

# Mapping Public History of Education in Spain: The Treasure Trove of Documentaries

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**ABSTRACT:** The documentary or non-fictional film is a powerful means of dissemination and communication with audiences, making it a cultural product that plays an important part in the construction of a country's public history. And yet, this research source has been absolutely neglected by historians of education. In this study we offer the first systematic study of documentaries of a historical-educational nature to be carried out in the field of Spanish historiography. Our study consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the exploration of the concepts of «documentary» and «historical documentary» from the perspectives of filmmakers, spectators, institutions, and films itself, the last being specifically related with the taxonomy of documentaries coined by Bill Nichols. In the second part we focus on historical-educational documentaries made in Spain between 1976 and 2023, describing the contextual and conceptual characteristics of these documentaries and comparing them with a set of categories that are derived from our explorations in the first part of this article. The preliminary results of our investigation yield a descriptive inventory of 73 documentaries, this being a novel contribution, given that no such catalogue has ever been published. Our

initial analysis of these documentaries, which focused on plainly observable categories – for example, release date, funding sources, directors and producers, duration, language, classic narrative techniques and so on –, allowed us to come to some initial conclusions regarding the role played by documentaries in the Spanish public history of education and to outline our subsequent lines of research.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Public History of Education; Documentaries; Civil War; Spain.

### 1. *Documentaries in History and History Documentaries*<sup>1</sup>

What we have come to call a «documentary» did not appear as a distinctive method of filmmaking at any given moment in the cinema's history. It did not suddenly become manifest as a new conception of film in any particular production. Rather has documentary evolved over a period of time for materialist reasons; partly as the result of amateur effort, partly through serving propagandist ends, partly through aestheticism<sup>2</sup>.

This text by Paul Rotha, the well-known British documentary filmmaker and film-historian, diverges from the accepted narrative that attributes the «invention» of the notion of the «documentary» to an article published by Rotha's close collaborator, John Grierson, in 1926<sup>3</sup>. Many authors support this thesis of Rotha's and believe that what would eventually become known as the «documentary» evolved gradually between 1894 and 1922, finally emerging «as an original model distinct from all other types of motion pictures», its particular features being those of having «a clear social purpose, dealing with real people and real events<sup>4</sup>. French historiography, without going as far as to question the pioneering role played by Grierson in the use of the term in English, does take note of the growing popularity in France, going back to as early as 1907, of the category «photographie documentaire animée» as the cinematographic equivalent of the «photographie documentaire» captured by the first portable photographic cameras<sup>5</sup>. Recent Anglosaxon historiography goes even further, claiming that the adjective «documentary» was already being used widely in English-speaking contexts at the end of the nineteenth century<sup>6</sup>, as was the

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<sup>2</sup> P. Rotha, *Documentary Film. The use of the film medium to interpret creatively and in social terms the life of the people as it exists in reality*, London, Faber and Faber Ltd, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1951, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> *Flaherty's Poetic Moana by John Grierson*, in L. Jacobs (ed.), *The Documentary Tradition. From Nanook to Woodstock*, New York, Hopkinson and Blake, 1971, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> L. Jacobs, *Precursors and prototypes (1894-1922)*, in *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> C. Zéau, *Cinéaste ou propagandiste? John Grierson et «l'idée documentaire»*, «1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze. Revue de l'association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma», vol. 55, 2008, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> M. Stollery, *John Grierson's «First principles» as origin and beginning: the emergence of the*

«documentary tradition»<sup>7</sup>. Dutch historiography has also shown that around 1920 the term «documentaire» was used to label «non-fiction films, whether they be film reports, educational films, travel films or even industrial films»<sup>8</sup>.

If the concept of the «documentary» is hard to pin down, the concept of the specific category of the «historical documentary» is no easier to define. From its very invention, film showed great potential for representing and explaining historical events. One of the first film practices that sought to connect audiences with the past consisted in the use of archival film footage together with other indexical archive documents such as photographs and sound recordings. As early as 1898, the Polish film-maker Boleslaw Matuszewski argued for the value of films as historical sources and for their being accorded «the same authority, official existence and accessibility as other already well-established archives»<sup>9</sup>. However, it was not until the 1920s that preexisting film footage began to be used for creating new documentaries, giving rise to a new cinematographic genre for which film director Jay Leyda coined the term «compilation film» in 1964. While he was not especially keen on the term, he could find no better way to label the activity of cutting and splicing «already existing film shots [...] originated at some time in the past»<sup>10</sup>, which were reused to illustrate the new historical narratives being presented in the new documentaries. Some of the pioneering films from this genre came out of Soviet Russia, from directors who were sympathetic to the ideology of the socialist revolution, artistically aligned with the constructivist movement and were technical virtuosos in the art of montage and of Picasso's collage technology. One of these Soviet filmmakers, Esfir Shub, has generally been accepted – at least until recently – as the first director of a «compilation film». It was Shub who put together *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) from «chaotic heaps of unlabeled film reels abandoned in dank basements in Leningrad»<sup>11</sup>, which she herself discovered and salvaged, using the private film archive of the Czars to tell a new story about the triumphal birth of Communist Russia.

Some historians have identified «compilation film» with «historical documentary», acknowledging the pioneering role that Esfir Shub played in the cre-

*documentary tradition in the field of nonfiction film*, «Screen», vol. 58, n. 3, 2017, p. 310.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. Musser, *Problems in Historiography: The Documentary Tradition Before Nanook Of The North*, in B. Winston (ed.), *The Documentary Film Book*, London, BFI Palgrave/Macmillan, 2012, pp. 119-128.

<sup>8</sup> B. Hogenkamp, *The British Documentary Movement in perspective*, in W. De Greef, W. Hesling (edd.), *Image. Reality. Spectator. Essays on documentary Film and Television*, Leuven, Acco, 1989, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in J. Howard, *Afterword: «screening schoolhood»*, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. 47, n. 4, 2011, p. 559.

<sup>10</sup> J. Leyda, *Films Beget Films. A study of the compilation film*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1964, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> I. Shub Sharp, *Esfir Shub. Pioneer of Documentary Filmmaking*, New York, Bloomsbury Academia, 2022, p. 45.

ation of this type of film. Her narrative style, more than being defined, has been described: «In the most common form, a narrator (and/or historical witnesses or experts) speaks while we see recent footage of historical sites intercut with older footage, often from newsreels, along with photos, artifacts, paintings, graphics, newspaper and magazine clippings»<sup>12</sup>. This first approach to the historical documentary is made from the perspective of the filmmaker, and in order to get to know it we must discover just what history-telling the director has created; their control of pastness in the register of meanings; the practical differences and historiographical methodologies underlying the story; and the use that has been made of the indexical documents and images. Philip Rosen<sup>13</sup> has identified an interesting parallelism between the «modern historian» and the «documentary filmmaker» what for the former are «documentary artifacts», remains and traces of a past that shall never again be directly observable, are for the latter filmed images of the real world. If the «modern historian» constructs a rhetoric based not only on the pertinence of evidence from documents but also on the significance of historical sequences, the «documentary filmmaker» creates meanings in the same manner through the historical seriation of audiovisual documents that he or she has selected and assembled in accordance with an ideological project. The difference between document and documentary is the difference between temporality and sequentiation, but in both cases – the history written by the historian and the documentary edited by the filmmaker – the document goes under an interpretive transformation through its (re) contextualization.

Another way of approaching the historical documentary is from the perspective of the viewers or spectators. The audience's expectation is that the images as well as the sounds that they are perceiving in the documentary come from the world's past; as a result, they tend to believe unflinchingly everything shown on the screen. The observer takes for granted that the event shown has not been altered in any way during the filming and assembling process and believes that the events captured by the camera would have transpired in the same way had the camera not been there to film them. This helps to explain why the documentary creates a sensation of realism, arousing in spectators the illusion of bearing direct witness to history. This owes to the fact that most of the audience does not distinguish between the recognition of a historical reality, the understanding of the ways in which it is represented, and the interpretation conferred upon it by the documentary filmmaker. This is so because many viewers fail to appreciate the hermeneutic labor of the director or filmmaker while at the same time holding on to a naïve kind of faith in the authenticity and truthfulness of

<sup>12</sup> R.A. Rosenstone, *The Historical Film as Real History*, «Film-Historia», vol. 5, n. 1, 1995, <<https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/filmhistoria/article/view/12244/14998>> (last access: 10.11.2023).

<sup>13</sup> Ph. Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001, pp. 237-239.

the documents, especially if they are audiovisual. Jaimie Baron has explained the mechanisms of identification that spectators create with what she calls «appropriation films»<sup>14</sup>, a concept closely linked to that of «compilation films» and that serves to characterize all historical documentaries. Such films tend to be based on archival evidence, seducing the audience with claims of providing «rare archival footage» that has «never been seen before»<sup>15</sup>. This idea of «foundness» of the footage enhances its historical authority, «because what has been ‘found’ has not (ostensibly) been fabricated or shaped by the filmmaker»; thus, the promise of «rare archival footage» triggers in the observer «an epistemological seduction»<sup>16</sup>.

In his pioneering research (1994) on audience reception of historical documentaries, Dirk Eitzen concluded that the public assumed that they were authentic and «truthful»<sup>17</sup> and that they «expect to have an exciting or emotionally charged experience while watching historical documentaries. Viewers are particularly interested in imaginative or vicarious involvement in the lives of individuals in history»<sup>18</sup>. But some of the responses gathered by Eitzen differed markedly from what we would expect from professional historians. For example, a great many spectators affirmed that they had seen *Shoah*, a very long, horrific documentary about the Holocaust, because the film «truly reflects the ‘reality’ of the Holocaust» and «keeps the memory alive». Eitzen did not know quite what to make of the fact that the audiences harbored such expectations, which he considered wrong and misleading, «since both the text and the memories it supposedly keeps alive are merely compelling constructs-creations, representations, ‘fictions’». But he also found the observation by public historian Michael Frisch to be very compelling when Frisch calls attention to the rupture existing between history and memory in contemporary life. He proposes transforming the discourse of historical documentaries in such a way that it is «less about history than about how people remember it and relate it (or try not to relate it) to their own lives and to events of the present»<sup>19</sup>. Clearly Michael Frisch sensed, in 1981, that the focus of public history was rooted in the «prob-

<sup>14</sup> The author calls «appropriation films» «those films that, appropriating previously recorded textual material, give rise to the viewer’s experience of the “archive effect” – a sense that certain sounds and/or images within these films come from another time and served another function». J. Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*, London-New York, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> D. Eitzen, *When is a Documentary? Documentary as a Mode of Reception*, «Cinema Journal», vol. 35, n. 1, 1995, p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> D. Eitzen, «*Bringing the past to life*»: *The reception and rhetoric of historical documentaries*, Doctoral Thesis, Communication Studies (Supervisor: R. Altman), Iowa City, University of Iowa, 1994, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> D. Eitzen, *Against the Ivory Tower: An Apologia for «Popular» Historical Documentaries*, «Film-Historia», vol. 5, n. 1, 1995, <<https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/filmhistoria/article/view/12245/15000>> (last access: 10.11.2023).

lematic nature of historical consciousness in our culture» and that the best way to tackle it was by adopting «the process of historical memory itself as a subject for study, one capable of saying a great deal about how the past does or doesn't figure in our lives»<sup>20</sup>.

