it were, in her subconscious; later this idea is reinforced when the boys break into her bedroom, playing war games.”

If Gaby, a fictional child of the disappeared, has an uncertain future, so too do the children whom she represents. As Roberto’s brother Enrique points out during a family gathering, it is the children, both those of the disappeared and those who were “simply” children at the time, that will have to pay for both the dictatorship’s actions and the financial gain of its supporters. He asks Roberto, “Do you know who lost it [the war], brother? Entire generations of kids, kids like mine! Against them you won... They’re going to pay those dollars that were stolen from them.” Enrique’s description “kids, kids like mine” underlines that Roberto’s “kid,” Gaby, is not like his own children. And while Enrique directly addresses monetary payment, it may easily be said that the children also have had to pay psychologically, through attempting to cope with the past.

These attempts to cope and remember permeate the experience of those who were children during the dictatorship. In her work with Argentine society’s “gray zone”—youths who were either very young during the dictatorship or born just after democracy’s return—Susana Kaiser employs the notion of postmemory to address the experiences of these approximately fifteen to twenty-two year olds. Postmemory, as defined by Marianne Hirsh, refers to “second-generation memory characterized by displacement and belatedness.” Gathered from a previous generation, these memories are “instilled from the recollection of others. The stories they were told by parents, teachers, and the communication media—broadly defined to include television, film, songs, or demonstrations—are the elements with which young people have reconstructed their representations of this past.”
Through a series of interviews and group discussions, Kaiser studied how those of the “gray zone” coped and continue to cope with Argentina’s past. She explored a variety of topics, such as the way “media...transmit[ted] and reconstruct[ed] the events of the dictatorship,” and she included film in her discussion. Respondents mentioned the film *La historia ofcial*, which they generally felt illustrated ignorance, on the general public’s part, of what happened during the *proceso*, or *el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* [National Process of Reorganization]. This process was the goal of the dictatorship and was used as a name for the dictatorship itself. From their comments Kaiser notes:

This film could reinforce the belief in society’s ignorance and serve to calm any remorse for not having done anything, therefore discouraging the questioning of past roles. In other words, it can be a tool for a collective self-deception process, or a reconstruction of the past to defend a positive self-image of an uninformed and innocent society: we did not know, therefore we have no responsibility.

Another film that respondents discussed at greater length was Héctor Olivera’s *La noche de los lápices* [The Night of the Pencils] (1986). While, like Bemberg and Puenzo, Olivera worked during redemocratization, his film more vividly and directly depicts the terror surrounding the abduction of a group of high school political activists on September 16, 1976. Within Kaiser’s study group “many...indicated that they had learned about the dictatorship through this film (as 74.7 percent of 500 college students answered to a survey poll conducted at the University of Buenos Aires).” The participants’ responses suggest that *La noche de los lápices* was better received than *La historia ofcial* due to its subject matter and presentation. However, from Kaiser’s analysis, it would appear that both played a role in the creation of this group’s concept of the past, or postmemory.

Kaiser did not ask interviewees only about media. She also asked participants about those directly represented by *La historia ofcial’s* Gaby, the children of the disappeared. She examined organizations founded on behalf of these children including *Hijos y Hijas por la Identidad y Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio* [Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence] (*HIJOS*). This organization includes children of the
disappeared, children of those who went into exile, and those of murdered political activists. Members of HIJOS created their own response to the impunity and circumstances arising from “Full Stop” and “Due Obedience.” Like other similar groups, such as Madres de Plaza de Mayo [Mothers of the May Plaza] and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo [Grandmothers of the May Plaza], HIJOS has been both highly visual and highly vocal in their activities. As part of their activities to fight impunity and bring awareness about former torturers, HIJOS instituted a form of protest known as escraches. Kaiser explains:

_Escraches _[was] a communication strategy based on public exposure and humiliation, whose goal was to eliminate or limit the societal space that represores [repressors] have gained. They [are] a metaphysical repossession of the streets by freeing them from these criminals presence....For HIJOS, “escrachar” is “to reveal, to make public the face of a person that wants to go unnoticed.”

