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FROM SCREEN TO PAGE:
FEMINIST COUNTER-ARCHIVES IN MEXICAN DOCUMENTARY
FILM AND DOCUMENTARY WRITING

Cuánto es capaz de experimentar un cadáver?

Teresa Margoles

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SITUATED PREFACE: POSITION, VISION, AND RESPONSIBILITY

This article is written from a situated position at the intersection of feminist political analysis and visual communication studies. It examines the growing challenge of depicting violence without perpetuating the systems that produce it.

In contemporary Mexico, mass graves, forced disappearances, feminicide, and the precarious mobility of migrants have become structural features of social and political life. Violence is not exceptional: it is normalised, administered, sensationalised, and disseminated through media systems, bureaucratic protocols, and cultural narratives. This saturation of violence across institutional, criminal, and media systems has generated urgent questions for cultural producers: how can one bear witness to systematic violence without becoming complicit in its circulation?

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Lethal violence escalated markedly since the militarised war on drugs was launched in 2006 under President Felipe Calderón.¹ Rather than reducing insecurity, the strategy has deepened cycles of contestation between criminal organisations and state forces. As Rivera Garza notes in *Los muertos indóciles*,² Mexico has been filled with mass graves, which is a stark indication of the brutality of contemporary violence and the chronic institutional failure to identify, protect, or mourn the dead.

Beyond its statistical magnitude, this violence, especially gendered violence, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking, has generated a substantial documentary corpus across cinema, literature, photography, and hybrid narrative forms. Over the past two decades, a growing number of filmmakers and writers have attempted to narrate feminicidal landscapes, forced disappearance, and trafficking economies through diverse aesthetic strategies. Films such as *Las tres muertes* by Marisela Escobedo (2020), *La libertad del diablo* by Everardo González (2017), and *Bellas de noche* by María José Cuevas (2016), as well as literary works by Marcela Turati, Fernanda Melchor, and Cristina Rivera Garza, all explore the entanglements between gendered violence, state complicity, and organised crime. Many of these works navigate the tension between evidential visibility and the risk of reproducing sensationalist imaginaries. This ethical dilemma has become central to the documentary engagement with Mexico's necropolitical landscape. Within this context, violence against women and violence against migrant children are not separate phenomena but overlapping regimes produced by the same networks of trafficking, criminal exploitation, and institutional abandonment. These overlapping regimes blur the boundary between the living and the dead: the disappeared remain suspended between presence and absence, while survivors carry the weight of those who have been erased, navigating a landscape haunted by ungrievable losses.

This article examines Tatiana Huezo's *Tempestad*³ and Valeria Luiselli's *Los niños perdidos*.⁴ Their documentary practices, one audiovisual, one textual, reject extractive modes of representation that convert suffering into spec-

¹ Guadalupe CORREA-CABRERA, "The Spectacle of Drug Violence: American Public Discourse, Media, and Border Enforcement in the Texas-Tamaulipas Border Region During Drug-War Times," *Norteamérica* 7, no. 2 (2012): 199–220.

² Cristina RIVERA GARZA, *Los muertos indóciles* (new expanded ed.) (México: Literatura Random House, 2021).

³ Tatiana HUEZO, *Tempestad*, documentary film, 105 min., 2016.

⁴ Valeria LUISELLI, *Los niños perdidos* (Madrid: Sexto Piso, 2016).

tacle. Instead, they cultivate ethical strategies grounded in protection, relationality, and responsibility. Documentary practices are never neutral: they determine what becomes visible or inaudible, whose stories circulate, and whose memories are sustained or erased.

This position entails a double responsibility: to confront forms of violence that institutions obscure, and to resist representational practices that transform pain into a consumable resource. Guided by feminist commitments to care and accountability and by a political understanding of representation as a field structured by inequality, this article asks not whether violence should be represented, but how documentary forms can intervene in perceptual regimes that normalise disposability and forgetting.

1.2 TOPIC, OBJECTIVES, AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This article addresses a central question: How can one represent unbearable violence – against disappeared people unaccompanied children, bodies rendered disposable – without reproducing the very logics that made this violence possible?

Through comparative, cross-media analysis, the article argues that Tatiana Huezo's *Tempestad* (2016) and Valeria Luiselli's *Los niños perdidos* (2016) develop complementary documentary ethics: an ethics of visual opacity in film and an ethics of textual audibility in essay. These medium-specific strategies form complementary counter-archives that intervene in dominant regimes of visibility and recognition.

The analysis contributes to visual culture studies by examining how documentary form challenges necropolitical perception; to feminist epistemologies by foregrounding accountable and relational modes of representation; and to documentary theory by exploring cross-media ethics of resistance.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: VIOLENCE, REPRESENTATION, AND A FEMINIST ETHICS OF ATTENTION

In the Latin American context, particularly in contemporary Mexico, violence is not merely an event but a structuring condition that saturates everyday life, reorganises social relations, and shapes regimes of visibility and representation.

Scholars such as Rita Segato⁵ and Rossana Reguillo⁶ have demonstrated that violence in the region functions pedagogically and performatively: it teaches through spectacle, it governs through fear, and it circulates through media ecosystems that amplify its effects. Within this field, the problem of representing violence becomes inseparable from the problem of participating in its reproduction. In such a landscape, documentary practices confront a profound ethical challenge: how to create forms capable of testifying to violence without contributing to the very pedagogies of cruelty that sustain it.

Segato's notion of *pedagogías de la crueldad*⁷ is foundational for understanding the stakes of representation. For this author, contemporary violence, particularly against women, is performative: it sends messages, marks bodies, and imposes order through extreme brutality. The dissemination of violent images is therefore part of the violence itself. This insight is deepened by Reguillo's analysis of the *narcomáquina*,⁸ the media-criminal assemblage that produces affective excess, desensitisation, and a collapse of meaning through the circulation of horrific images. The convergence of these two theorists establishes the terrain on which this article operates: a context in which visibility can be violent, and where the visual economy of crime can transform suffering bodies into consumable spectacle.

From this regional grounding, the framework expands toward philosophical analyses that illuminate how violence transforms bodies into non-subjects. Adriana Cavarero's concept of *horrorism*⁹ articulates the destruction of singularity that characterises contemporary brutality. Horror, for Cavarero, does not merely kill; it undoes the integrity of the body, exposes its helplessness, and reduces persons to faceless, anonymous matter. This resonates strongly with Achille Mbembe's theorisation of *necropolitics* as the subjugation of life to the power of death.¹⁰ In the Mexican context, this landscape materialises through clandestine graves, disappearance routes, militarised highways, unregulated detention spaces, and bureaucratic procedures that classify certain

⁵ Rita Laura SEGATO, *La escritura en el cuerpo de las mujeres asesinadas en Ciudad Juárez: Territorio, soberanía y crímenes de segundo estado* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2013).

