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Transtextuality and metafiction in fake documentaries: self-referential discourse in *The Unmaking of*

Abstract

The universe of Art has been prone to resort to transtextuality and metalanguage since the beginning of the human activity. Films like *Sunset Boulevard* or *Cinema Paradiso* have shown the interest in the expression of the cinematographic praxis through its own tools. However, it is not frequent to find self-referential and transtextual language in the field of fake documentary; this is the case of *The Unmaking of*, an awarded movie made by Juan Manuel Chumilla Carbajosa which represents a step forward in metafiction since it is a self-referential film into the frame of a fake. A metalinguistic movie, unique in the Spanish cinematography, that deserves to be studied in depth.

Keywords

Transtextuality, Intertextuality, Self-referentiality, Fake Documentaries, The Unmaking of, Chumilla Carbajosa.

1. Introduction. Metalanguage and other reflexivity features: transtextuality, self-referentiality and metafiction

From the beginning of the human activity, the world of art has been prone to apply metalanguage discourse. The use of language referring to itself has been a constant feature over the centuries. Cinema, as a fundamental part of artistic practice, is not excluded from this reflexivity propensity, in that there are countless films which involve metalinguistical reflection. In connection with the point previously mentioned, we can assert that History of Art has bequeathed us a splendid array of metalinguistical works subject to a practice that involves explaining itself with its own language.

Based on these premises, we must point out that metalanguage is a type of self-conscious reflexivity, which has its origin in the prehistory and has endured until the contemporary era. In this sense:

We could look back to prehistoric times (between ten to twenty five thousand years ago). In Stone Age paintings found in the “Cave of Painted Hands”, in Argentinian Patagonia, or in the French “Pech Merle” Cave, we find evidence of the use of this resource by the performer. Her/his own hands constitute the visual result (Puig, 2006: 2).

This reflexive use, extrapolated to the cinematographic frame, give rise to a wide range of films which use this linguistic reflection referring to itself. Therefore, this metalinguistic perspective involves a reflective attitude elaborating a linguistic “reflection on itself” (Castillo, 1998: 247). In this regard, into the cinematographically reflection there will be films that question their own ontological identity, which are going to be denominated “self-referential films”. Likewise, there are movies that introduce elements belonging to precedent cinematographical texts (meaning as a text any expression with communicative purpose), which are defined as “transtextual films”. Finally, there are productions framed within other fictions which belong to a superior discourse which is denominated “metafiction”. These concepts are going to be analysed in depth in the following epigraph.

1.1. *Practices of cinematographical reflexion*

In the field of art, reflexivity has been an inherent characteristic from the beginning of the human activity. Reflexivity comes from Latin word *reflexio, reflexionis* (Lo Bello, 2013: 368), and its etymological root is eloquent about its meaning. Although its original connotation is “self-examination”, authors like Robert Stam have defined reflexivity as “the capability of any medium or language to auto-reflection” (Stam et al., 1999: 228). In the particular case of cinematographic productions, the reflection results in the capability of some films to emphasize in their own ontology. Despite this concept has been taken from the Philosophy and Psychology –where reflection is defined as “the capability of the mind to be simultaneously the subject and the object into the cognitive process” (Stam et al., 1999: 228)–, the suitability of applying this term into the field of arts, made possible its rapid expansion not only in the theatrical area, but also in the cinematographic sphere.

It is important to underline that artistic reflection (whether in Painting, Literature, Linguistics, Music or otherwise), is a long tradition tendency –in the sixteenth century Michel de la Montaigne mentioned “there are more books on books than on any other subject” (Stam, 2001: 235)–, although this inclination has been frequently used by contemporary authors. According to Linda Hutcheon, this postmodern preference strives to rebuild the past and to provide an updated version of the previous production, by offering “a way of doing things highly suitable for a culture like ours, overloaded with images” (Hutcheon in Heinrich, 1991: 225 and ss). Likewise, Robert Stam stresses the same tendency to check ancient premises and carry out an appropriate reflexivity:

The penchant for reflexivity must be seen as symptomatic of the methodological self-scrutiny typical of contemporary thought, its tendency to examine its own terms and procedures (Stam, 1999: 228).

Obviously, contemporary artists have not “the monopoly of self-conscious art” (Hutcheon, 2000: 32), although they carry out their practices in a “more explicit and therefore more articulated way” (Hutcheon, 2000: 32). Reflexivity is currently understood as a natural propensity of authors for observing and analysing reality in order to explore precedent artistic expressions and consequently to adapt them to the present time. Even though there are an enormous amount of terms referring to reflexive practices –as “self-conscious fiction”, “exhausted art”, “anti-ilusionism”, “mise-en-abyme”, “autodesignation of the code”, “self-referentiality” and “metafiction” (Stam, 1999: 229)–, we are going to accentuate the importance of cinematographical reflection in the last two terms, given their close connection with the film *The Unmaking of*. Added to the previous point, it is necessary to examine another feature that alludes to reflexivity as well, namely: transtextuality.

