

Archipelago of Memories: Affective Travelogue and Mourning in *La forma exacta de las islas*

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Ancient and early medieval authorities consistently placed islands at the confines of the Earth. Almost falling off the map, these tiny masses of floating land have been a constant source of fascination throughout history.¹ Because of their literal isolation, or merely the sense of detachment from mainland society, islands are fabulous spaces in terms of both geography and the imagination. More than scenic locations, they also function as literary devices whose natural boundaries shape and contain narratives. As Gilles Deleuze proposes, the actual and virtual spaces of islands lend themselves to the exploration of the shifting relationship between the self and the other, between nature and culture: “The deserted island is the origin, but a second origin. From it everything begins anew. The deserted island is the necessary minimum for this re-beginning, the material that survives the first origin, the radiating seed or egg that must be sufficient to reproduce everything” (12). This idea of a second origin, a rebirth, suggests that the “deserted island” is a liminal and exceptional space that prompts us to imagine, question, and recreate social bonds.

In Deleuze’s philosophical perspective, physical, human, and affective geography converge, but for Argentine people insular geography and subjectivity are also inextricably intertwined with history. The 1982 armed conflict in the Malvinas/Falkland Islands left an indelible mark on history and set a decisive tone in Argentine literature and cinema. The war between the Argentine junta and Margaret Thatcher’s Great Britain for sovereignty over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands ended with a British victory and led to the collapse of the regime that had ruled Argentina since 1976.² As a haunting memory, the “Malvinas cause” repeatedly returns to trouble the national imaginary. A review of British and Argentine films that focus on the 1982

war reveals the importance of the islands for identity politics, as most of the narratives propose representations of geographical, social, political, and symbolic proximity and distance between the archipelago and the center of the “imagined community” of Argentina that ultimately serve to “recycle national myths” (Tal).³ However, from another perspective, Julieta Vitullo finds that the discourse of the “just cause,” which became hegemonic after 1982, has been challenged by literary works that point to the impossibility of the heroic epic narrative that has marked national discourse.⁴ In this sense, parodic or melancholic narratives by authors such as Rodolfo Fogwill, Rodrigo Fresán, Juan Forn, Martín Kohan, and Carlos Gamerro dissemble the mega-narrative of the war, leaving behind only its fragments.

Travelogue and Mourning

This challenging of the heroic narrative and critical view of the Malvinas/Falkland war inspired the production of *La forma exacta de las islas* (2012), a documentary directed by Daniel Casabé and Edgardo Dieleke and based on a script written in collaboration with the protagonist, Julieta Vitullo.⁵ Unlike other films concerning the war, Dieleke and Casabé’s documentary eludes the discourse of the “just cause” and questions the validity of the epic narrative. Like many literary fictions about the aftermath of the war, this film is a narrative of return that explores the islands, utilizing two trips as the starting point of a personal quest. In the first, in 2006, Julieta travels to the Malvinas/Falkland Islands to finish her doctoral thesis on the literature of the war. Upon arrival, she meets two Argentine ex-combatants, Carlos Enriori and Dacio Agretti, who were eighteen at the time of the conflict and who have returned to the islands after twenty-five years. Drawn by their compelling stories, the young Argentine researcher changes her plans and decides to film the men for a week. This video footage, along with a subsequent intimate experience linked to the trip, are two of the story lines in *La forma exacta de las islas*, a meta-documentary that intertwines the images shot in 2006 with images captured in 2010 by the directors accompanying Julieta in her return to the islands, a place that has also a personal meaning for her.

Rather than a historical documentary or a war film, *La forma exacta de las islas* is a “search documentary” and a “mourning film.”⁶ For the two veterans and Vitullo, the return is related to mourning. Carlos and Dacio return to the Malvinas in 2006 to pay tribute to a fellow soldier fallen in combat, while Julieta returns in 2010 to the islands where she conceived a son who died within hours of birth. Although the spectators only learn about

Julieta's son towards the end of the film, a general sense of loss permeates the documentary, as fragments of travel memoirs, autobiographical discourse, photographs, historical meditations, fiction, and literary criticism all merge to reveal the permanent marks of pain through history. The overlapping of travels of exploration and return to a fictional and geographic space is crucial in the documentary, which follows the structure of a postmodern travelogue to give an account, through a fragmented and self-reflective mode, of the intimate connection between collective wounds and personal drama. In this sense, the structure of the travel diary and other forms of personal expression in documentary film are indicative of an "affective turn" in historical narratives. Such films, as can be seen in *La forma exacta de las islas*, are characterized by an emphasis on the texture of the individual experience rather than historical events, as well as by the use of narrative to repair, rather than to establish or uphold, the "truth" in historical representations.