⁶ Rossana REGUILLO, "La narcomáquina y el trabajo de la violencia," *e-misférica* 8, no. 2 (2011). <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/es/emisferica-82/reguillo5.html>

⁷ SEGATO, *La escritura en el cuerpo*, 45.

⁸ REGUILLO, "La narcomáquina," 51.

⁹ Adriana CAVARERO, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 9.

¹⁰ Achille MBEMBE, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11.

subjects, especially women, incarcerated persons, and migrant children, as expendable or ungrievable.

Sayak Valencia's analysis of *capitalismo gore*¹¹ specifies how market logics and criminal economies turn this disposability into a commodity, transforming bodies, images, and suffering into profitable spectacle. Together, these frameworks illuminate the structural conditions of violence in Mexico and the Americas: a system that renders certain subjects killable, ungrievable, and hypervisible at the precise moment they are politically erased.

If these thinkers describe the conditions of violence, Latin American feminist theorists illuminate the problem of representing it. Cristina Rivera Garza's *necroescrituras*¹² and her formulation of *escritura común* provide a crucial ethical horizon. She insists that writing with the dead, the disappeared, or the bereaved demands a practice of shared authorship that resists appropriation. Testimony is not raw material but relational labour. Nelly Richard's work on the fractures of memory in post-dictatorship Chile¹³ further demonstrates how trauma resists coherent narration, requiring aesthetic forms capable of holding fragmentation, opacity, and interruption. These insights are essential for understanding both Huezo and Luiselli: each constructs forms that honour fracture rather than resolve it, and that resist the extractive tendencies of documentary truth regimes.

If Rivera Garza and Richard show how memory and testimony are fractured by violence, Judith Butler's theorisation of *grievability*¹⁴ further clarifies what political frames determine whether a life is recognised as a life, while others remain structurally ungrievable – unmourned because they are never fully apprehended as subjects. This insight articulates the stakes of testimonial representation: violence does not merely destroy bodies; it destroys the conditions under which those bodies can be mourned. In the Mexican and Central American context, this ungrievability manifests not only in the criminal sphere but also in the bureaucratic regimes that process children, migrants, incarcerated women, or the disappeared as cases rather than subjects.

While Butler clarifies the frames that regulate recognition, Jacques Rancière illuminates how aesthetic practices can intervene in them. For this

¹¹ Sayak VALENCIA, *Capitalismo gore* (Spain: Melusin, 2010), 93.

¹² Cristina RIVERA GARZA, *Los muertos indóciles: Necroescrituras y desapropiación* (México: Tusquets, 2013), 27–41.

¹³ Nelly RICHARD, *Fracturas de la memoria: Arte y pensamiento crítico* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2007).

¹⁴ Judith BUTLER, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 1–2.

author, politics and aesthetics are both concerned with the distribution of the sensible: the implicit rules governing what can be seen, heard, and known.¹⁵ Documentary practices that refuse spectacle or disrupt conventional visibility are not simply stylistic innovations; they are political acts that redistribute perception itself. This provides a crucial conceptual grounding for analysing Huezo's and Luiselli's work: each reorganises the perceptual field and thereby challenges the regimes through which violence becomes legible.

Glissant's *right to opacity*¹⁶ offers the final conceptual anchor for this framework. His argument that oppressed subjects have the right not to be fully visible or legible to dominant systems directly challenges the colonial and administrative demand for transparency. In contexts where transparency often means exposure to surveillance, criminal scrutiny, or bureaucratic extraction, opacity becomes a form of protection and self-determination. Glissant thus offers a language for understanding why both works strategically withhold visibility and limit audibility: opacity becomes a practice of care.

Bringing these strands together, the framework culminates in a **feminist ethics of attention**. Attention is not simply directed sight or listening; it is an ethical orientation grounded in relationality, care, and responsibility. Unlike the surveillance gaze or the classificatory ear of the state, feminist attention recognises the fragility of those who speak and the risk inherent in disclosure. It involves perceiving without extracting, listening without appropriating, and holding space for the unfinished, the fragmentary, and the opaque. Huezo and Luiselli do not ask viewers and readers to look harder or know more; they ask us to cultivate forms of attention that honour vulnerability without transforming it into spectacle or evidence.

This integrated framework establishes the conceptual foundation for analysing how *Tempestad* and *Los niños perdidos* respond to the moral-aesthetic dilemma of representing violence without reproducing its logics. The next sections mobilise these concepts through medium-specific formal strategies that articulate new forms of documentary ethics.

¹⁵ Jacques RANCIERE, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009), 12.

¹⁶ Édouard GLISSANT, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 194.

3. METHODOLOGY: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTARY FORM AND ETHICAL POSITIONING

This article adopts a qualitative, comparative, and cross-media methodological approach designed to examine how documentary practices respond ethically to contexts of extreme violence. The methodology is grounded in the premise that, under conditions where violence has become spectacularised, bureaucratised, and normalised, the central analytical task is not to catalogue representations of violence but to interrogate how documentary *forms* intervene in regimes of perception, audibility, and recognition.

The comparative dimension of the study does not aim to establish equivalence between film and literary documentary, nor to measure their respective effectiveness. Rather, it is employed to analyse how distinct media confront a shared moral-aesthetic problem: how to testify to unbearable violence without reproducing the very logics that sustain disposability and erasure. *Tempestad* and *Los niños perdidos* are therefore treated as parallel responses to a common historical and political condition, articulated through different material, sensory, and narrative resources.

Methodologically, the analysis combines close visual and auditory reading of *Tempestad* with close textual analysis of *Los niños perdidos*, with sustained attention to formal decisions rather than thematic content alone. In the case of the film, this includes the use of off-screen voice, sound design, duration, framing, camera movement, and the systematic refusal of facial visibility.

These elements are examined as ethical strategies that displace the gaze from exposed bodies toward modes of listening, resonance, and temporal attention. For the text, the analysis focuses on narrative structure, fragmentation, translation, the incorporation of bureaucratic language, and the positioning of the authorial voice. Particular attention is paid to how administrative procedures, such as questionnaires and legal protocols, are reworked as narrative devices that reveal the violence embedded in systems of classification and control. Finally, a comparative interpretation that identifies shared strategies across different media is used.

This methodological approach is informed by feminist and decolonial epistemologies that understand representation as a relational practice rather than a neutral transmission of information. Testimony is not treated as raw data or evidence but as a situated act shaped by asymmetries of power, vulnerability, and institutional mediation. Accordingly, silence, opacity, hesitation, and incompleteness are read not as absences or failures, but as active strategies of

care and protection. The methodology thus resists extractive modes of analysis that would seek to stabilise meaning, resolve ambiguity, or produce definitive accounts of violence.