Given the fact that artistic reflexivity “refers to the process by which foreground their own production, their authorship, their intertextual influences, their textual processes or

their reception” (Stam, 1999: 228), we can assert that transtextual connections are a fundamental part of reflexive phenomenon, as we are going to describe below.

1.2. *Transtextuality as artistic reflexivity*

In his work *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (1982), the narratology theorist Gérard Genette suggested transtextuality as a defining term to underline the “textual transcendence of the text” (Genette, 1989: 9). For the French author, transtextuality was “all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” (Genette, 1989: 9-10). This fundamental connection has led some authors to assert that “the value of a text is relational” (García Landa, 2013: 286). To delineate the term transtextuality, Genette put forward a model with five different associations between texts, which included intertextuality, defined by the author as “a relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts” (Genette, 1989: 9-10), in other words: “the effective presence of a text in another text” (Genette, 1989: 10). According to Genette, there is also a paratextual connection, which can be defined as the relationship that “the text itself maintains with what we can only call paratext: title, subtitle, intertitles” (Genette, 1989: 11).

Taking the scheme of Genette one step further, we discern metatextuality, defined by the author as “the relationship, more commonly called ‘commentary’, which links one text to another text and about which it speaks without necessarily quoting it” (Genette, 1989: 12). A forth transtextual union is architextuality, which “involves a relationship that is completely silent, articulated at most only by a paratextual mention” (Genette, 1989: 12). Finally, Genette formulated the concept hypertextuality. By hypertextuality the literary theorist meant “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext) upon which it is grafted in a manner that it is not of commentary” (Genette, 1989: 13). Naturally, the author mentioned the frequent presence of many transtextual relationships into the same text, as he expressed:

The generic architextuality is mostly, historically constituted through imitation [...] and therefore through the hypertextuality; the architextual presence of a work use to be declared through paratextual indications; these same indications are signs of the metatext [...] and the paratext, of the prologue or other parts, contains many other manners of commentary; hypertext has often the value of a commentary (Genette, 1989: 19).

In the course of the present research, we are going to prove that the five types of transtextual relationship are a constant feature into the film *The Unmaking of*, though intertextuality is going to acquire more importance. Accordingly, we are going to look at this subject in greater detail, previous to analysing the relevant terms “self-referentiality” and “metafiction” in depth.

1.3. *Intertextuality: the origin of the term*

As we mentioned in previous epigraphs, intertextuality refers to the presence of a text within another text, a definition that is not so far away from its own etymology, which indicates the relationship that can be established “between texts”. This connection underlines the relational value of the works:

Intertextuality is a valuable theoretical concept in that it relates the singular text principally to other systems of representation rather than to an amorphous “context” anointed with the dubious status and authority of “the real” or “reality”. In order even to discuss the relation of a work to its historical circumstances, we are obliged to situate the text within its intertext and then relate both text and intertext to other “systems” and “series” which form its context. (Stam, 2001: 237).

On the basis of this definition, we can assert that intertextuality is an “ontological property of the object” (Noemí, 2011: 120). To find the genesis of its primitive use, we must go back to the decade of the thirties of the 20th century, when the Russian theorist Mijaíl Batjín coined the concepts “dialogism” and “translinguistic”, which are terms that express the presence of texts within other texts:

When there is no access to one's own personal 'ultimate' word, then every thought, feeling, experience must be refracted through someone else's style, someone else's manner, with which it cannot immediately be merged without reservation, with distance, without refraction (Batjín, 1988: 283).

The term “translinguistic” was superseded by the concept of “intertextuality” when the Bulgarian-French professor Julia Kristeva, coined the term in the seventies of the 20th century, to refer to the interrelationship that relates texts. Consequently, the author asserts that “any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva, 1997: 3); this absorption and transformation then give rise to “intertextuality”. This term, profusely applied by post-structuralists authors and semiotic theorists of mass communication (especially by Umberto Eco or Lamberto Pignotti), was developed by Roland Barthes, who gave intertextuality the connotation of a *caisse de resonance*. As the French theorist argues: “every text is the intertext of other text” (Barthes, 1994: 78). This semiotical conceptualisation is also connected to the paradigm of intertextual frames proposed by Umberto Eco, which are:

The diverse frames of reference invoked in the reader, which authorize and orient interpretation, the filling in of gaps and fissures in the text, guiding the reader's inferences about the story and the characters by providing intertextual cues (Stam, 1999: 233).

This co-presence of two texts, in words of Genette, “in the form of quotation, plagiarism and allusion” (Stam, 1992: 211) has been identified as “intertextuality”, a term connected to self-referentiality which are going to be lavishly present in the film of Chumilla Carbajosa, *The Unmaking of*.

1.4. Self-referentiality as artistic evidence

We have indicated that reflexivity leads in an ineluctable manner to the concept of self-referentiality, a term which alludes to the reflection that a text carries out about itself. In other words, we can assert that the conception of self-referentiality “designates any entity or text which refers or points to itself” (Stam, 1999: 229). Naturally, to reflect about the own ontology of a text, reveals an interest in the status of the identity, a phenomenon intrinsic to self-referentiality:

The question of “reflexivity” refers necessarily to the concept of self-referentiality. Such concept does not entail an exclusively logic notion, or just a metaphoric sense, but it manifests itself as a sign of a fundamental crisis: the question of the rational principles of “identity” (Álvarez Falcón, 2010: 32).