These escraches include large marches and gatherings that enter neighborhoods in which the represores, a “generic term for previously state-licensed torturers, assassins, and their accomplices” during the Dirty War, live. The activist marchers sing, chant slogans, carry banners, and pass out fliers that alert the community to the presence of a person-in-question, what they did during the dictatorship, and other such information. Members of the group “then ‘mark’ the torturers’ homes by painting slogans on sidewalks and walls. Red paint—symbolizing blood—is usually thrown at the building.” Members of HIJOS advertise the escraches via paper advertisements, fliers, and on the organization’s website. Through such activities, HIJOS constantly keeps the 30,000 disappeared in the public’s eye. Or, in other words, “HIJOS has asked society: Now that you know, what are you going to do?” HIJOS also worked to shape the community’s memory regarding both the disappeared and the Dirty War in general. One of Kaiser’s interviewees “linked [the] escraches with their role as prods to social memory.... In her words: ‘It has to do with memory, so people know.’”

_HIJOS, as well as Madres de Plaza de Mayo and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, are not the only forces that challenge the government’s “official” version of history and memory. Events during the 1990s and early 2000s have done
so as well. International courts took steps to prosecute those protected by Argentina’s amnesty laws. For example during the 1990s, Spain responded to the disappearance of Spanish citizens in Argentina during the junta by prosecuting those responsible. And France condemned, in absentia, Naval officer Alfredo Astiz for the disappearance of two French nuns, who disappeared while working in Buenos Aires in the late 1970s. The Argentine court brought charges against members of the junta in connection with the disappeared children in 1998; this aspect of the junta’s activities was not covered under the impunity laws. Finally in August 2003, the Argentine Congress, under President Néstor Kirchner, annulled both “Due Obedience” and “Full Stop” impunity laws that the Supreme Court subsequently nullified in November 2005, opening the way for future trials.

During this period of the 1990s and early 2000s, Enrique’s prediction in *La historia official*—that the children would pay for Roberto’s and other members of society’s profit from the dictatorship—came true. The rickety economic structure engineered by General Jorge Videla and the other junta leaders was already shaky when democracy returned. Recession, strikes, International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans, and slipping credit ratings over the next twenty years, led to the 2001 freezing of Argentine’s personal savings accounts and to the 2002 suspension of banking and international trade. The nation defaulted on IMF and World Bank loans that same year, the largest default on a loan in world history.

It should not, however, be automatically assumed that these economic difficulties spelled death, or even a dramatic decrease, for the nation’s film community. Starting in the mid-1990s, filmmakers began to produce works that were labeled *El nuevo cine argentino* [New Argentine Cinema] (NaC), *Las películas argentinas jóvenes de éxito* [Young Argentine Film Successes], and *El nuevo cine independiente argentino* [New Independent Argentine Cinema]. A variety of reasons lead to the high production numbers despite the nation’s economic problems. One of these is the large increase in film schools and formal training opportunities within Buenos Aires and several other Argentine cities. Other factors include “the availability of new digital technology...which facilitate independent production; the new Cinema Law which practically completely subsidises [sic] national production; [and] the acceptance and respect created in international markets, particularly France and Spain, which has enabled a good number of coproductions.”
Background and funding are not the only differences between these new filmmakers and those working during and immediately after the dictatorship. Unlike those earlier filmmakers, younger filmmakers depict smaller stories of those who usually are marginalized rather than tackling the grand narratives or histories. Although more recent filmmakers do not present stories in the same way as their predecessors, Tamara Falicov notes, “This is not to say that these younger filmmakers are not grappling with social issues that affect the Argentine public. The difference is that their stories are told from a different standpoint, and they are not openly polemic or ideological.”

Guillermo De Carli also notes that unlike some earlier films, these New Argentine Cinema NAC films leave the viewer with an open ending. Rather pessimistically he states that in NAC films, “We get tales of melancholy, obvious violence, alienated looks at a society broken and destroyed. The capacity of the ‘well told story’ to transcend the telling of the tale doesn’t work: there is no revelation, no images of movement, no visions of the future. There is what there is.”