Central to this approach is the recognition that documentary practices create obligations among those who testify, those who assemble the narrative, and those who receive it. The analysis, therefore, attends to how *Tempestad* and *Los niños perdidos* position viewers and readers not as consumers of suffering, but as participants in a shared ethical space that demands attentiveness, restraint, and responsibility. This includes examining how each work redistributes agency, limits access and challenges the desire for transparency or narrative closure.

Finally, the methodology reflects an essayistic orientation, in which analysis itself is understood as a process of inquiry rather than a claim to exhaustive knowledge. By moving between filmic and textual forms, and by foregrounding formal strategies over representational completeness, the study seeks to illuminate how documentary practices can function as counter-aesthetic interventions, reconfiguring how violence is sensed, interpreted, and remembered without reproducing its spectacle.

The methodological approach adopted here is consistent with the theoretical commitments outlined above. Just as Segato conceptualises violence as relational and pedagogical, and Rivera Garza frames writing as ethical engagement, this analysis approaches documentary forms relationally rather than extractively. The methodology thus mirrors the ethics it studies: attending to opacity, partiality, and restraint as analytical values rather than obstacles.

4. COUNTER-ARCHIVES IN FORMATION: INTRODUCING *TEMPESTAD* AND *LOS NIÑOS PERDIDOS*

This article examines the construction of feminist *counter-archives* capable of responding to the central research question: how to represent unbearable violence without reproducing its logics. ‘Counter-archive’ refers to artistic practices that generate alternative forms of memory and testimony outside state or institutional archives, particularly in contexts where official records erase, distort, or bureaucratically neutralise violence. Drawing on Richard’s analyses of memory after political trauma¹⁷ and Rivera Garza’s *escritura*

¹⁷ RICHARD, *Fracturas de la memoria*.

común,¹⁸ counter-archives resist dominant regimes of documentation by creating spaces where fragmented, vulnerable, or non-normative forms of testimony can persist. They do not aim to reproduce evidentiary completeness; rather, they sustain traces that official archives suppress. In here, counter-archival work emerges through visual opacity, sonic intimacy, paraphrase, redaction, and fragmentary narration.

4.1 CONTEXTS OF PRODUCTION: CINEMA AND LITERATURE AT THE LIMIT

Tempestad and *Los niños perdidos* emerge from distinct but structurally connected encounters with extreme violence. Neither work arises from observational detachment; each is grounded in long-term relational engagement with subjects whose lives have been shaped by the overlapping forces of criminal brutality, state abandonment, and bureaucratic dehumanisation. The following subsections trace how these production contexts shape each work's ethics.

4.1.1 Tatiana Huezo: Encounter, relational ethics, and cinematic responsibility

Tatiana Huezo's trajectory before *Tempestad* is essential to understanding the film's ethics. *El lugar más pequeño* (2011) already established her commitment to working within communities affected by violence, privileging memory, duration, and relational trust over investigative immediacy. It is through this ongoing engagement that Huezo encountered Miriam Carbajal's story: a young woman wrongfully imprisoned in Matamoros, tortured, and released into a country unwilling to acknowledge what had been done to her. Adela's parallel narrative and her years-long search for her disappeared daughter entered the project through a similarly sustained relational bond. These stories were not discovered; they were entrusted.

Huezo's decision to work over several years with these two women signals a refusal of extractive journalism. Her temporal commitment produces what Rivera Garza might call a cinematic *escritura común*, where testimony is shaped collaboratively rather than captured. It is in this relational context that the choice of cinema as a medium becomes ethically charged. Through film, Huezo can mobilise duration, atmospheric texture, and the sensory weight of landscapes to create forms of testimony that protect as much as they reveal.

¹⁸ RIVERA GARZA, *Los muertos indóciles*.

This choice is inseparable from the historical moment of *Tempestad*'s production (Mexico in 2016), marked by forensic crisis, proliferating clandestine graves, and the hypervisibility of spectacularised violence.

4.1.2 Valeria Luiselli: Interpretation, bureaucracy, and the ethics of listening

Luiselli's work arises from a different but parallel site of impossible witnessing: the New York immigration courts, where she served as a volunteer interpreter during the 2014 "surge" of unaccompanied Central American children arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border. Her role placed her inside the bureaucratic machinery that translates children's traumatic journeys into administrative categories. This structural positioning, neither advocate nor judge, neither participant nor observer, deeply shaped *Los niños perdidos*. The book is not reportage; it is a reflection from within the constraints of institutional listening.

The intake questionnaire functions as both a trigger and an architecture of the essay. Luiselli confronted its forty questions not as neutral prompts but as instruments of state power, devices that compress suffering into admissible formats and determine which children may be allowed to remain. Her work emerges from this tension: the impossibility of fully translating trauma into legal categories, and the ethical responsibility to listen without appropriating the voices of those she interprets for. Her literary practice arises from the limits imposed by this role, turning constraint into a method.

4.1.3 Shared territories, shared violence

Although their points of encounter differ, one in a Mexican prison and the roads of a country marked by disappearance, the other in a U.S. courtroom, Huezo and Luiselli are responding to the same necropolitical landscape. The children Luiselli heard in New York had travelled through the same highways Huezo films: roads controlled by criminal networks, checkpoints manned by corrupt officials, transit hubs that function as sites of risk, extortion, and disappearance. The violence that confines women like Miriam and that erases daughters like Adela's is materially contiguous with the violence that expels Central American children and subjects them to bureaucratic erasure. These shared geographies underscore that the two works are not merely thematically aligned but structurally interlinked: they respond to different faces of the same systemic violence.

These production contexts, shaped by relational practices, institutional constraints, and the impossibility of transparent testimony, directly inform the formal strategies that each work develops. As the following section demonstrates, ethical predicaments become aesthetic decisions.

4.2 FORMAL ARCHITECTURES: MEDIUM, STRUCTURE, AND AESTHETIC REFUSAL

4.2.1 *Tempestad*: Visual and Temporal Architecture

Visually, *Tempestad* is defined by its systematic refusal of the conventions of documentary revelation. Huezo withholds faces, masks bodies, and keeps scenes of violence off-screen. Landscapes, particularly highways, rain-soaked windows, bus terminals, and dim interiors, become repositories of affect rather than sites of evidence. This is Glissant's visual opacity;¹⁹ the film asserts the subject's right not to be seen under punitive or extractive conditions.

Temporally, the film privileges duration. Long takes establish a rhythmic slowness that resists the urgency of spectacle. Travel sequences unfold in real or near-real time, insisting on the weight of passage, confinement, and uncertainty. This temporal commitment creates space for testimony to be held rather than displayed.