In this sense, “self-referentiality is shown as the reference of a part belonging to a whole” (Álvarez Falcón, 2010: 32), therefore, this nature underlines the need of a previous identity which can be subsequently imitated or, *sensu stricto*, represented:

The self-referential moments work best to indicate how these texts rework the [...] conventions to create innovative [...] forms by introducing the metafictional component inherent in the self-referentiality (Malcah, 2010: 256).

Therefore, the self-referential discourse has been inherent to every artistic expression, cinematographic productions included. In this particular regard, the self-referential narrative has facilitated that different genres and narrative styles change and evolve creating original meanings (Tyner, 2008: 82).

The Seventh Art, as a first magnitude artistic expression, has been self-referential since the beginning of the cinematographic production, reflecting on the inner mechanisms of the industry from the dawn of its conception. Hence “Cinema has been self-referential from its origin, examples like *The big Swallow* (Williamson, 1899), *How it feels to be Run Over* (Cecil Hepworth, 1900) or the suggestive *The modern Sherlock Holmes* (Buster Keaton, 1924), still in the silent era, corroborate it” (Navarrete, 2013: web). Evidently, the self-referential reflexivity covers a wide range of fields into the cinematographical discourse, as we are going to confirm analysing *The Unmaking of*.

1.5. *Metafiction as artistic reflexivity*

As we have stated, artistic reflexivity is a versatile phenomenon, finding a wide variety of terms that allude to reflexive practices, i.e. self-referentiality, as we have corroborated, or metafiction, the concept we are going to consider in the present epigraph. According to Patricia Waugh, the term “metafiction” refers to those artistic works which “embody dimensions of self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty” (Waugh, 1996: 2). Regarding to its origin and its significance, the author specifies:

The term ‘metafiction’ itself seems to have originated in an essay by the American critic and self-conscious novelist William H. Gass [...] However, terms like ‘metapolitics’, ‘metarethoric’ and ‘metatheatre’ are a reminder of what has been, since the 1960s, a more general cultural interest in the problem of how human beings reflect, construct and mediate their experience of the world. Metafiction pursues such questions through this formal self-exploration, drawing on the traditional metaphor of the world as book, but often recasting it in the terms of contemporary philosophical, linguistic or literary theory (Waugh, 1996: 2-3).

The self-consciousness interest is inherent to the human condition, as Waugh declares, being a practice that strives to discover the underlying processes which lay on human creativity and, simultaneously, that tries to unravel the relationships that unite the world of fiction with the universe of the reality:

Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically drags attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text (Waugh, 1996: 2).

Evidently, fiction and reality; history and fictional creation, do not share the same identity; on the contrary, they belong to different and even opposing natures. In this sense:

History and fiction are, however, entirely different in their conceptual make-up. History relies on the validation of historical evidence, which interacts with the argumentative presentation of explanatory theses. Fiction, on the other hand, concentrates on individual human experience even if that experience is viewed from the perspective of a general, philosophical vantage point and constitutes an analysis of the human predicament (Fludernik in Engler, 1994: 83).

Extrapolating the metafictional practice to the cinematographical field, we find the term “metacinema”, a concept which precisely alludes to the self-consciousness of the film industry to itself, and that can be concreted in the statement “cinema within cinema”. Movies dedicated to illustrate the cinematographic praxis “allow establishing a new mode of filmmaking in which films are the main character” (Prieto, 2008: 65).

The discourse of these movies has been prone to emphasize the negative side of the film industry, practicing an eloquent and expressive self-critic: “already in the mid 20th century, the film industry carried out a self-critic exercise for considering itself as a ‘wasted’ art” (Marfil, 2011: 13). Representative titles like *Charlie Chaplin’s Burlesque on Carmen* (1916), the Spanish *The Sixth Sense* (1929, Nemesio Sobrevilla), or paradigmatic *Fellini 8 y 1/2* (1963, Federico Fellini), *La Nuit Américaine* (1973, François Truffaut) and *Cinema Paradiso* (1988, Giuseppe Tornatore), have led to new filmmakers who have decided in the last decades, to carry out a review of the metafictional phenomenon. This tendency to metafiction is executed by a diverse range of filmmakers like Olivier Parker (*Fade to black*, 2006), Iciar Bollaín (*También la lluvia*, 2010) or Philippe Garrel (*Un été brûlant*, 2011). Given the abundance of titles and subject matters, we are going to elaborate categories that enclose the whole metafictional creation. In doing so, we are going to compose a meticulous synthesis of its infinite possibilities, finding a resulting list with four summarized manners of undertaking metafiction in films.