These newer films also differ from earlier ones technically as well as narratively. As previously noted, a greater amount of digital equipment is available to NAC filmmakers. They also “do not conform to the same classic styles of camera angles and cuts that earlier directors used, and they typically do not make genre films.”

One example of NAC filmmaking is Albertina Carri’s documentary *Los rubios* (2003), which combines the themes of history, memory, and the disappeared. The film includes a number of NAC characteristics. Most particularly it focuses on a smaller, more personal story, albeit one firmly placed within a larger national context. Through the film Carri documents her personal search for her parents, Roberto Carri and Ana María Caruso, who were abducted, tortured, and disappeared in 1977; the filmmaker was three at the time of her parents’ abduction. However much more occurs in the film than this description initially implies.

Within *Los rubios* three narrative strands twist and blend together. The first is that mentioned above, Carri’s search for information about her parents. During this thread Carri appears as herself while the actress Analía Couceryo also portrays Carri. Although Couceryo generally resembles Carri, viewers are left in no doubt that she is an actress. Within the film’s opening five minutes Couceryo introduces herself as an actress playing a role as she states,
“My name is Analía Couceryo. I am an actress in this film. I play the part of Albertina Carri.” The second narrative thread contains both Couceryo and Carri and is a documentary about the making of the first narrative strand. For example both Carri and her crew are onscreen when the filmmaker receives notice that the Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales [National Institute for Cinema and Audiovisual Arts] (INCAA) has denied her funding application. Carri is shown behind the camera filming the crew members reading the letter and, as they talk, Carri chimes in both on and off screen. These two narrative strands blur, especially in Carri’s few appearances within the first narrative, such as when Couceryo travels to the Center of Forensic Anthropology. The Center compiles genetic information used to “identify the corpses found in clandestine common graves, as well as those children who were taken” and given to other families. After the technician pricks Couceryo’s finger, Carri asks, “Aren’t you going to stick me?” The director addresses the technician because within the narrative strand of Carri searching for her parents, Couberyo’s DNA cannot yield the desired information. The technician then pricks Carri’s finger. A third narrative strand, employed less frequently and visually devoid of humans, uses toy figurines. While this third narrative provides commentary on the other two, it also emphasizes “the film’s theme of loss and trauma, as viewed through the eyes of a child.” For example in one sequence of this third strand, a couple drives a car down a dark road. A faceless UFO comes down and takes the car and the couple away; small blond figures are left behind to represent Carri and her two sisters.

Through the combination of these threads, as well as other self-reflexive and self-referential methods, viewers can not identify comfortably with Carri. For these reasons scholars Joanna Page and Gabriela Nouzeilles classify Los rubios as a “performative documentary,” which does not “actively promote identification and a straightforward response to the film’s content.” Nouzeilles notes that this type of documentary is:

Based on the idea of disavowal that simultaneously signals a desire to make a conventional documentary, and hence to provide an accurate account of a series of factual events, while also indicating the infeasibility of the documentary’s cognitive...
ambitions. Against the notion of transparency, it encourages a performative exchange between subjects, filmmakers and spectators.\textsuperscript{31}

Therefore the viewer, while not physically interacting with Carri or the others, will find it difficult to passively view the film without any mental engagement.

Within each of \textit{Los rubios}' three strands, lies a complex range of interactions between personal and national histories: Carri’s autobiography as well as that of her parents; the role of the disappeared and their children within Argentina’s 1976-1983 dictatorial period; and memory, again Carri’s, her generation’s, and Argentina’s. As Valeria Wagner notes, this film “raises the question of how historical discourse structurally mediates the perception of the everyday, and with it, the perception of oneself, of the past, and of memory.”\textsuperscript{32} Indeed it is difficult to separate history and memory from each other. In her attempt to address this complex relationship, Carri questions the way in which society has remembered the disappeared for the past twenty years. For example the \textit{INCAA} letter in \textit{Los rubios} notes that while the Carris’ story deserves to be told, the current script does not warrant the funds. Onscreen Carri and her crew interpret this reasoning as the \textit{INCAA} wanting the story told in their way. “As a film institute?” asks one of the crew. “No, as a generation,” Carri states. She continues, “They need this film, and I understand that they need it, but it is not my place to do it or I don’t feel like doing it.” This discussion relates to a later statement in the first narrative strand when Couceryo laments, “My parents’ generation, who survived terrible times, demand to be the protagonists of a story that doesn’t belong to them.”