The sonic dimension is equally crucial. Miriam's and Adela's voices circulate off-screen, intimate yet protected. Diegetic sounds, such as rain, engines, and ambient noise, create an aural world that accompanies their testimonies without illustrating them. Silence operates as a form of respect, a refusal to fill spaces where violence would otherwise compel representation. The film constructs a sonic architecture that allows testimony without exposing bodies to the regimes of spectacular visibility critiqued by Valencia.²⁰

4.2.2 *Los niños perdidos*: Fragmentation, intertextuality, and ethical paraphrase

The fragmentary structure of *Los niños perdidos* mirrors the administrative fragmentary form imposed by the intake questionnaire. Each section begins with a question drawn verbatim from the form, but the answers do not follow its logic. Instead, Luiselli assembles short fragments: paraphrased traces of children's testimonies, reflections on migration policy, historical references,

¹⁹ GLISSANT, *Poetics of Relation*.

²⁰ VALENCIA, *Capitalismo gore*.

and moments of personal narrative. No linear story emerges; instead, the text accumulates meaning through juxtaposition and resonance. Textual fragmentation becomes a way to honour what cannot be made whole.

Intertextuality deepens this structure. Literary, historical, and philosophical citations situate migrant children within larger genealogies of displacement, political violence, and narrative erasure. Luiselli's essayistic voice moves reflexively through these sources, acknowledging the impossibility of complete translation while refusing institutional silence.

Ethical paraphrase forms the core of the work's testimonial practice. Children's voices are mediated, not quoted; names are withheld; identifying details are redacted. In doing so, Luiselli constructs what may be called partial audibility: the voices are present but never exposed. This technique aligns with Rivera Garza's *escritura común*²¹, producing a textual space where testimony circulates without being appropriated.

These formal choices respond directly to the ethical imperatives mapped in the theoretical framework. Huezo's refusal to show bodies speaks to the critique of spectacle developed by Valencia,²² while Luiselli's exposure of bureaucratic language confronts the classificatory violence Butler²³ theorises. Both works reorganise sensory regimes through strategies that protect, rather than reveal, their subjects.

4.3 THE COMPARATIVE IMPERATIVE

Reading *Tempestad* and *Los niños perdidos* together reveals an epistemological relationship rather than a merely thematic one. Each work illuminates the other's representational strategies, demonstrating how different media can generate parallel forms of ethical resistance within the same necropolitical landscape. Their convergence does not lie in similar narrative content, but in a shared attempt to rethink the conditions under which lives rendered disposable by state and criminal forces can be addressed without being exposed to further harm. In this sense, the comparative lens is not only justified but necessary; it makes visible an underlying conceptual project that neither work fully reveals on its own.

This becomes particularly clear when considering the ethics embedded in each medium. Huezo mobilises what cinema uniquely allows: a grammar of

²¹ RIVERA GARZA, *Los muertos indóciles*.

²² VALENCIA, *Capitalismo gore*.

²³ BUTLER, *Frames of War*.

visual opacity that protects subjects from the violences of exposure, a temporal duration that obliges the viewer to inhabit the rhythms of trauma, and a sonic intimacy that carries testimony without revealing the body that speaks it. Luiselli, by contrast, draws on the affordances of literary form: a fragmentary structure that resists linear consumption, intertextual layering that situates child migrants within longer histories of displacement, and the modulation of voice through paraphrase and redaction that respects both the children's fragility and the limits of institutional language. Neither work claims superiority for its chosen medium; instead, each activates the ethical possibilities inherent in its form.

What emerges from their juxtaposition is a complementary relationship between opacity and audibility. Huezo protects her protagonists by withholding visibility (faces remain unseen, violence remains off-screen) countering a visual economy saturated with spectacularised suffering. Luiselli protects by regulating speech (children's words are paraphrased, identifying details withheld), countering the bureaucratic erasure that reduces migrant minors to administrative categories. Together, these strategies respond to the two primary mechanisms through which disposability is produced in Mexico and the Americas: the spectacular circulation of images of violated bodies, and the bureaucratic disappearance of vulnerable populations into files, forms, and case numbers.

This comparative perspective also clarifies the shared gendered and generational vulnerabilities at the core of both works. Miriam and Adela in *Tempes-tad*, and the migrant children in *Los niños perdidos*, occupy various positions within the necropolitical order, yet they are all subjected to systems that render them ungrievable, interchangeable, and easily expendable. Their experiences are not equivalent but structurally connected. Reading the works together brings these continuities into focus: incarceration, disappearance, forced migration, and administrative violence all operate through similar logics of devaluation, especially when directed toward women and children.

Finally, both works intervene in what Segato²⁴ identifies as *pedagogías de la crueldad*: the social and cultural processes through which societies learn to naturalise brutality, to accept disposability, and to participate – willingly or not – in circuits of dehumanisation. Against these pedagogies, Huezo and Luiselli cultivate practices of attention grounded in care, relationality, and ethical restraint. Their works refuse to teach through spectacle; instead, they teach through listening, withholding, and sustaining vulnerability as a site of knowledge rather than a sign of weakness. The comparison thus reveals a

²⁴ SEGATO, *La escritura*.

shared commitment to constructing counter-pedagogies and counter-archives capable of resisting both spectacularisation and erasure.

Having established production contexts, formal architectures, and comparative logic, we now turn to detailed analysis. Section 5 examines *Tempestad*'s cinematic architecture of opacity; section 6 addresses *Los niños perdidos*' practice of bureaucratic exposure and partial audibility.

5. *TEMPESTAD*: VOICE, SILENCE, AND THE ETHICS OF NOT SHOWING

Tatiana Huezo's *Tempestad* (2016) confronts one of the central dilemmas of contemporary Mexican documentary: how to testify to violence that is both spectacularised and structurally erased without reproducing the very logics that sustain it: scopic domination, extractive exposure, and commercial circulation. Rather than offering visual access to trauma, Huezo reorganises the perceptual field itself. *Tempestad* creates a cinema of protection: a documentary language in which voice, duration, and atmosphere carry the weight of testimony while the image refuses complicity with the pedagogies of cruelty that structure Mexico's necropolitical landscape.