Michael Frisch's intuition would prove brilliantly prophetic, as shown by the so-called «memory boom» of the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which the most important work on historical documentaries has focused on what are known as «memory documentaries» or «films of memory». In tandem with this tendency, we have seen the consolidation of memory studies in the field of historiography, while socially this movement has been accompanied by the growth of a «culture of memory» which has freed documentaries from any pretension of objectivity; rather, they can be seen as a symbolic product built collectively that brings together subjective voices around a story that is interpreted with no limits<sup>21</sup>. The ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall defined «films of memory», as early as 1992, as those that use a variety of signs to connect viewers with their own memories and enable them to influence their own representations of the past, because «if memory itself is selective and ideological, films of memory redouble this and add further codes of cultural convention»<sup>22</sup>. While McDougall does not actually mention Maurice Halbwachs, with this observation he establishes the intentionality with which these documentaries seek to construct a collective memory. He also describes their narrative style: «They have coalesced to produce a cinematic sub-genre whose ritual ingredients are aging faces (usually of interviewees), fetish-objects from the past, old photographs, archival footage and music»<sup>23</sup>. Some memory documentaries adopt the historiographical approach of «history from below» or microhistory. These «micro-historical documentaries», as they are known, focus on bringing forth anonymous, ordinary or marginalized individuals who would never be found in the pages of history; on «underscoring the affective dimension, using autobiographical and essayistic perspectives, drawing on the protagonists' personal memories to reconstruct the past, and using family archives»<sup>24</sup>; and by developing the narrative technique based on «the frequent inclusion of testimonies by protagonists and witnesses»<sup>25</sup>, a way of eliciting the emotional identification of the spectators with the stories and actors. The anonymous source of the mem-

<sup>20</sup> M.H. Frisch, *The Memory of History*, «Radical History Review», n. 25, 1981, p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> R. Arnau Rosselló, *Images for the Interpretation of the Past. Uses and Abuses of Memory in Documentary Film*, «Quarterly Review of Film and Video», vol. 39, n. 2, 2022, pp. 464-478; Id., *Why remember? Representations of the past in non-fiction films: fabrication, re-construction and interpretation of the collective memory (s)*, «Studies in Documentary Film», vol. 16, n. 1, 2022, pp. 56-67.

<sup>22</sup> D. MacDougall, *Films of Memory*, «Visual Anthropology Review», vol. 8, n. 1, 1992, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> E. Cuevas, *New Paths for Exploring «History from Below»: Microhistorical Documentaries*, «Panoptikum», vol. 29, n. 36, 2023, p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

ory documentary has thus replaced the omnipresent narrator of the historical documentary<sup>26</sup>.

It is precisely this relationship between the testimonies and the audience that constitutes the central element of films of memory. Most of these films have their origin in traumatic historical experiences – wars, holocausts, dictatorships, repression, violence – and they attempt to depict the «transgenerational dimensions of memory»<sup>27</sup>, in other words, to show how the survivors of the first generation have transmitted and transmit their memories to the second and third generations who did not experience the events directly but who have a bond of their own with them through these inherited memories. In the 1990s Marianne Hirsch coined the concept of postmemory to describe «the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right»<sup>28</sup>. In the process, the personal testimonies shown in the memory documentaries take on an enormous symbolic weight; the spectator sees a witness who ratifies and substantiates what happened, whose words bring the past into the present and who «performs the act of evocation on the stage: there is at least one witness in front of the camera, addressing the spectator»<sup>29</sup>. This witness' narration, attitude, credibility, and communicative skills can help the younger generations overcome «the burdening chain of memory»<sup>30</sup>.

From the study of historical documentaries from the filmmaker's and from the spectator's points of view, we would like to move on and analyze them as texts, following the known taxonomy designed and perfected by Bill Nichols between 1983 and 2006. Despite some criticism, Nichols' system is widely accepted in academic circles, having shown its usefulness for identifying the narrative, textual and contextual elements that appear in a documentary and which Nichols called «modes of representation», which he defined as the shared conventions and characteristics of films belonging to the genre of documentaries. He describes six modes, which are neither historically consecutive nor exclusive, and which may even coexist in the same documentary<sup>31</sup>. They help the

<sup>26</sup> I. Sánchez Alarcón, A. Jerez Zambrana, *¿La memoria encontrada o la memoria inventada? Recursos narrativos y pautas de estilo de índole ficcional o subjetiva en los documentales históricos españoles recientes*, «Historia y Comunicación Social», vol. 18, special issue, 2013, pp. 304-305.

<sup>27</sup> J. Kortti, *War, transgenerational memory and documentary film: mediated and institutional memory in historical culture*, «Rethinking History», vol. 26, n. 1, 2022, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> M. Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, «Poetics Today», vol. 29, n. 1, 2008, p. 103.

<sup>29</sup> G. Aprea, *Puras palabras. Sobre algunos de los usos de los testimonios en los documentales argentinos que evocan el pasado reciente*, «Doc On-line», n. 22, 2017, p. 145. For the Chilean case see: A. Traverso, *Dictatorship memories: Working through trauma in Chilean post-dictatorship documentary*, «Continuum», vol. 24, n.1, 2010, pp. 179-191.

<sup>30</sup> J. Rüsen, *History. Narration, Interpretation, Orientation*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Nichols has recently described a seventh mode that is named «interactive», and defines the

researcher recognize patterns and conventions which are not rigid – they may change or be mixed together – but which afford us an exact view of «the negotiation that a society has with reality»<sup>32</sup>; in the case of historical documentaries, this is the relationship created with the historical world.

The *expository mode* represents the best example of the plot-based tradition, offering a clear linear structure whose persuasiveness, «far from being innocent, conceals options that include important ideological and political implications»<sup>33</sup>. Historical reality is presented within an historical framework that is easy to recognize, owing to the fact that the narrative reaches the spectator mainly through an authoritative and disembodied voiceover. This narrative strategy, also known as the «voice of God», «is construed as fundamentally unrepresentable in human form, connoting a position of absolutely mastery and knowledge outside the spatial and temporal boundaries of the social world the film depicts»<sup>34</sup>. It tends to be accompanied by three other legitimizing strategies: «expert speech», during which a series of experts on the topic speak about it while the documentary director uses techniques such as the «close shot» «to create an impression that the expert is directly addressing the audience»; an abundance of «archival and news footage», for the purpose of creating a sense of realism and authenticity; and the use of «expository intertitles», that is, graphic texts inserted with the images displaying statistics and phrases meant to evoke an emotional response from the viewers<sup>35</sup>. Owing to its didactic nature, this mode has generally been considered the most appropriate format for historical documentaries of a classic style.

The *observational mode* utilizes a rhetorical structure in which the images are meant to speak for themselves and show the spectator what occurred with no external narrative strategy like that used in the expository mode. The filmmaker is “invisible”, adopting a supposedly non-interventionist attitude and

«web-based documentaries» that enable the spectators «to make choices that alter what they see and hear. The filmmakers provide a database of material on a given subject and allow viewers to choose how they access it by interactive, digital means». We will not explain any further this new mode because Nichols did not discuss it either, «given its relative immature state».

We have followed the descriptions of the six established modes in B. Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2017 (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). It is an ebook, so it does not show page numbers. The modes are explained in chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>32</sup> S. Gaudenzi, *The Living Documentary: from representing reality to co-creating reality in digital interactive documentary*, Doctoral Thesis, Goldsmiths – Centre for Cultural Studies (Supervisors: Luciana Parisi and Matt Fuller), London, University of London, Academic Year 2012-2013, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> C. Moreno-Nuño, *Documentales sobre el 15-M: una modalidad plural para una revolución plural*, «Fotocinema. Revista Científica de Cine y Fotografía», n. 17, 2018, p. 133.

<sup>34</sup> Ch. Wolfe, *Historicising the «Voice of God»: The place of vocal narration in classical documentary*, «Film History», vol. 9, 1997, p. 149.

<sup>35</sup> Y. Hailing, Y. Ye, *Legitimation in documentary: modes of representation and legitimating strategies in «The Lockdown: One Month in Wuhan»*, «Visual Communication», July 20, 2021 (doi: 10.1177/14703572211015809).



seeming to abandon any attempt to control the documentary. The silent camera turns into a «fly on the wall», permitting an «unobtrusive and all-seeing eye on the world»<sup>36</sup>. There is a pretense that neutrality is guaranteed – after all, the camera cannot lie – and spectators are called upon to play a more active role, to see and interpret for themselves what is done and said in the documentary. Nichols pointed out that if this documentary mode reflected what occurred before the camera, then it could hardly represent historical events. And yet there are in fact many historical documentaries containing conventions typical of the observational mode; such is the case with those that Jaimie Baron has called «appropriation films», where rare, unknown archival footage is used and viewers are invited to participate in an immersive witnessing, one in which they are transported to a distant historical moment in their daily lives, experiencing an «archive effect».

The *participatory mode* is characteristic of films of memory in the way that its narrative style is developed through interviews, which often follow the tradition and practice of storytellers<sup>37</sup>. Their authority and legitimacy depend on witness testimony; the filmmaker uses cinematographic techniques such as the close shot in order to situate the interviewee squarely in front of the spectator and highlight the conversation with the historical protagonists. The mere presence of the interviewees is not enough; it also relies on «the variety of voices and opinions from multiple individuals that enhance our belief in the film's credibility»<sup>38</sup>. The previously mentioned film *Shoah* provides a classic example of this mode in its use of witnessing to give visibility to the evidence on extermination camps and converting each interviewee into a «historical document without references», «they understand their words are themselves documents»<sup>39</sup>.

The *reflexive mode* focuses on the act of representation and the process of filming, showing us how the documentary was made. As a narrative strategy, this mode tends to convince the audience of the representation's authenticity. In the case of historical documentaries, a common narrative tactic consists of filming the filmmaker and his team as they track down an archive, as they request and examine documents or sources, all of this meant to accentuate the drama and veracity of the story<sup>40</sup>. In the case of films of memory, it is common for the filmmaker to create an autobiographical documentary explaining his or

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Y. Chu, *The dogmatic documentary: the missing mode*, «New Review of Film and Television Studies», vol. 13, n. 4, 2015, p. 408.