Carri further depicts survivors and the memories that have created the “official” version of her parents through interviews conducted with neighbors, family members, and friends. One of these interviews early in the film depicts a woman who lived near the Carris when they were taken. The woman continuously states that she does not know anything and does not remember the family. Yet she contradictorily confesses that she remembers the children and is certain she was nice to them because she “helped people a lot.” All the while the neighbor clings to the idea of recognizing Carri’s name but not the now grown-up little girl who used to stay with her. In the
second “documentary about a documentary” strand she tells Carri, “If I saw her, I wouldn’t recognize her.” Later another woman recalls soldiers coming to her house. When she realized they were searching for the Carris, she pointed them to the correct residence. Although this means she, essentially, turned the Carris in, she seems to feel rather guiltless for her actions and is happy to appear on camera. Through these and other interviews, Carri gathers a variety of memories that often heroize her parents and, generally, do not really provide her with any tangible information.

While the interviews of these two women appear relatively clear in the film, many of the other interviews function as background noise. As Page notes, “Our access to many of the interviews is limited to scenes in which Analía [Courceryo, the actress portraying Carri], in the foreground, edits film notes on a laptop and replays recordings of interviews on a television screen placed firmly in the background, sometimes even obscured by her own body.” At times viewers cannot even see the screen, or at least not for the majority of the interview, and only hear the interviewee’s voice. In one such example Courceryo writes in a notebook while an unseen man speaks. Only after the camera focuses on the actress for an extended moment does she move and provide viewers a brief glimpse of the speaker. By often foregrounding Courceryo, Carri forces viewers to listen to what the various interviewees say and highlights the contradictions and the valorizing that occurs within their remembrances. While the interviews raise questions about the holes, reliability, and honesty of the shared memories, they also visually symbolize the idea of a second generation, and postmemory. The information Carri receives passes through someone else before reaching her, as she was only a young child at the time of her parents’ disappearance.

During several of the interviews, and when the filmmaker and crew visit the neighborhood in which the Carris lived when her parents were abducted, even the nickname “los rubios” becomes unreliable. Viewers learn that no one in the family had blond hair, and as Carri states, “It was obvious we weren’t from [the neighborhood]…. [It] must have been like that for my parents.” Therefore while Los rubios “evoke[s] the fictionalizing operations of memory, [it] also recalls the sharp social and political divisions, and the insidious processes of ‘othering,’ in operation at all levels of Argentine society during the dictatorship, from the discourse of the military regime to the self-protecting denunciations of the neighbour [sic] across the road.”

¿DE QUIÉN SON ESTAS MEMORIAS?
In the end, it was this “otherness” that gave the Carris away and made them stand out. This “othering” also “draws attention to the significance of the period during which the family was unidentified, ‘disappeared’ to the authorities and ‘disguised’ for the neighbors.” The phrase *los rubios* worked only from the neighbor’s viewpoint, skewing the remembered version of the family and events in a way that separates the real, abducted Carris from the outsider, or “other” Carris.

*Los rubios* ultimately deals with the absence created by Carri’s parents’ abduction and the inability of memory to address this absence adequately, largely because of the variability of both her memory and those she collects. Carri’s presentation of this absence does not provide closure for either her personal search or for the audience. Unlike other films that may, at least on the surface, provide answers, *Los rubios* does not. Instead the filmmaker “presents absence and loss as irreducible experiences which may not be eased through the process of ‘making a film about it’; nor are they experiences which may be generated through cinematic identification for the benefit of the spectator seeking a cathartic experience.” By not attempting to create a space for catharsis, *Los rubios* works in opposition to both *Camila* and *La historia oficial*, which do, or at least attempt to, provide a space for healing and coming to terms with Argentina’s past.