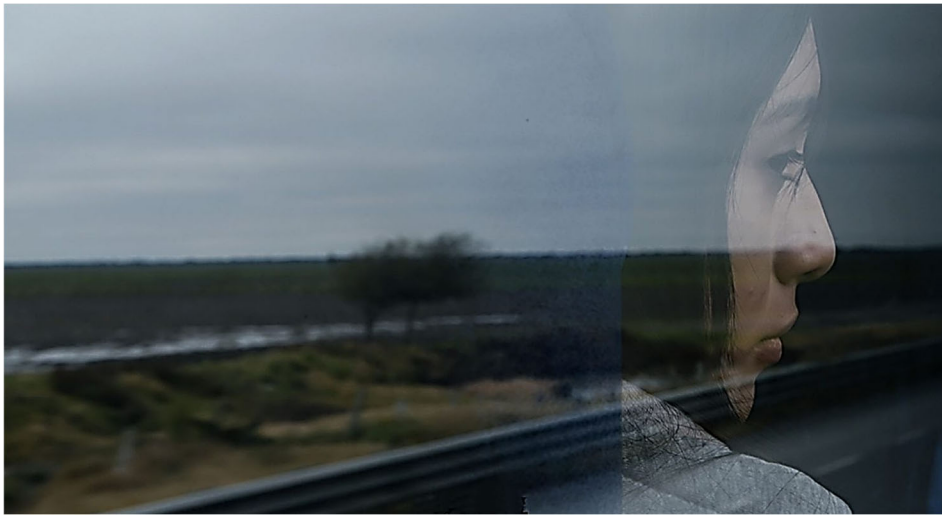


Figure 1. Landscape as aftermath: the highway becomes a repository of transit and disappearance rather than a site of visual evidence. *Tempestad* (Tatiana Huezo, 2016)²⁵

²⁵ The stills from *Tempestad* are used only for academic and critical purposes. Rights to the film belong to its producers and distributors.

The film tells two parallel stories that never meet in the diegesis but resonate affectively and politically: Miriam Carbajal, wrongfully imprisoned and tortured in a private detention centre in Matamoros, and Adela, a circus performer who searches across the country for her disappeared daughter. Yet the word ‘tells’ is not quite accurate. Huezo does not narrate these stories; she creates the conditions in which testimony can exist without being consumed. Her refusal of direct representation, no visible faces, no interview setup, no explanatory captions, responds to the combined forces of media saturation, criminal spectacle, and institutional silence that shape contemporary violence in Mexico.

Reguillo²⁶ has shown how narco-violence produces a *saturated visual field*, an ecology in which images proliferate while meaning collapses. In this context, showing becomes dangerous. Valencia’s account of *capitalismo gore* clarifies why: the circulation of violent imagery feeds an economy in which suffering becomes an object of consumption, a commodity of fear. Huezo’s refusal to show is therefore not an aesthetic flourish but a political intervention, an attempt to withdraw her protagonists from the circuits of spectacular violence that endanger them again.

5.1 OFF-SCREEN VOICE AS A CARTOGRAPHY OF TRAUMA

The most radical and formally consequential decision in *Tempestad* is the use of the off-screen voice. Miriam’s testimony is never attached to her image; her voice arrives disembodied, intimate, proximate, yet visually unanchored. This audio-visual separation produces a perceptual tension that reorganises the viewer’s engagement with testimony.

When Miriam describes the moment of her arrest, the image shows a highway, a long corridor, rain sliding down a window, never the moment of arrest itself. The disjunction between what is heard and what is seen compels viewers to inhabit the emotional, temporal, and corporeal space of trauma without the invasive power of the gaze.

This separation creates several effects; first, it produces a distinctive perceptual and ethical tension. Her voice, recorded in intimate proximity, carries the texture of breath, hesitations, and pauses that evoke private listening.

²⁶ REGUILLO, “La narcomáquina.”

Meanwhile, the camera remains at a distance, observing roads, crowds, and bus stations with an impersonal, almost forensic detachment. Rather than creating confusion, this disjunction obliges the viewer to inhabit contradictory registers at once, acoustic intimacy and visual distance, and to negotiate the gap between them. In this space of tension, testimony becomes a relational practice. Secondly, as Rivera Garza would argue, the film enacts a form of *escritura común*: Miriam retains control over the narrative content and emotional cadence of her account, while Huezo shapes the cinematic environment in which that account becomes audible. The voice is neither extracted nor subordinated to the demands of visual evidence; it remains sovereign even as it circulates through the filmic space. Finally, because the events Miriam recounts are never shown, the viewer cannot rely on the evidentiary regimes typical of documentary cinema. Instead of consuming images of violence, the spectator must engage with its reverberations – its resonance rather than its spectacle. In this sense, Miriam’s voice functions as a cartography of trauma, tracing emotional, sensory, and political landscapes across the geographical landscapes through which the camera moves, allowing her testimony to travel across Mexico’s geographic and emotional landscapes.

5.2 VISUAL STRATEGY: OPACITY, AFTERMATH, AND THE LANDSCAPE OF VIOLENCE

Huezo’s visual strategy is defined by opacity, understood through Glissant as the right not to be transparent, and operates through three interconnected techniques: landscape as aftermath, obstruction as protection, and atmospheric duration.

5.2.1 Landscape as aftermath

The landscapes Huezo films (highways, gas stations, bus terminals, bridges, toll booths) are not symbolic abstractions but the everyday infrastructures through which violence circulates. These are sites of transit, not spectacle. They carry the weight of what has passed through them but refuse to yield visual evidence. Huezo is not showing violence; she is showing the spaces it passes through, the spaces where bodies disappear, are moved, are processed.

5.2.2 Obstructions as protection

Glass panels, metal grilles, fogged windows, rain-streaked bus windshields, reflections in puddles: these ubiquitous obstructions create layers between the viewer and the filmed world. Faces appear but never resolve into full legibility. This is not coyness, it is protection. In a country where images of suffering circulate without consent, where victims are often re-victimised through digital circulation, these visual obstacles enact a feminist refusal of scopophilic possession.

5.2.3 Atmospheric temporality

Rain, fog, dusk light, and long durations construct an affective temporality that mirrors trauma's nonlinearity. Time stretches, stalls, thickens. The viewer must dwell in uncertainty and repetition – the very conditions of living under state and criminal violence.

5.3 SONIC ARCHITECTURE: TESTIMONY ANCHORED IN SOUND

Sound in *Tempestad* is not accompaniment – it is the film's primary narrative infrastructure.

5.3.1 Ambient sound as emotional groundwork

Rain against metal, engines revving, ventilation drones, footsteps, airport announcements, these sounds create the materiality of the spaces Miriam moved through. They mark confinement (echoes, metallic reverberations), transit (motors, movement), bureaucratic thresholds (waiting room hums, ticket counters), danger (dogs barking, distant shouts), and solitude (wind, silence). There is no non-diegetic music, and therefore no emotional manipulation. Sound is world-building, not affect-coercing.

5.3.2 Silence as an ethical gesture

Huezo uses silence sparingly and deliberately. Silence falls in moments when the narration touches emotional or political thresholds – torture scenes, the impossibility of speaking about certain abuses, or narrative ruptures. Silence functions as protection for the subject, recognition of unspeakability, refusal to aestheticise pain. Silence is not absence but respect.

5.3.3 Voice within the soundscape

Miriam's voice never dominates completely; it is always in conversation with ambient sound. The world with its noise, movement, and weather, presses against the voice. These relational mixing signals that the voice is not floating above reality; it is *embedded in it*, shaped by it, injured by it.