<sup>37</sup> Infact the 2012 acclaimed documentary *Stories We Tell* (Canada), called the interviewees «storytellers» in the credits.

<sup>38</sup> B. Natusch, B. Hawkins, *Mapping Nichols' Modes in Documentary Film: «Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry» and «Helvetica»*, «The IAFOR Journal of Media, Communication and Film», vol. II, n. I, 2014, p. 118.

<sup>39</sup> P. Rabinowitz, *Wreckage upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory*, «History and Theory», vol. 32, n. 2, 1993, p. 129.

<sup>40</sup> J. Montero Díaz, M<sup>a</sup> A. Paz Rebollo, *Historia audiovisual para una sociedad audiovisual*, «Historia Crítica», n. 49, 2013, p. 178.

her personal process of the discovery and reconstruction of family memories while at the same time showing the complexities and contradictions of memory and intrafamilial relationships. It is their way of dealing with their postmemory and of helping others from their generation overcome the cultural shocks of a traumatic past that the previous generation transmitted to them<sup>41</sup>.

In *performative mode*, a documentary's subjective, emotional and expressive aspects are accentuated, while its quest for a greater degree of vividness brings it close to the tradition of acting, even bordering dangerously on fictional genre; for this reason it tends to be combined with conventions and patterns borrowed from the expository, participatory and observational modes. In the case of historical documentaries and films of memory, «the performative introduces a new honesty to documentary representation, one that acknowledges that non-fiction is always an enactment for the cameras»<sup>42</sup>. Faced with events and scenes for which there is no material documentation, the filmmaker resorts to the construction of narrative mechanisms of documentary fabulation, establishing a balance between fact and fiction channeled through performances. These performances have a very clear intentionality and can be best understood as «a stage for making up legends»<sup>43</sup>. Bill Nichols himself has explained the «mythologizing strategies» of a «fictive performance», which reconstructs, in the documentary *Roses in December*, Joan Donovan's final hours in El Salvador – her abduction, violation and execution – by means of a «performance of actors» that «would depart from the indexical compact that grounds the reception of documentary»<sup>44</sup>.

The *poetic mode* transforms historical material into a narrative far more abstract, metaphorical and lyrical, to the point that it may lose touch with historical reality. This mode, which tends to be associated with modernist and surrealist ideas from the 1920s, focuses more «on stylistic and technical aspects than on the actual representation of reality [...] and does not pretend that the space and time where the actions occur can be understood»<sup>45</sup>. Very little has been written on the narrative strategies that this mode has brought to historical

<sup>41</sup> S. Pridgeon, *Redirected utopias: the politics of self-reflexive autobiographical documentary in Albertina Carri's «Los rubios» and Ufuk Emiroglu's «Mon père, la révolution et moi»*, «Studies in Documentary Film», vol. 16, n. 1, 2022, pp. 68-82 and Ch. Govaert, *How reflexive documentaries engage audiences in issues of representation: apologia for a reception study*, «Studies in Documentary Film», vol. 1, n. 3, 2007, pp. 245-263.

<sup>42</sup> Stella Bruzzi quoted in I. Hongisto, *Soul of the Documentary. Framing, Expression, Ethics*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2015, p. 68.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>44</sup> B. Nichols, *History, Myth and Narrative in documentary*, in W. De Greef, W. Hesling (edd.), *Image. Reality. Spectator. Essays on documentary Film and Television*, Leuven, Acco, 1989, pp. 168 and 181.

<sup>45</sup> S. Villanueva Baselga, M. Pérez-Montoro, L. Sánchez, *The use of statistics to define taxonomies of film voices: a practical approach to documentary classification*, «Visual Communication», vol. 20, n. 2, 2019, p. 250.

documentaries and films of memory, although Bill Nichols has suggested that some voiceovers are poetic. Filmmakers may also experiment with avant-garde filmmaking in which the association of texts, images, archival footage, sounds, dramatic music and interviews has a more aesthetic than factual value; however, even when transformed or construed in a magical or fantastical manner, the source material still comes from the historical world<sup>46</sup>.

After studying historical documentaries from the filmmaker's, the spectator's, and the film's points of view, we will mention the fourth and final perspective, that of the institutional framework, which has a greater relevance than may often be thought *a priori*, given that «documentaries are what the organizations and institutions that produce them make», in other words, if a television channel or government agency «calls a program a documentary, then these items come labeled as documentary before any work on the part of the viewer or critic begins»<sup>47</sup>. John Grierson, in his last interview, also reflected upon this question, connecting documentary production with government sponsorship and the interests underlying this relationship. He anticipated and predicted a future in which documentaries would be made «really locally», where villagers would arm themselves with cameras, where we could see «the local film people making films to state their case politically or otherwise, to express themselves whether it's in journalistic or other terms»<sup>48</sup>. That future is here, now.

## 2. *Cartographying historical documentaries about Spanish education: The first catalogue*

In educational historiography the documentary film has clearly been used as a source for research. Among the first of these uses were those works derived from the project «Documentary Film in Educational Research: Producing Methodologies» (2009-2010), financed by the British Academy, which sought to ascertain just why documentary films «remain an under-used resource among historians of education» «despite the salient role they have played in depicting

<sup>46</sup> Bill Nichols gives some examples of documentaries that address a specific historical event but that have strong poetic qualities, as *Silence* (1998), a documentary that recalls the experience of the Holocaust of a little girl but is told mainly through animation. He also stresses the task of reworking amateur movies into historical documents, as happens in some Exodus documentaries of the 1990s. «The historical footage, freeze-frames, slow motion, tinted images, selective moments of color, occasional titles to identify time and place, voices that recite diary entries, and haunting music» imbues these films with a poetic style that makes him to include them inside this narrative style. B. Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> E. Sussex, J. Grierson, *Grierson on Documentary: The Last Interview*, «Film Quarterly», vol. 26, n. 1, 1972, p. 30.

schools and schooling since the 1930s»<sup>49</sup>. Through the study of non-fiction films set in and around schools<sup>50</sup> – i.e., *Children's Story* (Scotland, 1938), *Parques Infantis* (Portugal, 1945), *Pour la vie, par la vie* (Belgium, 1946-1947), *Le Jardin d'enfants à l'École Decroly* (Belgium, 1952-1953), *Ten Years On* (UK, 1976), and *The Primary* (UK, 2008) – the project incited reflection about the potential of school documentaries as a source for studying a specific historical period, as objects of research in themselves, and as documents that can be used in triangulation with other documents or sources. The final conclusion was that «the historian of twentieth century schooling has access to one of the richest sources for educational history, the documentary film»<sup>51</sup>. In Spain research has been carried out on documentary films, dealing with educational themes, that were made between 1914-1939 and 1939-1970, including different analyses of their content – ranging from the use of school spaces to the treatment of bodies in movement<sup>52</sup> – in which special attention is given to the way education is presented in propagandistic non-fiction films and newsreels such as the NO-DO<sup>53</sup>. There is a common thread to these works in the way that all of them analyze documentary films representing schools and education at a given moment of the twentieth century: the precise moment when each film was made. This fact confers on them the same historiographical status, as primary sources for research, that we attribute to documents from historical files and archives.

<sup>49</sup> P. Warmington, A. Van Gorp, I. Grosvenor, *Education in Motion: Uses of Documentary Film in Educational Research*, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. 47, n. 4, 2011, p. 458.

<sup>50</sup> A. Van Gorp, P. Warmington (edd.), *Education in Motion: Producing Methodologies for Researching Documentary Film on Education*, special issue, «Paedagogica Historica», vol. 47, n. 4, 2011, pp. 457-577.

<sup>51</sup> I. Grosvenor, «*Since it permits seeing the past directly, it will eliminate at least at certain important points, the need for investigation and study*»: documentary film and history of education, «Educatió i Història: Revista d'Història de l'Educatió», n. 31, 2018, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> E. Collelledmont, *Educar, una deriva del verb propagar. La representació de l'educació en els films del període de la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera*, «Temps d'Educatió», n. 53, 2017, pp. 245-268; P. Prat Viñolas, A. Gómez Mundó, J. Casanovas Prats, I. Carrillo Flores, N. Padrós Tuneu, E. Collelledmont Pujadas, *L'Educatió representada als documentals de propaganda a Espanya (1914-1939)*, «Educatió i Història: Revista d'Història de l'Educatió», n. 31, 2018, pp. 35-57; E. Collelledmont Pujadas, *Espacios vivenciados a través de los cuerpos representados en los documentales*, «Anuario de Historia de la Educación», vol. 21, n. 2, 2021, pp. 61-82.

<sup>53</sup> E. Collelledmont Pujadas, C. Vilanou Torrano (edd.), *Totalitarismos europeos, propaganda y educación: una historia visual desde los NO-DO*, Gijón, Trea, 2020; C. Vilanou Torrano, E. Collelledmont Pujadas (edd.), *Disciplinas educativas en regímenes totalitarios. Una historia visual desde documentales*, Gijón, Trea, 2022; M<sup>a</sup> D. Molina Poveda, *La educación a través del NO-DO (1943-1981)*, Doctoral Thesis (Supervisor: C. Sanchidrián Blanco), Málaga, University of Málaga, 2021; E. Collelledmont Pujadas, N. Padrós Tuneu, R. Cercós, *Images That Portray, Challenge, and Refuse: Visual Content and Education in Francoist Spain, 1939-1975*, in T. Allender, I. Dussel, I. Grosvenor, K. Priem (edd.), *Appearances Matter. The visual in educational history*, Berlín-Boston, de Gruyter, 2021, pp. 63-86; E. Collelledmont, N. Padrós, I. Grosvenor, *La memoria educativa de los documentales como confrontación a los pasados totalitarios*, «Historia y Memoria de la Educación», n. 16, 2022, pp. 77-103.

In this article, however, we turn our sights to a different kind of audio-visual product, one which film historians include in the category of historical documentaries, and whose characteristics we analyzed in the first section of this essay. We define these works as discursive manifestations that seek to construct, from a current-day perspective, an account of the past for the unequivocal purpose of reconfiguring our social imaginarium or contributing to the construction of a collective memory concerning the given historical period. The historical documentary incorporates work from the archive, the search for testimonies and the interpretation of data from the point of view of the author or filmmaker, whereas the historian plays the role «as the substitute of the footnote of the bibliographical references»<sup>54</sup>. One indisputable fact is that the historical period that far and away arouses the greatest passion and interest in present-day Spanish society is that of the Civil War (1936-1939), a subject that has led to the consolidation of a non-fiction film genre that includes works narrating the conflict as well as others dealing with the war's antecedents and consequences. A survey of the copious bibliography on Spanish historical documentaries reveals, among the hundreds of products studied and catalogued, very few with an educational theme. And just two of these – *Los niños de Rusia* (2001) and *Las maestras de la República* (2013) – were included in a more global study on the narrative strategy of Civil War documentaries<sup>55</sup>. Thanks to the fame of its director, Jaime Camino<sup>56</sup>, the first of these received more attention and generated more publications. Two other documentaries, *La doble vida*

<sup>54</sup> D. Genovès, *Historia, testimonio, relato e implicación: la problemática en la representación visual de la memoria colectiva*, in J.M. Caparrós Lera, M. Crusells Valeta, F. Sánchez Barba (ed.), *Memoria histórica y cine documental*, Barcelona, Edicions Universitat de Barcelona, 2015, pp. 129-130.