Because of the indeterminacy of its narrative, formal, and aesthetic strategies, this hybrid "search documentary" articulates a territory of blurring boundaries as well as fertile confluences. First of all, *La forma exacta de las islas* is a travel diary that refers to itineraries that are primarily based on previous literary representations. The structure of the cinematic travelogue allows for the fusing of the chronicle of the actual journey with previous imaginations and interpretations of the Malvinas. Along with excerpts of Julieta's travel diary and the veterans' testimonies, the directors' voiceovers articulate fragments of Rodolfo Fogwill's and Carlos Gamerro's fictions as well as passages from Charles Darwin's travelogue. These references to testimonies, literary texts, and exploration diaries reveal that no landscape is ever seen for the first time. And yet *La forma exacta de las islas* is unique in Malvinas/Falkland cinematography precisely because instead of relying on the use of archival footage, it was shot in these remote islands, which have been repeatedly and vividly imagined but never actually seen by the majority of Argentines. In the movie, we vicariously navigate the territory of the islands through images that alternately come from Julieta's erratic handycam 2006 footage and from Dieleke and Casabé's camera as they follow Julieta's solitary walks and meetings with locals in her return to the Malvinas four years later. In a fragmentary way, the film shifts back and forth between one trip and the other. The voiceovers of the directors combine with the voice of an actress who reads fragments from the journal that Julieta wrote on her first trip, her personal diary, and her doctoral research thesis, all of which steadily produces

a multifocal perspective of the protagonist's subjectivity that places this film at the junction between a travelogue and a (auto)biographical documentary.

La forma exacta de las islas begins as a road-trip movie. From the framed perspective of a vehicle in movement, the camera introduces us to an empty landscape, open fields on both sides of the road, and a group of sheep grazing beneath a gray sky. At the bottom of the frame, a subtitle situates us in December 2006, while the car radio relates a story about a war with Argentine soldiers. In the next scene, through the window of a hotel room, the video camera tries to zoom in on a figure that stands against the horizon. The voice of the woman holding the camera tells us that the view is from the Two Sisters Mountain. These two early scenes invite us to draw closer to islands whose shape the film's title mentions but that we cannot completely recognize as a geographical space. Instead of using a high wide angle or a panoramic shot that would give a general but stable idea of the territory, the documentary introduces the islands from the car, with a ground-level, moving camera that gives us partial landscape images through a windshield. In her book *Atlas of Emotion*, Giuliana Bruno proposes that every film is a travelogue, because "there is a mobile dynamics involved in the act of viewing films, even if the spectator is seemingly static. The (im)mobile spectator moves across an imaginary path, traversing multiple sites and times. Her fictional navigation connects distant moments and far-apart places" (55-56). During its eighty-five minutes, *La forma exacta de las islas* invites us to travel through islands we do not know firsthand but whose fuzzy boundaries lie somewhere in our historical and affective memory.

The travel diary as a particular genre also evokes the journey in a broad sense. It is an exploration of an unknown land but also a journey of inner discovery. In this instance, the trip involves the act of mourning for the characters. For Julieta, the making of the film serves as a vehicle for understanding her feelings of grief. It also serves the reparatory and therapeutic function that, according to Philippe Lejeune, is implied in any (auto)biographical narrative. If the protagonist returns to the islands to close a traumatic chapter in her personal history, it is mainly through geographical displacement that the documentary examines self-reflexively the very possibility of the filmic form to deal with the watery world of emotions. The usual gesture of many (auto)biographical films that capture a personal voice by turning the camera inward is duplicated by an outward movement. The operation becomes cartographic, allowing the film to explore the associations between Julieta's mourning process and other experiences of grief, including those of Argentine

soldiers and the islanders. In this way, in the liminal space of the “deserted island,” the mourning process rearticulates, from an affective dimension, a new relationship between the intimate and the public, the present and the past, private and collective memory.