In a first approach, metacinema in films can be considered as an act of showing the whole machinery of the industry, revealing the mise-en-scene and the staging of the cinematographical sphere. On the other hand, metafiction in films may be employed to honour or allude to previous titles, a practice that is commonly known as “quotation”. In the third and fourth place, metacinema can be carried out whether reflecting on the own nature of the cinematographic medium, known as “reflexive discourse”, or employing cinema as a situational “context” (Navarrete, 2012: 2-3). As we are going to prove in consecutive epigraphs, *The Unmaking of* contains the fourth manners of metacinema. According to the filmmaker:

When I decided to deal with this subject matter in *The Unmaking of*, I was conscious of getting a unique and unrepeatable opportunity to make a movie about the attempt to get back to an unfinished shooting that began twelve years ago, having images of the actors during that period of time. It is a documentary that provides the real facts intermingled with apocryphal ones, becoming an intricate game of lies and half-truths that finally constitute the same thing (Chumilla, 2014):

This game of reality and fiction, with its consequent distortion of the cinematographical time frontiers, has been compared to the desire of Surrealist artists, of interweaving dream and reality; past and future. In a certain sense, this manner of filmmaking “fulfil the dream of [André] Breton: to fracture time because its capacity of showing simultaneously past, present and future” (Tavares, 2010: 47). Therefore, *The Unmaking of* is a conciliatory representation of fiction and reality, but not only “disclosing the mechanisms which configure the illusion, denying the traditional idea of transparency and verism present in fictions, especially audiovisual fiction” (García Martínez, 2009: 655), but, on the contrary, permitting fiction becoming imbued with reality and dissolving the codes which give spectators guidance on the filmic narration. Thereby, the film creates a confusion between reality and fiction that occasionally “makes distinction impossible” (Vilaró i Moncasí, 2011: 28).

¹ Text extracted from an interview carried out *ad hoc* with the filmmaker for this research.

2. The creation of reality and fiction: the outlines of the fake documentary

Whereas the communication field has experienced the appearance of new expressive dimensions, the cinematographic sphere is also experiencing some modifications of its classic syntax, for obtaining an innovative narrative complexity defined by “a tendency towards convergence and global integration” (Cebrián, 1999: 33). This phenomenon is evident in the case of mockumentaries or fake documentaries, a category of audiovisual fiction which applies “documentary techniques, codes and conventions” (Roscoe in Juhasz y Lerner, 2001: 2), in order to “create relations between form, content, style, representation, and the recorded world” (Roscoe in Juhasz & Lerner, 2001: 2).

This hybrid genre achieves its aim when counts on the complicity of the spectator, who should not notice the “falsification” until the end of the film. It can be said that the existence of fake documentaries brings genre hybridization into question, an observable fact that which bears witness to the need of a reformulation. According to the Sociologist Gilles Lipovetsky, “today, more than ever, we have to reflect [...] about the unfocused identity of cinema” (Lipovetsky, Serroy, 2009: 12). Though the cinematographical ontology requires an urgent revision, we must note that the existence of fake documentaries obliges to carry out an integral reformulation, in order to recognize the narrative involvedness it entails. In this regard:

Since the late 1980s, the documentary international scene is in what we can call its third great age of redefinition and renovation, in the field of formal experimentation, [experiencing] intermingling with other audiovisual and cinematographical forms, and [establishing] a dialogue with its own history (Barroso in Ortega, 2005: 11).

The redefinition of the nature of fake documentaries implies admitting their own identity, since they involve more than the mere introduction of fictional elements into a documentary, but the construction of a narrative and formal unity. Consequently, a fake is a fiction formally elaborated as a documentary with the intention of provoking and stimulating:

If fakes are in fashion –maybe is the most popular mode of cinematographical hybridization at the present-, is due to its great ludic value (filmmakers have fun falsifying materials) and its unquestionable potential for satirizing (the spectator recognizes and appreciates the imitated pastiche) (Weinrichter in Ortega, 2005: 99).

These productions, called “post-documentaries” according to John Corner, are an evidence of the mixture and combination of genres and the semantic complexity that entails to take the concept of “documentary” as an undifferentiated unity. Despite the obscurity that involves containing under the same label an enormous variety of productions, it is evident that fakes have gone through diverse periods of transition all over its existence. Even though Woody Allen used the mechanisms of the documentary style in *Take the Money and run* (1969), Orson Welles converted this tendency in a paradigm during the decade of the seventies in *F for Fake* (1972). Eleven years after the documentary of Welles, Allen filmed *Zelig* (1983), which was already an entirely fake. Ironically, the uniqueness of *Zelig* stemmed from its quality of imitating and parodying the films it was a tribute to. In this sense, “the film’s originality, paradoxically, lies in the audacity of its imitation, quotation and absorption of other texts” (Stam, 2001: 241).

During the decade of the nineties, it is going to be patently the proliferation of fakes that deal with the cinematographical praxis, emerging fake documentaries that “explore a

theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction” (Waugh, 1996: 2). This decade constitutes thus the key moment for metacinema into the structure of a fake:

From the 1990s, fake documentaries started to get associated with metafiction to reveal –in different grades– the creation mechanisms of the audiovisual texts (or of the own cinema), in films like *C'est arrivé près de chez vous* (Belvaux, Bonzel and Poelvoorde, 1992), *Guns on the Clackamas: A Documentary* (Plympton, 1995), *Forgotten Silver* (Jackson and Botes, 1995) and *Die Gebrüder Skladanowsky* (Wenders, 1996) (García Martínez, 2007: 304).