5.4 THE MARTÍN SEQUENCE: ETHICS AT THE EDGE OF REPRESENTABILITY

The death of Martín (a young migrant man Miriam befriended during detention) is the film's most ethically charged moment. It could have been a moment of visual revelation, yet Huezo maintains her commitment to opacity.

When Miriam recounts Martín's killing, the image does not show his body, the gun, the perpetrators, or the execution. Instead, the screen remains dark or cuts to atmospheric shots of the landscape at night, refusing to illustrate the execution.

This sequence crystallises several intertwined ethical commitments in Huezo's cinematic practice. By refusing to visualise Martín's execution, the film resists what Valencia (2010) identifies as *gore capitalism*: the economy in which mutilated bodies and spectacularised suffering circulate as consumable images. Avoiding such representation also counters what Cavarero²⁷ terms *horrorism*, the dismembering logic that destroys bodily and narrative singularity. By refusing to stage the scene of death, Huezo protects Martín from being reduced to a horrific spectacle, preserving his singularity precisely by maintaining visual opacity. Finally, Butler's notion of grievability gains a cinematic articulation here: Martín becomes grievable through the weight of Miriam's testimony rather than through the exposure of his body. The viewer is asked to acknowledge and mourn his death without consuming an image of it. The affective force of the scene arises from this refusal – its power lies in being profoundly felt while remaining unseen, restoring Martín to the realm of the human by shielding him from the gaze that killed him once and could symbolically kill him again.

²⁷ CAVARERO, *Horrorism*.

5.5 ADELA'S THREAD: DISAPPEARANCE, MATERNAL WITNESSING, AND THE CIRCUS

Adela's narrative thread, interwoven throughout the film, offers a parallel but distinct engagement with violence.



Figure 2. Adela in the circus: the film focuses on backstage preparation rather than public performance, suspending her between visibility and invisibility. *Tempestad* (Tatiana Huezo, 2016)

5.5.1 The mother-searcher

Adela belongs to a long genealogy of Mexican mothers who search for their disappeared children, women who have become some of the country's most important human-rights actors. Her testimony is quieter, steadier, marked by exhaustion and endurance rather than the acute terror of captivity. She narrates a violence defined not by confinement but by absence, uncertainty, state indifference.

5.5.2 The circus as metaphor

Adela performs in a family circus, a public space of spectacle. Huezo films these scenes without sensationalism, focusing on preparations, backstage labour, bodies in concentration rather than bodies performing. The circus be-

comes an allegory of visibility: Adela must perform to survive, yet cannot “perform” her grief publicly, and the state demands a spectacle of proof she cannot supply. Huezo films Adela as a figure suspended between visibility and invisibility.

5.5.3 The unresolved search

Adela’s daughter is never found. The film holds this non-resolution without imposing narrative closure. This refusal mirrors the reality of tens of thousands of Mexican families. The film maintains the open wound of disappearance as an ethical stance.

5.6 CONCLUSION: *TEMPESTAD* AS FEMINIST COUNTER-ARCHIVE

Taken together, the formal strategies of *Tempestad* (off-screen voice, visual opacity, atmospheric landscapes, sonic immersion, and refusal of spectacle) constitute a feminist counter-archive grounded in protection, care, and responsible witnessing.

She constructs an acoustic archive of women’s testimony, a visual archive of infrastructural landscapes marked by violence, and a temporal archive of waiting, searching, and surviving. If *Tempestad* constructs a feminist counter-archive through cinematic opacity, *Los niños perdidos* confronts a different register of violence, one that operates not through spectacular visibility but through bureaucratic erasure. We turn now to Luiselli’s textual strategies.

6. *LOS NIÑOS PERDIDOS*: AUDIBILITY, BUREAUCRATIC VIOLENCE, AND THE ETHICS OF TRANSLATION²⁸

If *Tempestad* constructs a cinema of opacity, *Los niños perdidos* develops an ethics of audibility, a practice in which voices are allowed to emerge without being exposed, extracted, or converted into evidence for bureaucratic systems that have historically erased them. Luiselli’s 2016 Spanish edition is structured around the intake questionnaire used in U.S. immigration courts to

²⁸ All quotations from Valeria Luiselli’s *Los niños perdidos* are cited in the original Spanish to preserve their situated expression and avoid the extractive gesture of forcible translation, in line with the article’s decolonial and feminist ethics of attention.

process unaccompanied minors. The forty questions are not neutral administrative tools; they are instruments of classification that determine whether a child's story will be accepted as credible, whether their suffering fits into available legal categories, and ultimately whether they can remain in the United States. As Luiselli writes, the first question – “¿Por qué viniste a los Estados Unidos?” – already presupposes agency and voluntariness where there are often only coercion, flight, and survival²⁹. The questionnaire thus becomes the text's foundational constraint: a structure designed to fix, reduce, and translate trauma into bureaucratic legibility.

6.1 THE BUREAUCRATIC QUESTIONNAIRE AS LITERARY DEVICE

Luiselli's decision to reproduce these questions verbatim is not merely documentary; it is a critique of the ideological work the form performs. Each question attempts to flatten lived experience into administrative categories that cannot hold the complexity of forced displacement. Luiselli highlights this when she notes that the narratives arriving in court are often “devastated and broken” stories, *historias de vidas tan devastadas y rotas, que a veces resulta imposible imponerles un orden narrative*.³⁰ The form demands coherence where trauma produces fragmentation. It demands clarity where fear produces silence. And it demands that children justify their presence in a nation that had long participated in producing the conditions that forced them to flee.

By structuring the book around this questionnaire, Luiselli exposes the violence embedded in bureaucratic language itself. The administrative voice becomes legible as a tool of necropolitical sorting – deciding which lives can be admitted, which can be protected, and which can be expelled. The book becomes a counter-document: it makes the bureaucratic frame visible, locatable, and therefore criticisable.

6.2 FRAGMENTATION AND ESSAYISTIC FORM

Against the rigid linearity of the intake form, the text deploys fragmentation. The book is composed of short, discontinuous sections: paraphrased tes-

²⁹ LUISELLI, *Los niños perdidos*, 15.

³⁰ LUISELLI, 16.

timonies, legal explanations, personal reflections, news fragments, and historical references. Luiselli's fragmentary composition mirrors the fractured narratives of the children themselves and refuses to impose artificial narrative unity. As she notes, the stories she interprets often appear *revueltas, llenas de interferencia, casi tartamudeadas*.³¹ Her prose adopts this rhythm deliberately. Instead of smoothing discontinuities, she arranges them, allowing incoherence to speak as evidence of trauma rather than as a failure of communication.

The essayistic mode – reflexive, self-interrupting, openly situated – also exposes the impossibility of transparent narration in such contexts. Luiselli never allows the reader to forget her presence. The “I” in the text is ethically accountable: it signals mediation rather than pretending to erase it. This reflexivity parallels, on the page, the opacity that *Tempestad* constructs through its images. Both reject the fantasy of objective, unmediated access to the suffering of others.