Islands of Memories

To perceive the landscape is, according to anthropologist Tim Ingold, “to carry out an act of remembrance and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image stored in the mind as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past” (31). About half-way through the film, Julieta and her camera follow the veterans who have journeyed back to the islands to find the positions from which they fought on the Two Sisters. In their visit to the mountain the past is presented in the double sense suggested by Ingold. At the beginning of the sequence, Carlos and Dacio retell their “mental map” of the place, but when they are actually wandering through the site, the landscape materializes as an environment that is, just as themselves, marked by history. In the absence of recognizable monuments and memorials that testify and recall the past, memory seeps into the fabric of the place and lingers there, resisting time. The mountain tour of Carlos, Dacio, and Julieta is an immersion in a former battlefield whose spectral texture shows objects and traces, residues of clothes and military equipment, silent remains of the violent confrontation that took place there in June 1982. Near the end of Julieta’s footage, the camera registers Carlos leaving a marker where one of his friends died. The work of mourning is entwined with an act of memory as he improvises a cross and plants an Argentine flag, an intervention that ties together a ritual of private mourning with the symbols of a public or official memory.

In contrast with the scenes that show Dacio and Carlos’ trip to the mountain and the establishment of a place of memory by land marking, Dieleke and Casabé follow Julieta in a somewhat distant way. The sequences in which she silently tours Port Stanley suggest an attunement with the romantic figuration of self and landscape in which the performance of the solitary walk is central to the learning experience of the journey that, in this case, is related to the mourning of her child. If in the first trip memory seeps into the remains of the battlefield, in the second one Julieta encounters other material manifestations of memory. The protagonist walks through monuments for remembrance such as monoliths, official cemeteries, and museums, spaces where loss is manifested in its public and private face. *La forma exacta de las islas* explores



Photo: Edgardo Dieleke, Daniel Casabé, and Ajimolido Films.

Julieta's personal drama against a background of collective trauma. At the beginning of the film, she visits Port Stanley's cemetery, and it is only when she stops at a war memorial for World War I and II veterans that she starts recalling her 2006 trip. Her almost obsessive meandering around the local cemetery is also filled with stories of loss and grief narrated by the directors' voiceovers. In another sequence, rather than telling, the film shows her visit to the San Carlos Blue Beach Military Cemetery, which holds the remains of 14 of the 255 British casualties from the Falklands War. The camera stops briefly to contemplate one of the sections with seven graves until, without transition, we move to the Argentine military cemetery, and a panning shot shows us graves marked by white wooden crosses, some marked with the name of a soldier and others marked with "soldado argentino solo conocido por Dios."

Julieta's persistent wandering through cemeteries and her visit to the local museum suggest that, similarly to the archipelago, these micro-spaces within the islands act as a kind of heterotopia, an "other space" that in Michel Foucault's formulation simultaneously represents, contests, and inverts all of the real sites within a culture. While a utopia exists only as a non-place, a heterotopia "is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 26). These "other spaces" are "linked to slices in time" that "open onto what might be termed [. . .] heterochronies" (26). Foucault articulates different ways in which heterotopias cut up time, including

various degrees of disruption. The cemetery, he states, is the most powerful example of temporal disruption, as here we are faced with an absolute rupture of familiar time that becomes strangely permanent. In contrast to these breaks or gaps in time, the space of the museum expresses the “idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages” (26). Encapsulating temporal discontinuities or accumulating and protecting all of time in one space, cemeteries and museums also merge the public and the private and tie together past and present in a common history. Rather than mere “places of memory” associated with a commemorative logic, in the film, these spaces articulate a new relationship between informal memory, private grief, and history.⁷

The concept of heterotopia allows us also to consider the space of the islands as presenting an inherent “otherness” that is also, almost paradoxically, bound up with broader questions of collective trauma and belonging. In this way, on Julieta’s second return trip, the islands become a space of loss not only for the generation that lived the 1982 war, but for many others as well. Apart from the collective damage done to Argentina following its defeat, there was the damage done to the Falklands. One interviewee explains that after the conflict, communication with mainland Argentina ceased, which considerably worsened the sense of isolation of native islanders. Along with the traumas of the combatants, the film explores the after effects of the war among the islanders. In a revealing scene, a kelper narrates the traumatic stress disorder suffered by a woman who confused the 1982 invasion of the Argentine army with World War II. The collective loss inflicted by the different wars overlaps with individual losses: that of Dacio, who lost his partner in combat; that of Rob Yssel, who recounts the tragic and painful loss of his wife, the archivist of the island; that of a woman who, according to the narrative of the Port Stanley Museum, lost her six children when a devastating plague hit Stanley in 1855; and finally that of Julieta and her frustrated motherhood.