It is essential to note that Peter Jackson and Costa Botes were the filmmakers who in 1995 launched to the public the paradigm of metafiction within a fake in *Forgotten Silver*. The film, an obvious antecedent of *The Unmaking of*, involved a re-reading of the History of Cinema, ‘revealing’ that the first film in History was shot, according to unquestionable and incontestable sources, in Oceania. The importance of the movie of Jackson and Botes lies in two fundamental elements, namely: to be precise shooting a fake, which can “confuse even the most experienced spectator” (Barroso, 2005: 175); and secondly, to make an impeccable approach to the archetype of a film within another film.

The Spanish cinematographical industry has also given precedents in the field of fake documentaries, however is *The Seduction of the Chaos* (1991), the best exercise of metafiction. The film was a hybridization conceived by the innovative filmmaker Basilio Martín Patino, who has found over subsequent years a continuator of this tendency in José Luis Guerín, fundamentally with his films *Train of shadows* (*Tren en sombras*, 1997) and *Under construction* (*En construcción*, 2001), in which Guerín carries out an “exploration of the borders between fiction and reality [as well as] an exploration about the role that cinema plays in that unstable ground” (Cuevas, 2001: 14). Among the last renowned Spanish fakes, we find *Aro Tolbukhin, in the mind of a killer* (Villaronga, Zimmerman and Racine, 2002) [and] *Cravan vs. Cravan* (Isaki Lacuesta, 2003)” (García Martínez, 2007: 306).

Recently, independent filmmaker Juan Manuel Chumilla Carbajosa, has achieved international renown with his film *The Unmaking of* (2010), a fake which also uses metacinema as narrative construction. In the film, we find fiction elements combined with real life passages and references to Preston Sturges, Samuel Fuller, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Orson Welles or Federico Fellini. Through this mixture we get into a fake with explicit metalinguistical nature, illustrating how could have been the shooting of the *opera prima* of Juan Manuel Chumilla, *The promised Hell*, if it would not have been as it really was. As it is explained at the beginning of the movie:

Cocteau wrote “Cinema is death at work”. And if making a movie is defying death? Could we go to The Infierno in search for a film not ended and bring it back? Anyway, about this movie, *The promised Hell*, it was made but not completely made by a young director, Álex Fortuna, and then he disappeared. So curious about this unfinished movie, we started searching for it. My colleague Patricia Hart took a cameraman with her to shot the search so, in this way we are making a movie about finding a movie. It is a search movie. It is called *The Unmaking of*.

Hence, in *The Unmaking of* we find a complex movie, consisting in finding “how was not made” a movie, a play on the words of the recurrent “making of” typical for any production. At present time as starting point, the film begins with the American film producer L. M. Kit Carson, who explains how interested he is in the lost script of an apparently unfinished film, *The promised Hell*. Seduced by the idea of re-elaborating the material and reshaping it, the producer asks a professor of the Columbia University (Patricia Hart), for going to each country where the feature film was shot, finding the actors and crew who participated in the film. In Cinecittà Studios, Patricia Hart finds forty-seven minutes of footage, which later

would be added to the scenes that are being filmed by Hart and the cameraman at this time. According to the professor:

Kit had the idea that maybe the material that we were filming could be a “making of”, if we manage to finish the project. And maybe this “making of” may be useful to show and to get money together for the project.

However, the complicatedness that involves recovering the material will exceed the expectations of the producer and the researcher. Throughout the journey across Spain, the United States, Mexico and Italy, different actors of the film are going to take part in *The Unmaking of* (Ginés García-Millán, Rafael Álvarez “El Brujo” or Franco Citti, the main character of Pasolini’s film *Acatonne*). Additionally, in front of the camera we are going to observe producers, editors and technicians, who show documents, drawings, footage and story-boards made twelve years ago, while they describe the peculiarities of the temperament of Álex Fortuna, a reserved director who one day decided to escape without concluding the shooting of *The promised Hell*. As expected, this narrative spiral concludes when in front of the camera appears the filmmaker, who seems to be willing to finish the movie. Is at that moment, during the period that lasts the gaze of the director, when becomes patent the “metafictional” discourse of the film, in the words of David Lodge, constituting a passage that “recognizes the artificial feature of the realist conventions which, however, are applied to the rest of the text” (Lodge, 1998: 304).

3. Reality and fiction in the cinema of Juan Manuel Chumilla Carbajosa

From the beginning of his career, Juan Manuel Chumilla Carbajosa has revealed an immense interest in filmic hybridization. Born in Cartagena in 1961, the filmmaker began his cinematographical activity in the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia de Roma (CSR), where he got his degree in “Cinematographic Direction” in 1985. That year he filmed two shorts, namely: *Berenice* (1985) and *L’uomo della folla* (*The Man in the Crowd*, 1985), both inspired by stories of Edgar Allan Poe. In 1986 he carried off Il Primo Volo of the Agrigento Festival with *Berenice*, beginning a solid career in which his talent has earned him fame and respect of the profession. His inclination to make a cinema definable as “art cinema” (O’Pray, 2003: 69), has given him a “schismatic dimension” (Chumilla & Tello, 2013: 16). Together with Julio Médem and Gracia Querejeta, he formed part of the new pool of cineastes who participated in the 7 footprints project, produced by Elías Querejeta. In concert with the producer, the filmmaker also carried out *The marked number* (1987), a film nominated for a Goya Award in 1990.