<sup>55</sup> M. Gómez Segarra, *Estrategias narrativas de los documentales históricos españoles sobre la Guerra Civil (2000-2014)*, Doctoral Thesis, Faculty of Informational Sciences (Supervisors: J. Montero Díaz and M.A. Paz Rebollo), Madrid, Complutense University, 2018; M. Gómez Segarra, F. Gil Gascón, *La presencia del presente en los documentales históricos españoles sobre la Guerra Civil realizados en el siglo XXI*, «Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico», vol. 25, n. 1, 2019, pp. 235-250. In the sample of historical documentaries analyzed in this research two other films of educational topics were included, *L'Escaezu. Recuerdos del 37* (Juan Luis Ruiz, 2009) and *Amaren ideia* (Maider Oleaga, 2010). It should be noted that they are not incorporated to our own catalogue because the educational discourse is very limited.

<sup>56</sup> A. Gómez López-Quiñones, *Identidad y memoria colectiva en Los niños de Rusia*, «Colorado Review of Hispanic Studies», vol. 1, n. 1, 2003, pp. 129-157; J.M. Caparrós Lera, *Los niños de Rusia, una valiosa muestra de Historia Oral*, in P. Poyato Sánchez (ed.), *X Congreso Asociación Española de Historiadores del Cine. El Documental, carcoma de la ficción. Sección Miscelánea*, Córdoba, Consejería de Cultura/Filmoteca de Andalucía, 2004, pp. 123-125; N. Mínguez, *Historia y Memoria en el documental español contemporáneo*, «Revista de Occidente», n. 302-303, 2006, pp. 86-87; M. Guerrero, *Reconfiguring the Spanish identity: Historic Memory, Documentary Films and Documentary Novels in Spain (2000-2002)*, Doctoral Thesis, Graduate School, Florida, University of Florida, 2010, pp. 132-154; M. Piñol Lloret, *Cine y movimientos migratorios: La representación del exilio y la emigración económica española hacia Europa (1939-2016)*, Doctoral Thesis, Department of Art History (Supervisor: J.E. Monterde Lozoya), Barcelona, University of Barcelona, 2017, Vol. I, pp. 133-137.

*del faquir* (2005) and *El llegat de la maternitat d'Elna* (2008), have been briefly mentioned in other research<sup>57</sup>.

This conspicuous gap – or double gap – in educational historiography and in the historiography of documentary film is what led us to undertake this investigation, whose initial objectives are two:

1. Cartographing the historical-educational documentaries made in Spain between 1976 and 2023.
2. Describing the contextual and conceptual characteristics of these documentaries and comparing a set of previously defined categories.

In order to put together a database of historical-educational documentaries, our first step was to interview the professors of the History of Education who had participated as experts in these documentaries or who had the greatest familiarity with audiovisual production in their regions<sup>58</sup>. We then undertook a systematic review of the following centers of documentation: *Biblioteca Nacional*, *Filmoteca Española*, *Biblioteca de Catalunya*, *Filmoteca de Catalunya*, *BEG (Biblioteques Especialitzades de la Generalitat)*, *MUPEGA (Museo Pedagógico de Galicia)*, and the *Archivo del Cortometraje Español*, complemented by a sweep of YouTube using keywords. The selection criteria used were as follows:

- a. The fundamental question we posed was: What type of product may be considered a documentary? We chose to follow the norm adopted by the *Academia de las Artes y las Ciencias Cinematográficas* in 2001, which states that «The producer of the film shall be the one to catalogue the film as a documentary»<sup>59</sup>. Therefore, we have included all of the works classified as such in the credits, in their publicity or in the distribution and screening processes. We have categorized as historical documentaries those of a divulgative nature, that is to say, those meant for an audience of non-historians. For this reason,

<sup>57</sup> C. Torreiro, *De tendencias y autores (la configuración artística del documental catalán contemporáneo)*, in C. Torreiro (ed.), *Realidad y creación en el cine de no-ficción (el documental catalán contemporáneo)*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2010, p. 52; Mínguez, *Historia y Memoria en el documental español contemporáneo*, cit., pp. 94-95; E. Castelló, *El documental televisivo como trabajo de duelo*, in L. Quilez Esteve, J.C. Rueda Laffond (edd.), *Posmemoria de la Guerra Civil y el franquismo. Narrativas audiovisuales y producciones culturales en el siglo XXI*, Granada, Comares, 2017, pp. 39-57; I. Merino, *Desde Cataluña: historia, crítica al presente y formación artística (1978-2020)*, in C. Torreiro, A. Alvarado (edd.), *El documental en España. Historia, Estética e Identidad*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2023, pp. 146-147.

<sup>58</sup> We thank for their help and useful informations the following researchers: Antón Costa Rico and Eugenio Otero Urtaza (University of Santiago de Compostela); Carmen Diego Pérez (University of Oviedo); Luis María Naya Garmendia (University of the Basque Country); Pere Fullana Puigserver (University of the Balearic Islands); María del Carmen Agulló Díaz (University of Valencia); Juan Luis Rubio Mayoral (University of Sevilla); Isabel Grana Gil (University of Málaga); and Manuel Ferraz Lorenzo (University of La Laguna).

<sup>59</sup> M. Palacio Herranz, A. Mejón Miranda, *De la Transición a los premios Goya. Derivas de los documentales producidos en Madrid en democracia (1978-2001)*, in Torreiro, Alvarado (edd.), *El documental en España. Historia, Estética e Identidad*, cit., p. 133.

and following the lead of Sira Hernández<sup>60</sup>, we have intentionally excluded those documentaries of a didactic nature made by experts – historians or pedagogues – and shown in classrooms where subjects from the History of Education are taught.

b. The time frame of the production of the documentaries chosen is from 1976 to 2023, which encompasses two stages: the so-called Transition to democracy (1976-1996) and the subsequent period beginning in 1996, marked by the process of the recuperation of the historical memory of the Civil War. This second stage stands out for the phenomenon of the surge in memory documentaries, a boom so spectacular that it has come to be considered «the fundamental discourse of this process»<sup>61</sup>. This discourse has a «revisionist tone»<sup>62</sup> about it with regard to the prevailing narrative found in the historical documentaries from the Transition – and their approach from a «critical distance»<sup>63</sup> –, which is now replaced by a more emotional telling fashioned from personal testimonies about violence under the Francoist repression. The way this change of paradigm was articulated and the specific discursive elements used in educational memory documentaries are, in themselves, areas in need of more exploration.

c. The historical period comprising the object of study of the documentaries covers all years prior to the end of the Civil War in 1939. However, respecting this criterion strictly proves extremely difficult, owing to the fact that the discursive strategies used in the historical memory require that the audience be shown the consequences of the war – along with the postwar repression – through the voices of those who were silenced; these voices may then be incorporated into the «public discourse» and help «to place the audience in the historical situation»<sup>64</sup>. For this reason, we have chosen to include those documentaries whose origin and narrative take place in the pre-1939 period, even when their denouement or conclusion reach into later or even current times.

d. We have established the historical-educational nature of the documentaries based on an analysis of their contents. Our definition of education is an ample one and encompasses all schooling experiences at the different levels of

<sup>60</sup> S. Hernández Corchete, *Hacia una definición del documental de divulgación histórica*, «Comunicación y Sociedad», vol. XVII, n. 2, 2014, pp. 118-119.

<sup>61</sup> I. M. Estrada, *El documental cinematográfico y televisivo contemporáneo. Memoria, Sujeto y Formación de la Identidad Democrática Española*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> S. Hernández Corchete, *Introducción. La televisión española como instancia productora de la memoria colectiva e histórica sobre la Guerra Civil*, in S. Hernández Corchete (ed.), *La Guerra Civil televisada. La representación de la contienda en la ficción y el documental españoles*, Salamanca, Comunicación Social, 2012, p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> J.C. Ibáñez, *Historia y relectura del consenso tradicional en los documentales televisivos. El caso de La memoria recobrada*, in *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>64</sup> E. Castelló, *Disrupting «Wills to Truth». How Catalan TV documentary contributed to the democratization of Spanish Civil War narratives*, «Memory Studies», vol. 7, n. 2, 2014, pp. 228 and 232.

teaching – from nursery school to the university – as well as those of a non-formal nature such as children’s camps, youth movements, and popular education. The principal challenge in applying such a criterion was determining that the educational discourse was clearly visible throughout the entire documentary. This meant eliminating those in which – in the opinion of the authors of this article – education was relegated to a secondary role; this includes, for example, documentaries dealing with evacuated children or biographies about teachers where the focus is more on their political work than their pedagogical activity.

e. The decision regarding the duration of the documentaries was established based on previous studies, such as that of Velázquez and Ramírez (2000), who determined that the average length of a short documentary film in the 1990s was 23 minutes<sup>65</sup>; the survey by Martí i Freixes, who, for the period 1996-2009, defined as documentaries those films more than 52 minutes long<sup>66</sup>, in other words, those exceeding «the television standards for production and stipulated timing»<sup>67</sup>; and those put forth by Enric Castelló, who states that Catalan television documentaries follow a double format of 30/60 minutes<sup>68</sup>. Faced with such disparity among film historians, we chose to adopt the minimum length suggested in these studies, that is, 23 minutes. This duration is quite common in historical-educational documentaries and is especially prevalent in those narrating educators’ biographies.

f. In the words of Dolors Genovès, a documentary work can be defined as «an audiovisual work that incorporates the author’s perspective on what he or she observes in their surroundings»<sup>69</sup>. This means that we have no choice but to take into account the figure of the director or filmmaker. One such filmmaker, Albert Solé, offers us a spot-on definition of the kind of «people who make historical documentaries» and «end up being a *one man show*: they tend to be responding to an enthusiastic initiative brought to them by a small group anxious for its story to be told: the story of their town, their city, or some other little-known event»<sup>70</sup>. The result then takes form in an artisanal work made with minimum resources that circulates in alternative channels. One of the criteria we have used in fashioning our catalogue of documentaries is the professional standing of the directors and filmmakers, as attested to by their curriculum,

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Palacio, Mejón, *De la Transición a los premios Goya. Derivas de los documentales producidos en Madrid en democracia (1978-2001)*, cit., p. 141.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in X. Cubeles, J. Borrás, *La producción independiente de documentales en Cataluña (1995-2009)*, in Torreiro (ed.), *Realidad y creación en el cine de no-ficción (el documental catalán contemporáneo)*, cit., p. 88.