6.3 TRANSLATION AS ETHICAL AND POLITICAL PRACTICE

At the heart of *Los niños perdidos* is the problem of translation. Luiselli repeatedly stresses that her role in the courts was strictly defined: “*Mi deber ahí es traducir ... testimonios de niños en peligro de ser deportados*.”³² Yet translation, in this context, is never a neutral linguistic act; it is a crossing between asymmetrical regimes of power. Translating fear, coercion, sexual violence, death threats, or extortion into the language of U.S. immigration law means forcing lived experience into a vocabulary that was not designed to receive it. Luiselli foregrounds this violence: the interpreter must transform broken, stuttering narratives into *frases sucintas*, turning traumatic memories into legally administrable *relatos coherentes*.³³

Her literary strategy responds to this ethical bind. She paraphrases rather than quotes the children directly. She withholds names and identifying details. And she marks the gaps between what is said and what can be translated. This is a textual form of the right of opacity of Glissant, a refusal to render vulnerable subjects fully legible to institutions that may harm them. Paraphrase becomes a protective gesture, a way of allowing voices to be heard without exposing them to the administrative gaze.

³¹ LUISELLI, 16.

³² LUISELLI, 15.

³³ LUISELLI, 16.

6.4 INTERTEXTUALITY AND HISTORICAL GENEALOGIES

The text expands beyond courtroom narratives by inserting migrant children into longer histories of displacement, resistance, and violence. The intertextual passages in the excerpt are especially revealing. In one instance, Luiselli recounts telling her daughter the story of the *Batallón de San Patricio*, Irish soldiers who defected from the U.S. Army to fight alongside Mexico during the 1846–48 invasion, *el grupo de soldados irlandeses ... que se cambiaron de bando para luchar del lado de los mexicanos*.³⁴ This history dislocates contemporary narratives of illegality; it shows the Americas as a space of shifting allegiances, migrations, and solidarities.

In another example, she presents the father's stories about Gerónimo, Cochise, and Mangas Coloradas, linking the children's displacement to Indigenous histories of forced removal. The parallel becomes explicit when she notes the recurrence (and the violence) of the term removal: *Es curioso –o, más bien, es siniestro– que todavía hoy en día se utilice la palabra ‘removal’ para referirse a las deportaciones...*³⁵ Intertextuality thus becomes a political tool: it maps the children's journeys onto larger genealogies of colonialism, flight, and survival, refusing to let their suffering be framed as isolated or exceptional.

6.5 GEOGRAPHIC CONTINUITY WITH *TEMPESTAD*

Although *Los niños perdidos* is written in and about the United States, its geography is transnational. Many of the children Luiselli interviews travel through the same spaces that Miriam and Adela traverse in *Tempestad*: the highways dominated by criminal checkpoints, the cities with overlapping cartographies of state and cartel control, the border regions structured by economies of fear and extortion. The text reminds us that the violence it describes is not only Central American but Mexican, Mexico functions simultaneously as a corridor, trap, and threshold. The two works, taken together, illuminate a shared geography of vulnerability, one in which adult women and unaccompanied children experience different but structurally related forms of disposability.

³⁴ LUISELLI, 22.

³⁵ LUISELLI, 22–23.

6.6 CONCLUSION: AUDIBILITY AS COUNTER-ARCHIVE

Where *Tempestad* constructs a filmic counter-archive grounded in opacity, *Los niños perdidos* builds a textual counter-archive grounded in audibility. Voices circulate, but they are mediated; testimonies emerge, but they are protected from the violence of exposure. The fragmentary composition prevents administrative closure, leaving open the spaces where trauma resists domestication. By reproducing bureaucratic language while simultaneously undermining it, Luiselli transforms an administrative instrument of erasure into a literary device that reveals its own violence. Through this strategy she creates a record that preserves children's histories without exploiting them, a counter-archive that both acknowledges the limits of representation and refuses the disappearance imposed by institutional protocols.

This section prepares the ground for the synthesis that follows. Having examined how *Tempestad* enacts an ethics of opacity and how *Los niños perdidos* constructs an ethics of audibility, the next section articulates the feminist ethics of attention that emerges when these works are read together.

7. FEMINIST ETHICS OF ATTENTION: SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS

A *feminist ethics of attention* names a relational, situated, and care-oriented practice of perceiving and representing vulnerable subjects. It draws on feminist epistemologies that foreground embodiment, interdependence, and accountability and reject hierarchical or extractive forms of knowledge production.

Attention, in this sense, is not passive noticing but an ethical labour: a commitment to attending to the conditions under which certain lives become visible or audible, and to resisting the gendered and racialised modes of exposure through which violence is typically circulated. What makes this ethics feminist is its grounding in the lived experiences of women and children, its refusal of masculinist grammars of spectacle, and its emphasis on protection, relationality, and the right to opacity.

The analyses of *Tempestad* and *Los niños perdidos* reveal that their most profound convergence lies not in their themes but in their shared reconfiguration of what it means to address lives made disposable by necropolitical governance. Attention, in this context, is neither passive witnessing nor empathetic identification; this ethical practice is grounded in care, relationality, and

restraint. Both works reject the masculinist narrative structures that typically organise representations of violence in Mexico, structures that privilege heroic agency, spectacle, and action, by placing women and children at the centre of their narrative and aesthetic operations. In doing so, they shift the terrain of knowledge production from mastery and revelation toward vulnerability and relational interdependence.

The gendered dimension of both works is fundamental. Huezo constructs a cinematic world in which the experiences of Miriam and Adela are not secondary testimonies or illustrative cases but the epistemic ground of the film. Their voices, withheld from visual capture, articulate an understanding of violence rooted in the everyday; their vulnerability becomes the premise for a different aesthetic grammar. Luiselli likewise re-centres child migrants, subjects traditionally positioned as mute objects of humanitarian discourse, by foregrounding the systemic conditions that shape their experiences and by refusing to reproduce their testimonies in exploitable form. In both cases, the disappearance of men as protagonists is not incidental but structural: the works interrupt the hegemonic association between violence and masculine agency and foreground instead the labour, grief, and embodied endurance of women and children. This reorientation aligns with Richard's argument that feminist interventions operate through practices of *relectura* and *reencuadre*, displacing dominant grammars of intelligibility and opening space for alternative modes of political and aesthetic engagement.

The approach developed here is inseparable from the expanded theoretical framework drawn from Latin American feminist thought. Segato's critique of *pedagogías de la crueldad* illuminates how contemporary violence teaches subjects to naturalise disposability, while her call for counter-pedagogies resonates strongly with the practices enacted by both works. Huezo refuses the didacticism of horror by refusing images of suffering; Luiselli refuses the bureaucratic didacticism of administrative categories by exposing their epistemic violence. Rivera Garza's notion of *escritura común* further clarifies how both artists construct relational practices of representation: Huezo co-authors testimony through sonic intimacy and formal protection; Luiselli co-authors through paraphrase, redaction, and interpretative acknowledgement of limits. The subject emerges not as an object of representation but as a collaborator in meaning-making.