Expansion of the Self and Collective Mourning

While the geographical singularity of the islands makes them an exceptional place to think about how to cope with pain, the testimonies of those interviewed, soldiers and islanders, all ultimately function as mirrors for the experience of the protagonist. These inscriptions of subjectivity in the discourse of *La forma exacta de las islas* are intentional, as they introduce an affective dimension into the dominant logic of the film’s argument. Subjectivity is the filter through which the real enters the discourse as well as a kind of

experiential compass that guides the work toward its goal as an “embodied knowledge” that addresses the spectator and creates the ground for an engagement with a collectivity much larger than the self. Tracing crucial forms of expression in (auto)biographical films, such as diaries and self-portraits, Paola Lagos Labbé argues that documentary discourses that expose the intimate are characterized by an introspective feature, an “ultrasound device,” as different representational resources look to shape a distinct space, time, and voice that come together to evoke the “self” (70). Certainly, *La forma exacta de las islas* replicates this inward movement, but it also constructs “subjectivity as a site of instability—flux, drift, perpetual revision—rather than coherence” (Renov 110). Although the audience enters the islands aligned with Julieta’s subject position, the film proposes to navigate the archipelago as an in-between space where the protagonist’s story continually intersects with those of the islanders. In other words, even if *La forma exacta de las islas* draws from different forms of personal expression in recent documentary film, it does so in order to explore what we can call an expansion of the self.

As a collective endeavor, this cinema of experience uses voiceovers as a pivotal resource not only to provide structural sense to the film, but also to modulate subjectivity. Throughout the film, the voiceovers of the directors, one of whom also appears in person, explain Julieta’s reasons for returning to the islands and an actress reads excerpts of Julieta’s personal diary, a self-reflective inclusion on the writer’s part that reveals both the intentions as well as the difficulties she experienced while making the film. In one scene, the voice of Dieleke tells us that “Julieta viajó a las Malvinas para terminar su tesis. Antes de viajar estudió toda la literatura sobre la guerra. Analizó en detalle novelas como *Los pichiciegos* de Fogwill y *Las islas* de Carlos Gamerro.” Using first person and present tense, an actress’ voice-over reads Julieta’s travel diary and reinforces what Dieleke said: “Vengo a las Malvinas para contrastar la versión de la guerra que nos contaron en la escuela, para contrastar las versiones testimoniales de aquellos que lucharon en 1982. Vengo para ver cómo este espacio fue imaginado en la literatura y el cine. Vengo a Malvinas para conocer a los Kelpers.”⁸ In the hotel room, when Julieta discusses the film she is making with Dacio and Carlos, one of the ex-combatants dismantles the objectivity of documentary discourse when he says, “Vos sos la que está haciendo la película. La película empieza con vos, empieza allá cuando estás pensando tu tesis,” and, looking at the other veteran, he reiterates, “La película es sobre ella. Ella tenía seis años cuando fue la guerra de Malvinas. Ella lleva Malvinas adentro desde que tenía seis

años.” These few scenes underscore the fragmented and polyphonic nature of this unconventional documentary. The film proposes a peculiar writing of the self that contains first-, second-, and third-person narratives. Moreover, these voices layered together narrate a story that contains autobiographical, biographical, and historical elements. Slipping back and forth between personal and historical narrative, the voiceovers overlap fragmentary meditations on the present and the past of the Falklands, telling a piece of the history of the islands through the exploration of the characters’ personal trauma.

The primacy of subjectivity in both the intentionality and the organization of the narrative is reinforced with the duplication of Julieta’s voice via voiceovers. The actress who provides them, far from incorporating an omniscient commentary, expresses the changing moods, doubts, and desires of the protagonist. At one point, reading what appears to be a fragment of Julieta’s journal, the voiceover says: “Cuando la guerra comenzó, yo tenía cinco y acababa de entrar a primer grado. No tengo memoria del día 2 de abril o del día de la rendición. Pero sí recuerdo el hundimiento del Belgrano. Creo que mi mamá me estaba preparando para ir a la escuela. Estábamos en el baño, con la radio prendida, y ella lloraba mientras escuchábamos las noticias.” However, it is not the childhood memory that is at the center of this subjective narrative, but rather a subsequent traumatic event that Julieta discusses with the directors during the second trip: “Espero que en algún momento dejemos de seguir los pasos de Carlos y Dacio . . . porque es como vivir sus experiencias vicariamente. Mi experiencia es otra. Tiene que ver con cosas que me pasaron después, cuando me fui de Malvinas.” Towards the end of the film, the female voiceover reads the last entry of the travel journal, written a few weeks after Julieta returned to the continent: “En estas islas cabe la última entrada de mi diario escrita en 2006, pocas semanas después de regresar al continente. Si un día vuelvo a Malvinas ya no seré la misma. No seré una, sino dos. Viviré mi maternidad con felicidad y será dulce la espera. Volveré con un hijo concebido en esas islas. Quizá cuando crezca él decida visitar ese lugar.” After a pause, the same voiceover reveals the main reason for making the film: “En el momento de cerrar el diario no sabía que ese viaje no se realizaría. Al menos no así. Porque mi hijo Eliseo moriría a pocas horas de nacer. Sin embargo seguirá conmigo su memoria y esa ficción feliz ligada a mi viaje a las islas.” The voiceover narration re-inscribes the story of the loss in a new travel journal, that of the film. The return journey to the islands and the very making of the documentary are part of the process of coming to terms with that loss and, in this way, the islands turn out to be a