<sup>67</sup> M. Martí i Freixes, *Filmografía*, in *ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>68</sup> Castelló, *Disrupting «Wills to Truth»*. *How Catalan TV documentary contributed to the democratization of Spanish Civil War narratives*, cit., p. 227.

<sup>69</sup> Genovès, *Historia, testimonio, relato e implicación: la problemática en la representación visual de la memoria colectiva*, cit., p. 129.

<sup>70</sup> A. Solé, *Cómo hacer cine con la memoria*, in Caparrós, Crusells, Sánchez (edd.), *Memoria histórica y cine documental*, cit., pp. 121 and 125.



their links with the audiovisual and press world and the diffusion of their works on commercial circuits. When information could not be found on a director, we established as our criteria for accepting a documentary that the filmmaker has to his or her name at least one other work.

g. Existing literature on historical documentaries reveals a tendency towards reductionism, with some studies focusing exclusively on television documentaries, while other studies expressly pass over productions made for television; some research deals with documentaries shown in commercial movie theatres, but very few studies address independent audiovisual productions or those that saw only limited circulation, this owing most likely to the difficulty of finding reliable information about such works. In our study we have ascertained that these divisions are somewhat fictitious; for example, many independently produced documentaries end up making their way to the television screen. Subsequently, for our study the production agency behind a documentary does not pose an obstacle for the work's inclusion in our catalogue.

With these criteria, we have found and catalogued 73 documentaries of a historical-educational nature made in Spain. They are shown in Table 1. Our database is ample and diverse, with works ranging from winners of the *Premio Goya* and documentaries that have been shown on national and regional television channels to others that are much more local in nature or of very limited circulation. There are works in which Spanish (Castilian), Catalan, Basque and Galician are the dominant languages, but fragments in Russian and English can also be found. While many of the works were produced by or received support from national, regional or local institutions, others were sponsored by syndicates, community groups, educational reform movements, associations involved in the recovery of the historical memory, or by independent producers. Documentary filmmakers represent an especially broad cross-section of the audiovisual world; many have worked producing programs on the most diverse topics for different television channels, others have become specialized in films of memory in their respective domains of influence, and there are even those who are super-specialized in the production of educational memory documentaries.

Table 1. List of historical documentaries about education by year, language, and director

Year	Title	Language	Director
1979	Carles Salvador, elogi a un xiprer	Catalan	Joan Vergara, Alfred Ramos (direction and script)
1992	Gregorio Sanz García	Galician+	Elvira Varela
1997	Viva la Escuela Moderna	Castilian	Adolfo Dufour Andía
1998	Las mujeres de la herencia del 98. La primera oportunidad	Castilian	J. Manuel Riancho
1998	La mestra, Rosa Sensat.	Catalan	José Pica (direction and script), Mercè Llimona (script)

2001	Los niños de Rusia	Castilian	Jaime Camino
2003	Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia, una vida per la llibertat	Catalan	Agustí Corominas (direction and script)
2003	La guerra dibujada	Castilian	Xavier Cortés, Amanda Gascó
2004	La República de los maestros	Castilian	Reyes Ramos
2004	Los niños de Morelia	Castilian	Juan Pablo Villaseñor (direction and script)
2004	Rosa Sensat Vila	Catalan	Marcel.lí Parés
2004	Francisco Moisés Rivera Casas	Castilian	Vicente Peña Saavedra
2004	Xulia Martínez Álamo	Castilian	Vicente Peña Saavedra
2004	Historia de una escuela. Cabranes 1900-1970	Castilian	Pablo A. Quiroga Prendes
2005	Els mestres catalans, de la guerra a l'exili	Catalan	Agustí Corominas (direction and script)
2005	La doble vida del faquir	Catalan+	Elisabet Cabeza, Esteve Riambau
2006	La escuela fusilada	Castilian	Iñaki Pinedo, Daniel Álvarez
2006	Crónica de pizarra e xiz	Galician	Xan Leira
2006	A darreira lección do Mestre	Galician	Xoán Carlos Garrido Couceiro
2007	Estudiar en Guerra. Los Institutos Obreros. 1936-1939	Castilian	Cristina Escrivà
2007	Misiones Pedagógicas (1934-36)	Castilian	Gonzalo Tapia
2008	El llegat de la maternitat d'Elna	Catalan+	Assumpta Montellà, Toni Espinosa
2008	Un sant que no anava a missa. Guillem Cifre de Colonya, abans Coll	Catalan	Pere Salas Vives, Antoni Rotger, Antoni Marquet
2008	La guerra de Severo	Galician+	César Fernández (direction and script)
2008	El secreto de educar	Castilian	Sonia Tercero Ramiro
2008	Pere Capellà (1907-1954)	Catalan	Miguel Àngel Abraham, Cesc Mulet
2008	Herminio Barreiro Calvete	Galician	Francisco Rodríguez Fontarigo
2008	Crónicas de represión lingüística	Galician	Xan Leira
2008	O valor das letras	Galician	Xosé Manuel Vega
2008	Elogio al horizonte	Castilian	Iñaki Ibasate Domínguez
2008	La Salle Beasain: 100 años de historia	Basque+	Ángel Forcada
2009	Més de 100 anys d'història de les escoles de Cabanes	Catalan	Tomàs «Fletxa» Morales
2010	La escuela olvidada	Castilian	Sonia Tercero Ramiro
2010	Han bombardejat una escola	Catalan	Mireia Corbera, Sandra Olsina, Anna Morejón
2010	La infancia evacuada. Colonias escolares. 1936 a 1939	Castilian	Cristina Escrivà
2010	Cien años de la Residencia de Estudiantes	Castilian	Jorge Martínez Reverte
2010	Hablaremos de esto dentro de cien años	Castilian	Rafael Zarza Ballugera (direction), Juan Pérez de Ayala y Rafael Zarza Ballugera (script)
2011	Ángel Llorca. El último ensayo	Castilian	Víctor M. Guerra
2011	Lembranzas da infancia. Recordos da escola	Galician+	Daniel Vázquez Vila

2011	Los niños de Guernica tienen memoria	Castilian	Roberto Menéndez (direction and script)
2012	Carles Salvador. La llarga vida de les paraules	Catalan	Francesc Pérez, Moragón, Nello Pellisser
2012	L'escola de la meua vida	Catalan	Carme Castelltors, Roser Grau, Carme Palmés.
2013	El Retratista	Castilian	Alberto Bougleux, Sergi Bernal
2013	Las Maestras de la República	Castilian	Pilar Pérez Solano
2014	Don Pablo, el maestro alcalde	Castilian	Nieves Fernández García
2014	L'Escola del Canto. Una escola amb vista. Un símbol per la lluita per la llibertat i contra l'analfabetisme	Catalan; Castilian	Hugo Doménech, Maria Andrés
2014	Andoingo haurrak erbestean / Los niños de Andoain en el exilio	Basque+	Karmele Otaegi (direction and script), Marta Trutxuelo (direction and script)
2015	La derrota de las aulas	Castilian	Fernando Hugo
2016	Maximino Roda, niño de la guerra	Castilian	Luis Felipe Capellín
2016	Antoni Balmanya i Ros: un mestre pioner	Catalan	Pau Guixà
2017	Clara Hammerl, el valor de la paraula	Catalan	Lluís Prieto, Toti García
2017	Don Pablo Miaja, maestro de maestros	Castilian	Luis Felipe Capellín
2018	Espais de pau en temps de guerra	Catalan	Juame Bayarri
2018	En el yunque de la desgracia. Paquita Sanchis. Maestra, librepensadora, republicana y naturista	Catalan+	Alberto Herrero Salvador
2018	Empar Navarro (1900-1986)	Catalan	Paloma Mora Iñiesta
2018	Guillermina Medrano (Albacete, 1912-València, 2005)	Catalan	Carles Palau
2018	Ana Maria Ibars (1892-1965)	Catalan	Paloma Mora Iñiesta
2018	Huérfanos del olvido	Castilian	Lino Varela
2019	La aguja de dos puntas	Castilian	Vanessa Perondi, Sara Gallardo
2019	Enriqueta Agut Armer (1912-1998)	Catalan	Paloma Mora Iñiesta
2019	Alejandra Soler (1913-2017)	Catalan	Paloma Mora Iñiesta
2019	Infancias quebradas	Castilian	Matías Montero
2019	La Guerra vista pels nens i les nenes	Catalan	Quim Paredes
2020	Carmen Valero: Crònica d'una dona lluitadora	Catalan	Armando Zaragoza, José M <sup>a</sup> Aguado
2021	Escala de grisos	Catalan	Antoni Capellà
2021	Pioneres, dones universitàries de la Segona República	Catalan	Lala Gomà
2021	Haur erbesterauak	Basque	Mikel Mendizábal
2022	Blau, blanc i verd	Catalan	Francis Manzano
2022	L'hora dels infants	Catalan	Eduard Miguel, Martí Boneta
2022	València, capital de la República	Castilian	Pilar Pérez Solano
2022	Elbira	Basque	Iban González
2023	Aprender na lignua pròpria. Das Escolas de Ensino Galego à Semente	Galician	Escolas do Ensino Galego Semente
2023	Artur Martorell, del Mestre a la Fundació	Catalan	Andreu Ortoll Rius

+ means: bilingual

### 3. *Analyzing historical documentaries about Spanish education: A methodological model*

We have analyzed this collection of historical documentaries using the following methodological steps. First, for an initial description of the documentaries, a collaborative *observation scheme* was prepared by the authors, with a space for annotating the following information: title of the documentary, year of release, name of the director, producer or production team, legal deposit number, language, length, location (where it can be found), public reception, synopsis, names of the documentalists, historical advisors, participating agencies, participating experts, and the origin of the documentation shown in the documentary. To this list a column for additional comments was added.

Secondly, after this observation scheme had been filled in by two of the three authors (open coding), the data was coded by assigning umbrella codes to each documentary (axial coding). This two-step coding process was theoretically inspired by (or empirically derived from) the prior exploration of academic literature as summarized in the first section of this article. The codes were assigned to the documentaries by two, and in some cases three, of the authors of this article. In the first round, this was done without back-and-forth input, but for the second round, the researchers discussed the accuracy of the interpretation. Finally, in all cases, agreement was reached on the translation of the conceptual and contextual characteristics of the documentaries into concrete codes of research variables.