Opacity, in both cases, counters the extractive imperative of the colonial and necropolitical gaze. The deployment of opacity differs across media but converges ethically. Huezo materialises opacity through visual withholding,

faces obscured, violence off-screen. Luiselli enacts opacity through textual redaction, names withheld, testimonies paraphrased. Despite formal differences, both recognise that in contexts where visibility operates as violence (Valencia's gore capitalism, Segato's *pedagogías de la crueldad*), protection requires limiting what can be known, seen, or heard.

This feminist ethics of attention operates, in Rancière's terms, as an intervention in the *distribution of the sensible*: it reorganises the perceptual boundaries that determine whose suffering is recognisable, whose voices are legible, and whose humanity is acknowledged. By refusing both the visibility demanded by the spectacle of violence and the legibility demanded by bureaucratic rationality, Huezo and Luiselli open a third space, neither transparency nor silence, where vulnerable subjects can be addressed without being exposed.

Beyond illuminating representational practices, this synthesis reveals broader implications for documentary ethics. Attention, redefined through these works, demands not more information but more responsibility, not more access but more care. It frames representation as relational practice rather than extractive gesture and positions documentary work as a site of ethical negotiation rather than evidentiary accumulation. Their counter-archives demonstrate that ethical representation in necropolitical contexts requires not revelation but protection, not transparency but relationality, not consumption but sustained attention to lives rendered disposable.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This article has examined how Huezo's *Tempestad* (2016) and Luiselli's *Los niños perdidos* (2017) confront the central research question: How can one represent unbearable violence – violence against the disappeared, against unaccompanied children, against bodies rendered disposable – without reproducing the very logics that made this violence possible?

Through a cross-media comparative approach, the analysis has demonstrated that both works develop distinct yet complementary strategies for navigating the moral-aesthetic dilemma posed by contemporary Mexican violence. Huezo constructs a cinematic ethics grounded in visual opacity, durational time, and off-screen sonic testimony; Luiselli articulates a textual ethics rooted in bureaucratic exposure, fragmentary form, and the politics of translation. Together, they intervene in a shared necropolitical landscape where vi-

olence against women, children, and migrants is rendered both spectacularly visible and bureaucratically invisible.

This analysis advances documentary theory by demonstrating that ethical representation in necropolitical contexts requires fundamentally rethinking visibility, transparency, and evidence. Drawing on Latin American feminist thought – Segato’s *pedagogías de la crueldad*, Rivera Garza’s *escritura común*, Richard’s fractured memory – and supplemented by Glissant’s opacity and Rancière’s distribution of the sensible, the article articulates a feminist ethics of attention as a framework for understanding documentary practices that refuse complicity with violence. This framework reconceptualises testimony and representation as relational processes shaped by care, restraint, and accountability rather than revelation or exposure. It offers an analytical approach applicable beyond these two works to documentary practices across sites of systemic violence.

Future research could extend this comparative method to additional documentary works addressing violence in the Americas, such as Marcela Zamora’s *El cuarto de los huesos* (2015), Tatiana Huezo’s *Noche de fuego* (2021), Diego Quemada-Díez’s *La jaula de oro* (2013), or literary works like Yuri Herrera’s *Señales que precederán al fin del mundo*. Such analyses would evaluate whether the practices identified here – opacity, fragmentation, attention, co-authorship – constitute an emerging aesthetic-ethical repertoire across contemporary Latin American documentary forms.

Beyond the Americas, the feminist ethics of attention developed here may illuminate documentary practices in other necropolitical contexts where marginalised populations are rendered disposable: Mediterranean migration routes, the Rohingya crisis, Brazilian police violence, or South African anti-immigrant regimes. Examining how opacity and audibility function across these political geographies would clarify whether these strategies are context-specific or part of a broader global shift toward protective forms of representation.

In an era when visibility is routinely weaponised and suffering commodified, *Tempestad* and *Los niños perdidos* model an alternative: counter-archives built not through revelation but through protection, not through transparency but through relationality, creating conditions under which the ungrievable might finally be mourned, and the disappeared remembered without being consumed. Their practices demonstrate that ethical representation in necropolitical contexts begins not with exposure, but with the sustained, attentive labour of care.

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FROM SCREEN TO PAGE: FEMINIST COUNTER-ARCHIVES IN MEXICAN DOCUMENTARY FILM AND DOCUMENTARY WRITING

SUMMARY

This article examines how Tatiana Huezo's *Tempestad* (2016) and Valeria Luiselli's *Los niños perdidos* (2019) develop ethical strategies for representing extreme violence without reproducing its logics. Drawing on Latin American feminist theory, decolonial thought, and critical political philosophy, the analysis argues that film and text mobilise complementary practices – visual opacity and textual audibility – to resist spectacularisation and bureaucratic erasure. Through off-screen

testimony, fragmentary narration, and protective mediation, both works construct feminist counter-archives that centre women and unaccompanied migrant children as epistemic subjects. The article proposes a feminist ethics of attention as a framework for documentary practices seeking to safeguard vulnerable lives within necropolitical landscapes.

Keywords: feminist counter-archives; documentary film; documentary writing; visual opacity; feminist ethics of attention; necropolitics; migration; Mexico

OD EKRANU DO STRONY: FEMINISTYCZNE ARCHIWA ALTERNATYWNE W MEKSYKAŃSKIM KINIE DOKUMENTALNYM I LITERATURZE DOKUMENTALNEJ

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób *Tempestad* (2016) Tatiany Huezo oraz *Los niños perdidos* (2019) Valerii Luiselli omawiają etyczne strategie przedstawienia przemocy bez powielania jej mechanizmów. Odwołując się do latynoamerykańskiej teorii feministycznej, myśli dekolonialnej i krytycznej filozofii politycznej, autorka pokazuje, że film i tekst wykorzystują komplementarne praktyki – wizualną nieprzezroczystość oraz tekstualną słyszalność – aby przeciwstawić się spektakularności i biurokratycznej eliminacji. Poprzez głos spoza kadru, narrację fragmentaryczną i ochronną mediację oba dzieła tworzą feministyczne archiwa alternatywne, które stawiają kobiety i dzieci migranckie w centrum poznania. Artykuł proponuje etykę uwagi jako ramę dla praktyk dokumentalnych w krajobrazach nekropolitycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: feministyczne archiwa alternatywne; film dokumentalny; pisanstwo dokumentalne; wizualna nieprzezroczystość; etyka uwagi; nekropolityka; migracja; Meksyk