His first feature film came in 1993, when he embarked upon the shooting of *The promised Hell*, a project in which he rewrote the myth of Orfeo. The film was approved by the Ministry of Culture for commercial screening and participated in diverse international festivals. In 1996, *The promised Hell* was programmed in the prestigious Renoir Cinema, on the occasion of the theatres’ tenth anniversary. In that moment, it was certificated as one of the best ten movies not commercially exhibited in the history of Spanish cinema. Although the film was premiered and displayed, its author always considered it unfinished because he has not the occasion to implement the technical aspects he considered necessities for the footage.

Defined by Carmen Maura as a director who “wants very concrete and accurate things” (Maura in Castilla, 1995: web), in the 21st century Juan Manuel Chumilla uses the material of *The promised Hell*, as a backbone of his fake *The Unmaking of*, displayed in 2010 and awarded with the Special Prize of the Jury “Point of encounter” in the 55th Edition of the Valladolid International Week Film (SEMINCI).

The movie *Amores que matan*, with Carmen Maura and Juanjo Puigcorbé, was premiered in 1995 being an immediate success, although it was not until 1999 that the filmmaker presented *Zapping*, starring Paz Vega and Eduard Fernández. This film provides evidences of genre experimentation, showing a kaleidoscope structure which deals with the grammatical capacities of the audiovisual format. His next film, *Desnudos desnudos* (2003), was considered to be “a splendid film because its complexity and its [...] innovative opting for his own cinematographical language” (Gisbert, 2003: web). This original attitude is also related to a tendency of the director of making an atypical cinema, although it does not prevent him from presenting commercial films or being influenced by other authors or films. According to the filmmaker, to have intertextual influences is not “a conscious referent but, in words of Bernardo Bertolucci, a way of stealing from the films we have seen traditionally” (Gisbert, 2003: web). His subsequent films, *El agua de la vida* (2006) and *Buscarse la vida* (2008), stress his tendency to combine formats, being a lucid referent mixing fiction and reality, a preference which finds its ultimate expression in *The Unmaking of*.

4. The shooting that could be but was not: reformulating *The promised Hell* in *The Unmaking of*

The basis for undertaking a project like *The Unmaking of*, Juan Manuel Chumilla Carbajosa re-elaborated his first film, *The promised Hell*, filmed during the nineties. We have mentioned that in his *opera prima*, the filmmaker had adapted the myth of Orpheo to the contemporary Mediterranean Spain, being Eurydice a young girl called Fuensanta (Cristina Marcos), and Orpheus a blacksmith played by Ginés García-Millán. In *The promised Hell*, the characters came into modernity, being adaptations of the myth and its different episodes. As we have affirmed in other epigraphs, despite being a finished film, the cineaste had always considered *The promised Hell* as an incomplete movie. The results thus obtained were not then adjusted to the planned script, being necessary to reformulate it in a newfangled film: *The Unmaking of*. This movie, on the contrary, is a fake filmed in 2010, in which we find a deep process of re-writing. Based on the initial material and on the testimony of the actors and crew of the first film, *The Unmaking of* is focused on giving the impression of absolute verisimilitude:

The idea emerged during an encounter I held by the American producer and scriptwriter Kit Carson, in a Screenwriters Lab at Sundance Institute. I told him my intention to recover my first feature film [...] and to reunite crew and actors for completing it. Surprisingly he accepted the challenge. But to define the project getting a greater consistency, we decided to change the argument: an independent producer in the United States is interested in an unfinished film made by a young Spanish filmmaker; then he organizes an expedition over the movie sets, searching for stolen material and the actors who took part in the film (Vanaclocha, 2011: web).

This tendency to recover previous material cannot uniquely be seen as a quality of Juan Manuel Chumilla, but as a propensity of a whole generation of contemporary cineastes. According to the author Vera Dika (2003: 18):

In the later postmodern work, however, the old genres seemingly return in reconstructed form. This strategy does not demystify the original. Instead we can note a tendency to utilize original forms for critical oppositions or displacements. From this dynamic model, then, we can begin to distinguish forms of resistance within the nostalgic tendency. The renewed status of the image is a central component in this practice.

Through successive inquiries carried out by the researcher Patricia Hart in New York, Cartagena, Fiumicino, Cinecittà Studios, Vermont, Cuetzalan or Xilitla, we discover the supposed details of *The promised Hell*:

We had to reinvent the past through true and false testimonies, we should merge fiction into reality reaching unexpected limits, in a particular narrative exercise that is, mostly, a tribute to cinema, to the memory, to time and to the faculty of dreaming and to make dreams come true (Notimex, 2011: web).