The coding of the documentaries resulted in two sets of codes: one related to the internal, and one related to the external characteristics of the non-fiction films. The external or contextual variables and their corresponding codes used in this article are the following:

- Year: the year in which the documentary was produced.
- Duration: the length of the documentary, in minutes.
- Producer: the organization that took the initiative to make the documentary. The following five codes were used: local authorities, regional authorities, national television, regional television, and (relatively) independent producers.
- Language: the language spoken in the documentary. The codes were: Castilian, Catalan, Basque, and Galician. The code «bilingual» was not used. In practice, bilingual meant that Castilian was used as a second language in addition to Catalan, Basque, or Galician as the main language of the documentary. Because the number of bilingual videos was rather small (2 out of 4 of the documentaries in Basque, 3 out of 9 in Galician, and 4 out of 30 in Catalan, making for a total of 9 out of 73), we decided not to add a fifth language code.

- Director: we noted the gender of the director, or the gender composition of the directive team in charge of making the documentary with the following codes: male, female, and mixed.

The set of variables and codes related with the internal or conceptual characteristics of the documentaries are the following:

- Testimonies: Documentaries – especially those that share the characteristics of the participatory mode as describe by Nichols – can be based on the testimonies of people speaking about the past that they have lived. This variable was coded with the options «yes» or «no».
- Archives: Documentaries with a historical nature generally are based on information, images and film footage that were found in archives. In the final credits of the documentary, the institutions where documentation and graphic material were found are supposed to be mentioned, but this is not always the case. The corresponding codes were «yes» and «no».
- Experts: As previously stated, experts are part of the legitimizing strategies from the expository mode mentioned by Nichols. Regarding documentaries on the history of education, the presence of historians with a focus on education, and pedagogues or educationalists with a focus on history, seems particularly relevant. Any type of expert who participated was coded as «yes». If no experts were present in the film, it was coded as «no».
- Online: Documentaries can be available for all to see. They can be uploaded on the video website [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and people can freely look at them. Documentaries can also be accessible if you pay for the right to see them. Netflix, to name just one provider, offers such possibilities. Documentaries can also be made available only if specific persons have given access to them. The documentaries that had a link to a website where the video could be watched from beginning to end were coded as «yes»; other possibilities were coded as «no».
- Voice-over: When the viewer of a documentary is addressed by an (invisible) person who introduces certain issues, explains topics, or comments on what we see, we refer to it as a «voice-over», a rhetorical technique that is widely used in historical documentaries, as we explained in the first part of this article. In general, the voice-over is linked with the expository mode mentioned by Nichols. If one or more disembodied voices appear in a documentary for a longer or a shorter period, we code it as «yes», and if they do not appear we code it as «no».
- Actors: Actors fit perfectly in fiction films, but the message of a documentary can also gain strength when actors play the roles of the main characters in the story, as it happens in the performative mode characterized by Nichols. If one or more actors appear in a documentary, regardless of the time, we code it as «yes», and if they do not appear it is coded as «no».

We will now proceed to analyze the external characteristics of the historical documentaries about education based on the variables we have just described: year, duration, producer, language, and director.

a. Looking at the distribution of the 73 documentaries over the years, we notice that in some years the number of documentaries is relatively high (Graph 1). We count 6 in 2004, 10 in 2008, and 6 and 5 in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The greatest increase takes place in the year 2008, which can be explained by the fact that the law known as the Historical Memory Act (2007) had just gone into effect. In this sense our study corroborates other research that sees the passing of this legislation as «the event that has most clearly influenced the increase in the production and screening of documentaries and reports dealing with the Civil War», a subject that also dominates non-fiction films of a historical-educational nature<sup>71</sup>. Three categories can be distinguished in terms of the production date of documentaries. The first period runs to 2008, the second from 2008 to 2017, and the third from 2018 to the present. The numbers of documentaries for these three periods are 21, 31 and 21, respectively. The notable upswing in 2018 may well be due to the boost and increased visibility that the new *streaming* platforms offered for documentaries of all genres, including those on history.

b. The average length of the 73 documentaries is about 51 minutes, precisely the average length of a feature film. Half of the documentaries are shorter than this and half are longer. The shortest documentary is 23 minutes and the longest is 120, this latter one being an outlier. About a quarter of the documentaries are between 60 and 90 minutes in length. The average length of the documentary in the three time periods mentioned above (i.e., before 2008, 2008-2017, and 2018 and later) is about the same, 52, 51, and 49 minutes, respectively.

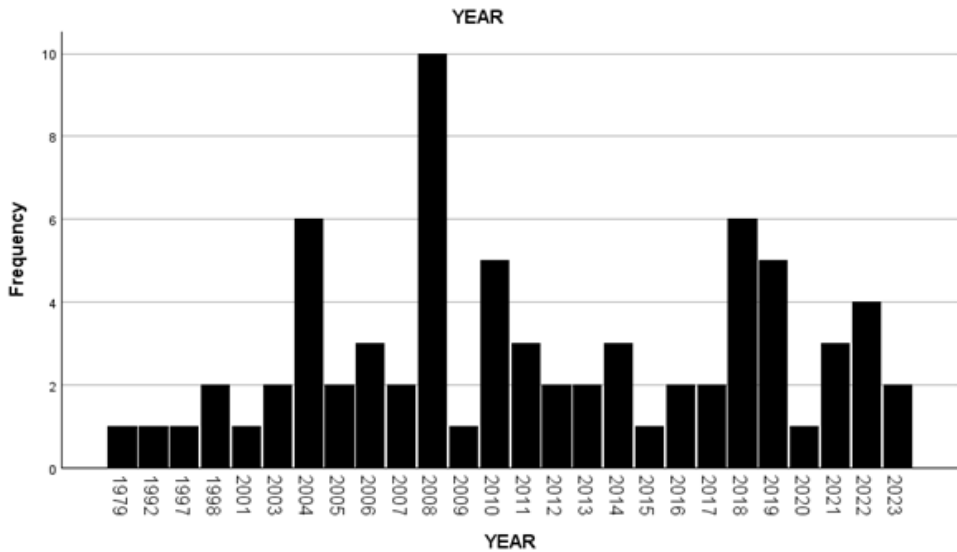
c. Of the 73 documentaries we studied, 30 were made by independent producers or production companies (Table 2), which shows how important it is to examine independent productions if we wish to carry out an accurate mapping of the robust documentary movement in Spain. What's more, documentary films created outside of established production channels «can often function as spaces of resistance and counter-memory, offering the audience films whose narratives take into consideration the voices of the minorities»<sup>72</sup>. We should also note that the proportion of local and regional authorities as well as regional and national televisions that took the initiative to produce (commission or finance) a documentary varies between 12 and 19 percent.

If we compare the share of the different producers mentioned in the periods before 2008, from 2008-2017, and from 2018, we can see that there is a

<sup>71</sup> M. Román Portas, A. García González, *La Guerra Civil en los programas de producción propia de la Televisión de Galicia*, «Doxa. Comunicación», n. 17, 2013, p. 197.

<sup>72</sup> L. Quílez Esteve, J.C. Rueda Laffond, *Introducción. Pasados, presentes y generaciones*, in Idd. (edd.), *Posmemoria de la Guerra Civil y el franquismo. Narrativas audiovisuales y producciones culturales en el siglo XXI*, cit., p. XVI.

Graph 1. Number of documentaries by year (1979-2023)



clear relationship between the two variables (Table 2). We have visualized this relationship in Graph 2. The number of documentaries made by independent producers increased most markedly in the period after 2007, the year the Historical Memory Law went into effect. This Act clearly stimulated the production of history of education documentaries. After this, it was local and regional authorities who became more active in terms of documentary production from 2008 and especially after 2017. It is possible that this interest was spurred by some of the regulations concerning the historical memory published in different autonomous regions during these years. A reverse trend applies to national television: while the number of documentaries has increased regionally and locally in recent years, it has decreased nationally, a change that may be chalked up to two reasons: on the one hand, regional authorities and television stations have realized how important the educational memory can be for fostering collective identities in their territories; on the other hand, an aversion exists in current-day Spanish society towards the role that national television has played historically «in monumentalizing a past that was “stable” and built on consensus [...] in accordance with the interest of the social and political elites», an «imposed memory» that could be better described as a form of oblivion<sup>73</sup>.

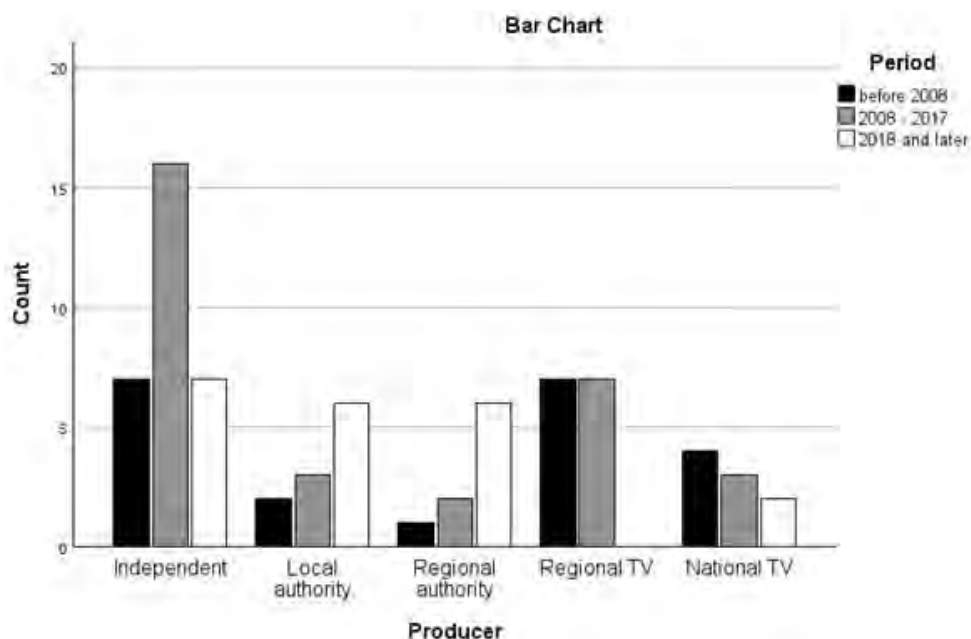
<sup>73</sup> N. Araüna, L. Quílez, *Voces dislocadas, memorias otras. Nuevas maneras de hablar del pasado traumático a través del cine documental contemporáneo*, in Torreiro, Alvarado (edd.), *El documental en España. Historia, Estética e Identidad*, cit., p. 197.