space associated with pain and suffering and also with beauty and consolation.

In the space of the islands, Julieta's grief enables new attachments and configurations as she performs the mourning that connects her loss with other tragedies both personal and collective. In her study of familiar memories, Annette Kuhn argues that memory work, when properly conceived, folds public and private spheres into one another: "Memory work makes it possible to explore connections between 'public' historical events, structures of feeling, family dramas, relations of class, national identity and gender, and 'personal' memory. In these case histories outer and inner, social and personal, historical and psychical, coalesce; and the web of interconnections that binds them together is made visible" (5). Kuhn's description of the coalescence of outer and inner histories describes well a documentary that, by redefining the reading of the past through subjectivity, finds truths that are partial but also profoundly embodied and functional for the construction of a closer, warmer memory that moves from the individual realm to the collective. A second ending to *La forma exacta de las islas* takes place when the director's voiceover says that "así empezaba nuestra película." A subtitle states that it is April 2, 2007, and the images show us Julieta, happy and pregnant, attending a 25th anniversary memorial ceremony for the war. In this final scene, the rupture of temporality retrieves past, aborted projects and re-inscribes the intimate



Photo: Edgardo Dieleke, Daniel Casabé, and Ajimolido Films.

in the public, making connections between personal tragedies and desires, collective wounds and projects.

Affective Geography or Thinking Memory through Space

Exploring the relationships between cinema and history, Robert Rosenstone proposes in *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* that affective films are a fruitful alternative to the narrative limitations of traditional history. Even if it merges different genres of intimacy, such as personal diaries and self-portraits, *La forma exacta de las islas* does not narrate a biography. Instead, it brings together fragments that give a particular look at a specific moment in Julieta's life and draws us to the affective dimension of lived reality and history. Defying the conventional opposition between affect, discourse, and reason, affectivity becomes in the documentary a condition of possibility of subjectivity and knowledge. In the film, a complex structure in which multiple perspectives and voices come together to expose traumatic situations is interspersed with travel-writing techniques such as the travelogue and the chronicle. Through a fragmented and self-reflective register, the superimposition of search and return journeys allows the documentary to reveal the links between personal drama and collective wounds while maintaining a critical relationship with the past, as the interplay of multiple trips avoids any sense of closure.

Part mourning documentary, part affective travelogue, *La forma exacta de las islas* eludes the nationalist prerogatives and the idea of the "just cause" that permeate political discourses, testimonies, and historical films and manages, instead, to pose complex responses to the question of the war's aftermath. As a modern cartography, the film is capable of mapping not only the shape of the islands' territory, but also the temporal experiences inscribed there. As an evocation of the temporal shifts that characterize the aftermath of a war, *La forma exacta de las islas* thinks memory through space. Mapping experiences of grief and consolation through narratives of self and space, the film makes the islands a place of both personal and collective trauma. Julieta's journey through ghostly sites of inarticulate and half-understood longing is an act of mapping haunted spaces that progressively fill with new stories. The film presents this remote archipelago as a site of memory, an intensive, affective, even heterotopic space that changes both the characters' and the viewers' connection to the land and to personal and collective wounds.