With Carri’s inspection on both a personal and wider level of how the disappeared are treated and remembered, her practices seem to parallel the activism of other children of the disappeared, such as those in *HIJOS*, especially because, as Joanna Page notes, her film “presents a generation that has been orphaned in more than one sense, given the incomplete work of memory and the all-too-hasty burials that have often characterized Argentina’s relationship with the more sordid events of its history.” However I conclude that this connection with members of *HIJOS* is not entirely the case. While *Los rubios* does not denounce the calls for justice or the actions of such groups, the film suggests a need to move forward. Instead of constantly recalling past actions, Carri questions the role and consequences of these memories. A series of scenes in the film’s closing sequence communicate this desire to move forward. After Carri and the film crew don blond wigs and leave a farmhouse, Couceryo walks away from the camera down a worn dirt road; she occasionally looks back at the camera and the viewer. Then Carri and the crew recreate the same action but they do not look back. It
would appear that, through the course of the film, this group has become a family—not one to replace that of Roberto Carri and Ana María Caruso, but a new form of family for the filmmaker. The creation of this new family, consisting of Carri and the film crew, neither negates the absence of Carri’s biological parents, nor does it suggest that she has forgotten or will forget them. Neither she nor Los rubios suggests that the absence left by all 30,000 desaparecidos will, or can be, negated by the various modes of memory—be they memorials, the actions of the children of the disappeared via HIJOS, or through processes such as filmmaking.

Carri’s questions do not attempt to erase her country’s recent history, but rather encourages the questioning of the “official” version of events. It would be foolhardy to disregard Argentina’s turbulent past and the 1976-1983 dictatorship. While Argentine films from the 1980s, such as Camila, La historia oficial, and La noche de los lápices explored the recent past, Carri pushes further and explores memories of that past, such as those of the younger generation’s “gray zone.” She examines the role of the desaparecidos in modern Argentina and the role of people, such as herself, who are the children of the disappeared. Through Los rubios Carri suggests both approaching the past in a different way, as well as turning more toward the future.

MARY BETH WOODSON is a Ph.D. Candidate in Film and Media Studies at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Her dissertation work focuses on memory and the environment in film. Woodson currently works with Tamara Falicov, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair of Film and Media Studies, University of Kansas.

NOTES:
2 Kaiser, Postmemories of Trauma, 3.
3 Ibid., 6. Kaiser goes on to note that the latter of these went against earlier international rulings, “the Nuremberg Trials established that this [Due Obedience] was in violation of international law and refused defenses based on superior orders.”


6 Foster, 11.


9 King, 96.


11 Quoted in Foster, 52.


13 Ibid., 173.

14 Kaiser, *Postmemories of Trauma*, 147.

15 Ibid., 157.

16 Ibid., 157.


18 Ibid., 500.

19 Ibid., 511.

20 Ibid., 506.


26 de Carli, 40. Although at times de Carli seems positive about NAC, he also is pessimistic or disapproving of it, as if he would either prefer clear-cut and non-thought provoking films or a return to an earlier style. While de Carli seems negative about NAC’s view of a broken society, “to [director Carlos] Sorín, his country’s new movie industry is the product of a crisis, of a disintegrated country trying to get a hold of itself with a strong tendency toward realism.” In other words NAC came from the society it depicts and, therefore, depicts a larger problem. María Alejandra Gutiérrez, “Bountiful Rebound of Argentine Cinema,” *Américas* 56, no. 3 (2004): 26.


¿DE QUIÉN SON ESTAS MEMORIAS?

32 Wagner, 155-156.
33 Page, 32.
34 Ibid., 35.
35 Wagner, 175.
36 Page, 34.
37 Ibid., 36.