Table 2. Documentaries by type of producer, 1979-2023 (N=73)

		Period			Total
		before 2018	2017-2018	2018 and later	
Independent	Count	7	16	7	30
	% within Period	33,3%	51,6%	33,3%	41,1%
Local authority	Count	2	3	6	11
	% within Period	9,5%	9,7%	28,6%	15,1%
Regional authority	Count	1	2	6	9
	% within Period	4,8%	6,5%	28,6%	12,3%
Regional TV	Count	7	7	0	14
	% within Period	33,3%	22,6%	0,0%	19,2%
National TV	Count	4	3	2	9
	% within Period	19,0%	9,7%	9,5%	12,3%
Count		21	31	21	73
% within Period		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Chi-square = 18,84; d.f. = 8; p = .016; V = .359

Graph 2. Documentaries by type of producer, 1979-2023 (N=73)



d. There is a close relationship between the region and the language in the different Spanish territories. This relationship is quite visible in documentaries dealing with the history of education, a fact that should not surprise us given



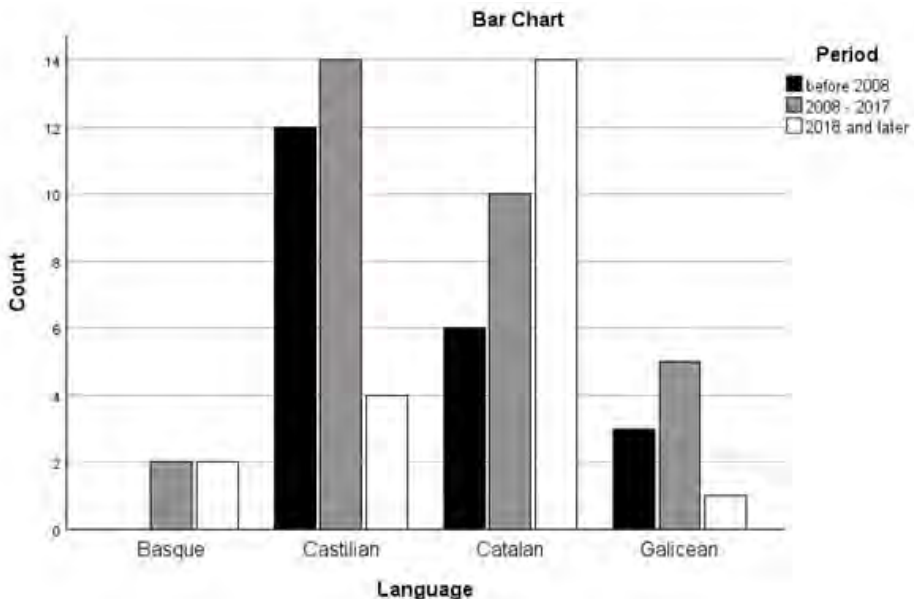
how intimately linked language and schooling are by nature. The documentaries catalogued here were made in four languages: 4 are in Basque, 9 in Galician, and an equal number, namely 30, in both Castilian and Catalan (Table 3). If we contrast the language used in documentaries with the year of production, we can clearly see that most Castilian-language films were produced before 2008, that in 2008-2017 the number of works in languages other than Castilian increased, and that finally the Catalan-language productions came to dominate in the period 2018 and later (Table 3 and Graph 3).

Table 3. Documentaries by language, 1979-2023 (N=73)

		Period			Total
		before 2008	2017-2018	2018 and later	
Basque	Count	0	2	2	4
	% within Period	0,0%	6,5%	9,5%	5,5%
Castilian	Count	12	14	4	30
	% within Period	57,1%	45,2%	19,0%	41,1%
Catalan	Count	6	10	14	30
	% within Period	28,6%	32,3%	66,7%	41,1%
Galicean	Count	3	5	1	9
	% within Period	14,3%	16,1%	4,8%	12,3%
Total	Count	21	31	21	73
	% within Period	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Chi-square 11.9; d.f. 6; p =.064; V =.285

Graph 3. Documentaries by language, 1979-2023 (N=73)



e. One cutting-edge line of research today involves the role of women as the filmmakers or directors of documentaries. In consequence, we undertook an analysis of the balance between male and female authorship and the way this relationship has evolved over the period studied. We can conclude that, at this point, two out of three documentary makers are men, and one out of three is a woman (table 4). Mixed teams are the exception. While we do find that the number of female documentary directors as of 2018 is higher than the proportion before 2008, the gain in this area is countered by the disappearance of mixed teams. It is somewhat surprising, as well, that the masculine presence, in percentage points, has remained practically unaltered over nearly fifty years.

Table 4. Documentaries by gender of the director, 1978-2023, (N=73)

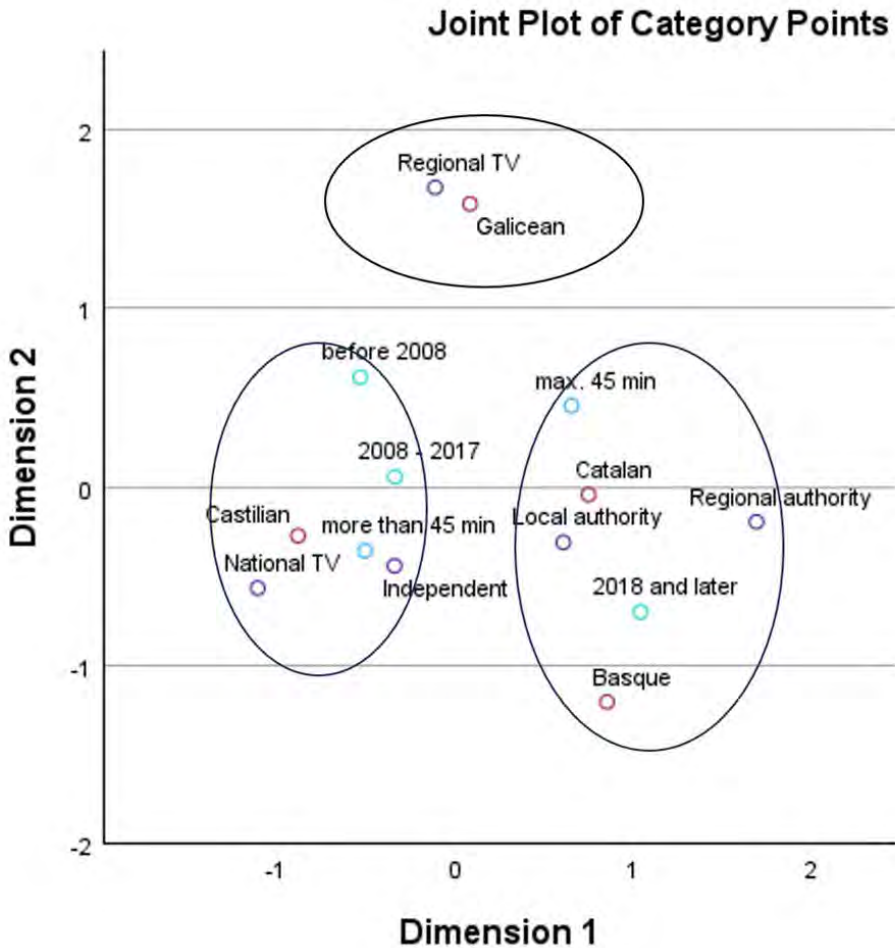
		Period			Total
		before 2018	2017-2018	2018 and later	
Female	Count	5	8	7	20
	% within Period	23,8%	25,8%	35,0%	27,8%
Male	Count	14	21	13	48
	% within Period	66,7%	67,7%	65,0%	66,7%
Mixed	Count	2	2	0	4
	% within Period	9,5%	6,5%	0,0%	5,6%
Total	Count	21	31	20	72
	% within Period	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Chi-square = 2,30; d.f. = 4; p = .680; V = .126

After having analyzed the external and contextual features of the historical-educational documentaries, we will proceed to establish relationships between all of these features. To this end, we have used an algorithm called HOMALS that visualizes the relationships between nominal variables in a two-dimensional space (Graph 4). The solution shows that there are roughly two types of documentaries: the Castilian-language documentaries of more than 45 minutes produced by independent producers and national television before 2018 on the one hand, and the shorter documentaries in the Catalan and Basque languages produced by local and regional authorities after 2018. This analysis highlights the idea that the production of documentaries has changed since 2018, especially in relation to developments at the local/regional level.

Secondly, we will analyze the internal or conceptual characteristics of the historical documentaries about education based on the variables described: testimonies, archives, experts, online, voice-over and actors. In Table 5, we present a statistical summary of these conceptual characteristics. This overview does not distinguish between the different time periods. Indeed, empirically there is no reason to do so. Unlike the differences between producer

Graph 4. HOMALS classification of documentaries on the basis of contextual characteristics (N=73)



type and production year, no statistically significant differences can be found between these characteristics and the year of production. In summary, we can conclude that there are three characteristics that are part of a vast majority of documentaries: testimonies are given, archives are used, and experts are consulted. This applies to 90, 83 and 78 percent of the cases, respectively. Two out of three documentaries can be found online, just over half of the videos begin with a voiceover, and in about 12 percent of the cases actors are appearing.

Table 5. Conceptual characteristics of the documentaries

	Yes	No	N	Total
Use of testimonies	90,4%	9,6%	73	100%
Use of archives	82,9%	17,1%	70	100%
Experts present	78,1%	21,9%	73	100%
Available online	64,4%	35,6%	73	100%
Voice-over present	54,9%	45,1%	71	100%
Actors present	12,3%	87,7%	73	100%

Table 5, in principle, shows that historical documentaries about education make use of the same elements as most historically themed non-fiction films: documents, testimonies, experts, voice-overs – which are «the source of authority of all documentaries – and dramatization, «a powerful tool owing to its ability to capture the audience’s attention»<sup>74</sup>. However, in this first overview we can detect at least three differences between our results and the results of other studies carried out in Spain on historical documentaries:

a) In most Spanish historical documentaries, enormous importance has been given to the voice-over, which was used to articulate the «official» narrative of the Second Republic and the Civil War<sup>75</sup>. While this narrative technique has lost some of its prestige and come to be considered somewhat old-fashioned, a study by Gómez Segarra of 36 documentaries on the Civil War, made between 2000 and 2014, reveals that 69,44% of these works resort to voice-overs<sup>76</sup>. Yet of the 73 historical documentaries that we analyzed for this paper, the use of voice-overs is considerably lower, appearing in only 54,9% of the works. Furthermore, we find a progressive democratization in the use of this strategy, with the single, masculine «voice of God» gradually giving way to the inclusion of an array of women’s and even children’s voices.

b) There is general agreement about the documentary value of interviews with witnesses and figures who played a part in the events, which «in and of itself may configure an entire historical documentary»<sup>77</sup>. However, there is also a general consensus that these kinds of interviews with anonymous players in a historical event only begin to show up in works made in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This

<sup>74</sup> Estrada, *El documental cinematográfico y televisivo contemporáneo. Memoria, Sujeto y Formación de la Identidad Democrática Española*, cit., pp. 89, 92 and 95.