This mixture of genres and references in *The Unmaking of* (i.e. transtextuality, self-reference and metafiction), results in a film in which “fiction becomes a subject of art” (Bousoño & Carnero, 1983: 26).

4.1. *Transtextuality in The Unmaking of and its bonds with The promised Hell*

According to Gérard Genette, we have enumerated in previous epigraphs the different types of bonds that can be established between texts; these unions were called, in terms of the French narratologist: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality and hypertextuality. Genette even mentioned frequently it is the simultaneous existence of these categories of transtextual bonds, a phenomenon that we find in the case of *The Unmaking of*. Employing the adaptation of the model of Genette that Robert Stam carried out for its application in cinematographical theory, we can state that *The Unmaking of* shows an elevated presence of intertextuality, defined as an “effective co-presence of two texts” (Stam, 2001: 241). In addition, this co-presence can be found “in the form of quotation, plagiarism and allusion” (Stam, 2005: 211).

Taking *The promised Hell* as starting point, we discover that the narration of *The Unmaking of* involves a constant exercise of quotation and allusion to the *opera prima* of Juan Manuel Chumilla. More explicitly, quotation as a recourse is used with “the insertion of clips” (Stam, 2001: 241) that belongs to *The promised Hell*, since it constitutes the narrative basis of *The Unmaking of*. Secondly, we find intertextual relationships in the form of allusion, when we detect the “verbal or visual evocation” (Stam, 2001: 241) of *The promised Hell* within *The Unmaking of*. Concretely, allusion is employed to explain “the fictional world of the alluding film” (Stam, 2001: 241).

These two cardinal points in *The Unmaking of* can be considered as an unambiguous reference to avant-garde through the continuous intertextuality (Bloom, 2011: 121). Nevertheless, we cannot underestimate either the recurrent presence of plagiarism as a third form of intertextuality. This plagiarism, definable as an appropriation of someone else’s work, is also present in *The Unmaking of*, although in an unexpected appearance. We should notice that in the fake it is affirmed that *The promised Hell* is a movie filmed by Álex Fortuna, a cineaste who emerges at the end of the movie. What the spectator does not know is that Juan Manuel Chumilla is actually Álex Fortuna, an alter ego created for plagiarizing his *opera prima*. Despite this transference is made with the acquiescence of the filmmaker, and apart from its unusual appearance, we cannot deny the presence of plagiarism in *The Unmaking of*.

The second transtextual relation proposed by Genette, namely paratextuality, is a type of transtextuality related to those “accessory messages and commentaries which come to surround the text” (Stam, 2001: 242). Among them, we find commentaries, press releases, posters, documents that prove problems with censorship or other authorities, etc. In this regard, *The Unmaking of* includes explicit content about its shooting, its erased scenes, its reception, how the crew found itself in a difficult situation, and even how rose the proposal of the producer L.M. Kit Carson. Likewise, the presence of outlines, drawings and sculptures, as constitutive elements of the film, configures an argument in which

paratextual features are abundant and significant. In this category, we can also include the differentiation made regarding to the first version of the film and its confrontation with the final cut, an aspect remarked by Genette which appears in *The Unmaking of* through “drafts, schemes and previous projects of the work” which “can also work as paratext” (Genette, 1988: 12).

The third transtextual type, the metatextual relation, implies the continuous evocation of the first film within the second one. In words of Robert Stam, the text is constantly evoked without explicitly mentioning (Stam, 2001: 242-243). While in the first part of the film the references to *The promised Hell* are necessary and connotative, during the second half the need to mention explicitly the first film gets diluted, being unnecessary to evoke it persistently. According to Genette, the paradigm of this transtextual category is “the critic relation” (Genette, 1988: 12), and in this sense, in *The Unmaking of* the constant presence of characters, situations and dialogues which play an important role of criticism with regard to the first film, cannot be denied, making incessant commentaries on it, whether in an explicit or in a tacit form (cfr. Stam, 2001: 242).

With reference to the fourth category of transtextuality, namely: the architextual relation, it must be noticed that is one of the most notable aspects of the present case, given that this type is a taxonomic category. Architextuality, in its application to cinema theory: “has to do with a text’s willingness, or reluctance, to characterize itself directly or indirectly in its title as [...] a film” (Stam, 2001: 243).

Evidently, this transtextual category acquires its full value in *The Unmaking of*, given that its title is the result of a twisting of the generic ‘making of’ present in many audiovisual productions. A ‘making of’ is a documentary, generally a medium-length film, which exposes how a movie was made. In this particular case, the author stresses the genre of the film, defining it as a negation of its nature, and revealing it as how it was not made. This self-reflexive declaration underlines its condition of a fake documentary, although in words of Gérard Genette “the text itself is not supposed to know, and consequently not meant to declare, its generic quality” (Genette, 1997: 4). In the case of *The Unmaking of*, its own title carries out an exercise of generic clarification, as it declares itself as a fake.

Finally, the last type of transtextuality, hypertextuality, refers to the relation which is maintained between two given texts, a previous one called “hypotext”, and another present named “hypertext”, which “transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends” (Stam, 2001: 243) the hypotext. The relation to the case we are studying, cannot be more evident, not only because *The Unmaking of* derives from a pre-existing hypotext which has been transformed by the operations of selection, amplification, concretization and actualization (Stam, 2001: 243), but also because, in words of Gérard Genette, *The promised Hell* “is grafted” in a reliable manner in *The Unmaking of*.