The film also explores how a particular space is involved in consolation. If the Falklands became a "consolation-scape" it is because the geography

of the islands metaphorically extends to the insular condition of those who inhabit that terrain, making it possible to think a parallel between the scenery and the subjectivity of the inhabitants. The audiovisual mapping of the islands guides us within the insular territory of the subjective experience. To live in one of the most remote archipelagos in the world is to expose oneself to a permanent state of vulnerability, precariousness, and resilience. Yearning and wandering through monuments, memorial sites, and erased spaces and places inhabited by memories of past violence and tragedy, Julieta exposes herself to the precarious conditions that will distinguish her affective process as she negotiates the fallout of acute grief. In the intersection of travelogue and mourning, psycho-geography comes to function as a memorial site, a collection of places of reclamation and self-discovery, allowing the film to stage a form of mourning that emerges as a mode of becoming an other. In this vein, tracing the protagonist's emotional journey in the aftermath of loss, *La forma exacta de las islas* functions as an affective geography that configures new forms of community through its creative transformation of voices and places ignored by hegemonic narratives.

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Notes

¹ For example, Volume 4 of *SIWA. Revista de literatura geográfica*, "Islarios de todas las islas del mundo," is entirely devoted to the fascination with archipelagos in literature.

² The Malvinas / Falkland Islands consist of two main islands as well as many smaller ones in the south Atlantic Ocean. The 1982 conflict was triggered by Argentina's occupation of South Georgia Island on March 19, 1982, followed by the occupation of the Falklands, and it ended when Argentina surrendered on June 14, 1982. The initial invasion was considered by Argentina to be the re-occupation of its own territory and by Great Britain to be an invasion of a British overseas territory. In the period leading up to the war, Argentina was in the midst of a devastating economic crisis and large-scale civil unrest against the military junta that had been governing the country since 1976. The Argentine military government, headed by General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri, sought to maintain power by diverting public attention, playing off long-standing feelings of the Argentines towards the islands, although the junta's leaders never thought that the United Kingdom would respond militarily. After combat resulting in 258 British and 649 Argentine deaths, the British eventually prevailed, and the islands remained under British control. The ensuing fall of the military dictatorship was precipitated by Argentina's defeat in the conflict.

³ Some of the films analyzed by Israeli scholar Tzvi Tal are *La Rosales*, directed by David Lipszyc (1984); *Malvinas, historia de traiciones*, directed by Jorge Denti (1984); *No tan nuestras*, directed by Ramiro Longo (2005); *Locos de la bandera*, directed by Julio Cardoso (2005); *Resurrected*, directed by David Greengrass (1988); and *An Ungentlemanly Act*, directed by Stuart Urban (1992).

⁴ Over a century, Argentine public discourse had imagined the islands as two empty spaces on which to imprint national identity, which explains the massive support the invasion received from the

entire ideological spectrum. However, the outcome of the war prompted large protests against the ruling military government, hastening its downfall. Since then, the islands have acquired other undertones. Placed in a grey zone between dictatorship and democracy, the cause of the “just war” crystallized as part of the hegemonic discourse but became, at the same time, a shameful event of difficult assimilation.

⁵ Directed by Edgardo Dieleke and Daniel Casabé. Written by Dieleke, Casabé, and Julieta Vitullo. Cast: Vitullo, Carlos Enrriori, Dacio Agretti, Tony Smith, John Fowler, Rob Yssel, Dieleke, and Casabé. Voiceover: Dieleke, María Emilia Franchignoni, and Casabé. Texts of the voiceover: Dieleke. Excerpts from Vitullo’s diary, Fogwill’s *Los pichiciegos* (1983), and Carlos Gamerro’s *Las islas* (1998). Fragments of Vitullo’s dissertation.

⁶ By “search documentary” I refer to a personal-essay documentary where filmmakers and characters go on journeys of (self) discovery, often triggered by a crisis. *La forma exacta de las islas* is also a “mourning film” since the process of making the documentary helps the character to navigate and work through the grieving process.

⁷ As I have shown in a previous article, “Paisajes interiores: espacio y afecto en un documental sobre Malvinas,” what is peculiar to *La forma exacta de las islas* is that mourning takes a “spatial turn.” The deciphering of the geographic space of the islands is key in the process of coming to terms with traumatic events. In the course of the documentary, broken sequences of perfectly framed land- and seascapes act as a silent commentary on the work of mourning. Exploring self-reflectively the aesthetic and affective relationships between landscape and self, the film turns the islands into a space, a practiced place that ultimately allows the finding of a register that escapes the grand narrative and, instead, highlights the subjective experience of both geography and history.

⁸ “Kelper” is a term used to refer to inhabitants of the Malvinas/Falklands.

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