<sup>75</sup> S. Hernández Corchete, *La mirada documental de la Guerra Civil en el tardofranquismo y la Transición. De la celebración de la paz a la búsqueda de la reconciliación nacional*, in Hernández Corchete (ed.), *La Guerra Civil televisada. La representación de la contienda en la ficción y el documental españoles*, cit., p. 31; J.E. Monterde, *Realidad, realismo y documental en el cine español*, in J.M. Catalá, J. Cerdán, C. Torreiro (edd.), *Imagen, memoria y fascinación. Notas sobre el documental en España*, Madrid, Ocho y Medio, 2001, p. 20.

<sup>76</sup> Gómez Segarra, *Estrategias narrativas de los documentales históricos españoles sobre la Guerra Civil (2000-2014)*, cit., p. 211.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

should be seen as a result of the influence of the movement for the recovery of the historical memory, which «converted live testimony into something mythological [...], it became an amulet of sorts, an irrefutable signal of veracity»<sup>78</sup>. The same can also be said of historical-educational documentaries, the great difference being that in the latter, testimonies from ordinary people were being incorporated into these documentaries well before the 21<sup>st</sup> century, appearing in films from as early as the mid-1970s.

c) Expert testimony – generally that of historians – is quite prevalent in works on the history of education, where it is used in 78,1% of films, as opposed to in 65,63% of the documentaries analyzed by Gómez Segarra<sup>79</sup>.

With regard to the way documentary material is used, there are few significant differences. Various essays on post-memory allude to the resignifications that children and grandchildren of the victims of collective traumas attach to images and documents from public, private or family archives, which serve to ratify the veracity of the narrative<sup>80</sup>. Documentaries which include in their credits a long list of sources of documentation have helped to mythologize, but also to subjectivize, archives as a symbol of a story's truthfulness, and this is something that occurs in a significant percentage – 82,9% – of historical-educational films. With regard to the incorporation of actors or dramatizations in documentaries, a technique known as docufictions, a number of studies have called attention to the fictionalization of the documentary genre in Spain. This overlap of documentary and fiction is considered «one of the outstanding aspects of current Spanish cinema»<sup>81</sup>, reflected in the 12,3% of documentaries that resort to the use of actors and therefore, to at least some degree of dramatization.

Finally, and as we did with the context characteristics of the documentaries, we look at the interrelationships between the different categories of the variables. From Graph 5 we can see that a number of combinations of characteristics can be found. The most important and common combination is the configuration in the center of the image in Graph 5. These are documentaries that make a detailed, in-depth use of the archives and sources consulted, where experts have been brought in, where there are witnesses, where there are no actors, but where there is a voice-over. These documentaries can also often be found online. In addition to this basic type, some more exceptional combinations of features can be found. For example, there are documentaries where no archives

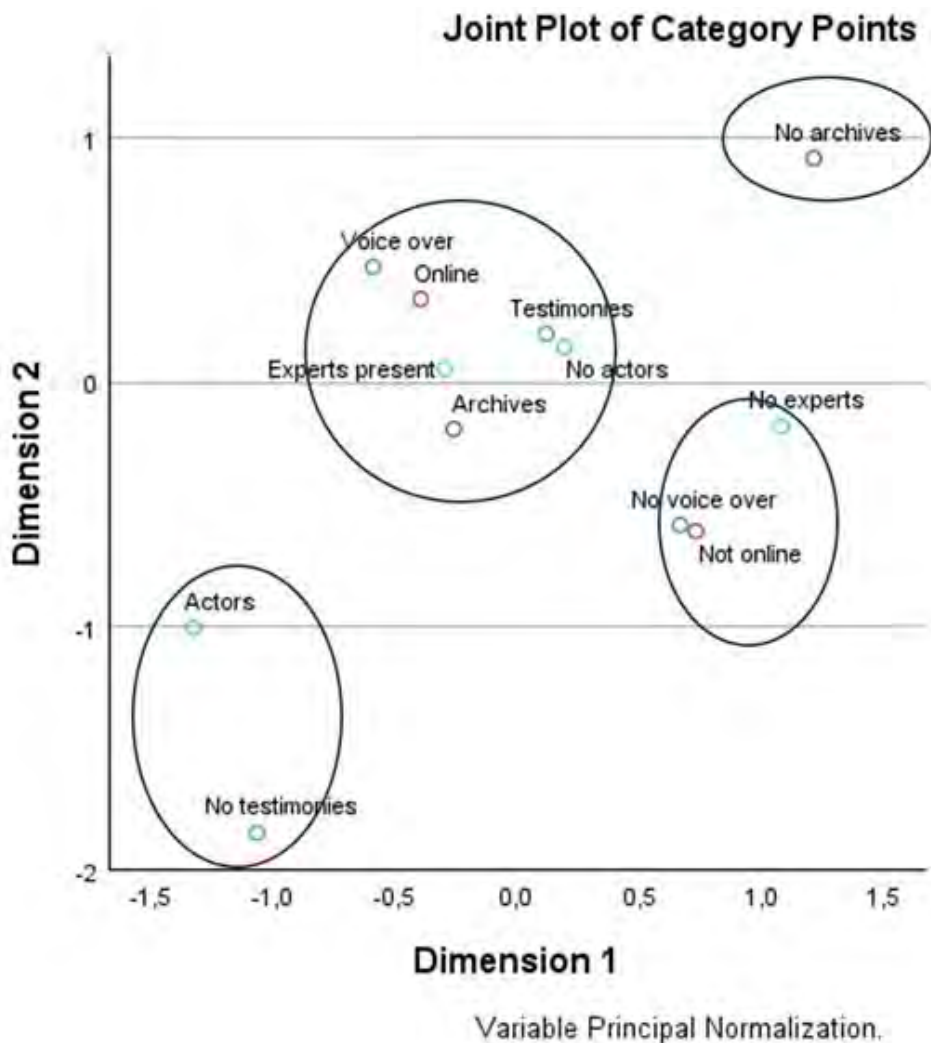
<sup>78</sup> V. Sánchez-Biosca, *Cine y Guerra Civil Española. Del mito a la memoria*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2006, p. 318.

<sup>79</sup> Gómez Segarra, *Estrategias narrativas de los documentales históricos españoles sobre la Guerra Civil (2000-2014)*, cit., p. 233.

<sup>80</sup> N. Araña, L. Quílez, *Género y (pos)memoria en el cine documental sobre la Guerra Civil y el franquismo*, en Quílez, Rueda (edd.), *Posmemoria de la Guerra Civil y el franquismo. Narrativas audiovisuales y producciones culturales en el siglo XXI*, cit., p. 31.

<sup>81</sup> Ch. von Tschilschke, D. Schmeizer, *Docuficción: un fenómeno limítrofe se aproxima al centro*, in Ch. von Tschilschke, D. Schmeizer (edd.), *Docuficción. Enlaces entre ficción y no-ficción en la cultura española actual*, Madrid, Iberoamericana, 2010, p. 12.

Graph 5. HOMALS classification of documentaries on the basis of conceptual characteristics (N=73)



are used (or, if they are, they are not considered important enough to figure in the final credits). Furthermore, it is notable that where no voice-over is used, expert historians do not tend to be involved, and these documentaries cannot as a rule be found online. And finally, when testimonials are missing, the use of actors becomes an option, a reality that tends to contribute to the mythologizing of a historical figure or event, as Bill Nichols has pointed out and as we commented in the first section of this article.

### *Conclusions and future directions*

Our investigation fills a conspicuous gap existing both in educational historiography as well as in the historiography of documentary film, which is none other than the search for and cataloguing of all documentaries of a historical-educational nature made in Spain from 1976 up until the present day. For our study we made a compilation of 73 documentaries that deal with periods prior to 1939. Our initial conclusion is that a great many of these films have as their subject the Spanish Civil War. However, it would be misleading to categorize them as «Civil War» films that focus on the three-year war; the Second Republic, with its hopeful educational message, and the subsequent Francoist repression, which shattered these hopes, make up part of the common narrative of these documentaries, which often reach into current times.

We do not believe that this list of 73 works is definitive, but rather that it is the start of a catalogue best seen as under construction. To our mind, this list shows the importance of discovering films made by independent producers or businesses, who account for 41,1% of our entire sample. We have found that most of the research on historical documentaries only takes into account works made for different national and regional television stations or films meant to be shown in movie theatres. Films that do not make it into either of these «official» circuits are virtually invisible, making it crucial that we bring them out into the light of day in order to achieve a fuller perspective on the situation of documentaries in Spain.

Our analysis of the contextual and conceptual characteristics of these historical educational documentaries has led us to a series of specific conclusions. The first conclusion is that their expansion – as with that of documentaries about the Civil War in general – was a consequence of the law *Ley de Memoria Histórica* of 2007. The second conclusion is that in recent years, especially beginning in 2017, there has been an extraordinary increase in the local and regional production of these documentaries, in which the educational memory is used to construct collective identities that are territorial in nature. At the same time, however, national television stations seem to pay ever less attention to these products. A third conclusion is that the narrative techniques used – testimonies, voice-overs, experts, archives and actors –, while they continue to be a mainstay of practically all historical documentaries, appear to follow specific formulas when touching on educational themes; for example, the voice-over loses some of its predominance, especially since the 1990s, in favor of the testimony of anonymous, unknown individuals whose public voices were forcibly silenced at the time.

This article opens at least two future lines of research. The first of these involves the study of the content and discourse of these documentaries, from the double perspective of historiographical analysis and audiovisual creation. Our focus is to identify the narrative strategies used in the audiovisual language in

order to understand the historical construction fashioned in each documentary and to determine the role that this plays in reconfiguring collective memory. A second line of research involves reflecting on the participation of historians of education in the elaboration of these historical documentaries, especially in those cases where they have intervened in the role of public historians of education, working side by side with educational reform movements or local associations for the recovery of the historical memory.

But we are also aware that when a historical subject becomes popular it is automatically transformed into an objective for the memory industry, a realm in which historians of education tend to move clumsily at best. Journalists and communicators, on the other hand, manage deftly in such circles and can easily end up substituting the historian of education. As we write these final lines, it has been just a few weeks since the debut in Spain of a fictional film, «El maestro que prometió el mar» (The teacher who promised the sea, 2023), based on a book and a previous documentary, «El retratista» (The portraitist, 2013). The lead character of both films is Antonio Benaiges, a schoolteacher and follower of Freinet who was assassinated by Francoists and whose body lies in an unknown tomb. The movie is wildly popular and is certain to become an icon of pedagogy. And, although the teacher Antonio Benaiges was discovered by the researcher Fernando Jiménez Mier y Terán in 2012 and, despite the fact that the Freinetist educational movement has been extensively studied by numerous Spanish scholars, not a single historian of education has been counted as an expert or advisor for the documentary or the film; a current reality that anticipates an unflattering future for the public history of education in Spain.