4.2. *The Unmaking of and the presence of self-referentiality*

To fulfil his demand for innovation both formal and narrative, Bertolt Brecht went further proposing for theatrical art a deep reflexivity, a concept that included the aspiration of disclosing “the principles of its own construction, to avoid the “swindle” of suggesting that fictive events were not “worked at” but simply “happened” (Stam, 2001: 228). This eagerness to revealing what is behind is also found in *The Unmaking of*, in which there is a manifest work of artistic reflexivity. This reflexivity is a phenomenon connected to the term self-referentiality not only because it allows the meditation about the film itself, but about its own ontology. The identity of *The promised Hell* is presented again under a new format, reflecting about how it was elaborated, and how its nature and identity would be, if it had been made as it is stated in *The Unmaking of*. According to the parameters established by Efron Malcah, through the second film conventions established in *The promised Hell* are

reformulated, obtaining as a result an innovative film in which “the metafictional component inherent in the self-referentiality” (Malcah, 2010: 256) constitutes the backbone of the plot.

Logically, this innovative text derived from the first one, not only entails a superimposition on *The promised Hell*, but a conversion and an evolution of its structure, appearance and connotation. Through this renovated sense, *The promised Hell* is not the *opera prima* of Juan Manuel Chumilla, but an unfinished movie made by Álex Fortuna and afterwards abandoned in the basements of Cinecittà. By so doing, the author has given a new significance to the texts, in words of professor Kathleen Tyner, configuring a new “aesthetic intention related to its new presentation and its new context” (Tyner, 2008: 82). Therefore, *The Unmaking of*, as a result of the re-reading of *The promised Hell*, acquires through self-referential discourse a double ontological dimension, both dependent and independent to the given text. Hence:

Both of them are two sides of the same coin and, at the same time, two films titles with their own identity; and they can both be watched and understood, each without the other. So we have three dimensions: the two films seen as independent works, and a third in which they merge on a common path; i.e., a double descent into the fires of hell, the adaptation of the myth on one hand, and the mythology of the real on another (Chumilla & Tello, 2013: 131).

This identity envisages thus the connection between the two films, a consubstantial union that introduces the works unequivocally into the frame of metafiction.

4.3. *Metafiction in The Unmaking of: Cinema within Cinema*

Given that the main characteristic of metafiction lies in “its attempt to reveal the fictional illusion, the conventions of artistic realism [and] the trick fabricated by fiction” (García Martínez, 2007: 655), and assuming the four axiomatic categories of metafiction mentioned in previous epigraphs (cinema for revealing the *mise-en-scene*, for “quotation”, for elaborating a “reflexive discourse” or as a “context”), we observe that *The Unmaking of* contains each of those metafictional dimensions. Regarding to these dimensions, the fake of Juan Manuel Chumilla do exposes cinema as a fictional mechanism, revealing “the magic of the invisible *mise-en-scene* [...] always denied in order to not atrophying the realism” (Navarrete, 2012:2). In this sense, it is evident that in *The Unmaking of* it is shown what happens behind the scenes, as a specular reflection of the cinematographical activity. Furthermore, metafiction is profusely utilized as a “quotation” all along the film for alluding to *The promised Hell*. This link exhibits the interconnection, and even narrative need, between both titles: without *The promised Hell* there would not be *The Unmaking of*.

Likewise, the film is an incessant reflection about the nature of cinema, the difficulties of a shooting, the inconveniences when searching for locations; the constant complaining of actors and crew. The whole film constitutes an invariable tribute to the film industry. Regarding to the last dimension, it is palpable that in *The Unmaking of* cinema is, from the beginning of the film, the environmental fund and stage of what the camera shows. In this sense we affirm that cinema is the authentic context of the film.

We should also mention that metacinema in *The Unmaking of* is presented as “a completely new cinematographical experience” (Preminger, 2004: 183), a feature that has in common with other generational films, that reformulates the technical process innovating both in narrative and formal structure. Despite the innovative nature proposed by *The Unmaking of*, it should be noted that metacinema is an identifying mark of the filmography of Juan Manuel Chumilla, a constant that the author explains:

My interest in the metalanguage arose from the reading of the essay *Philosophy of Composition*, written by Edgar Allan Poe, in which the renowned American author, through a

speculative exercise, reveals and reflects on the creative process that led him to compose his famous poem, *The Raven*. Subsequent to that reading, unconsciously, in many of my films and writings appear other languages as essential elements of the narration. The mystery of the creative process is something that in general, has to do with the own existentialist process of the author, not only in artistic terms. Deep down, art is a projection of life, and from this perspective must be understood my interest in the metalanguage (Chumilla, 2014)².

Additionally to that metalinguistic dimension and the necessary and inevitable interrelationship established between *The promised Hell* and *The Unmaking of*, both titles are also a reflection of the personality and biography of Juan Manuel Chumilla. According to the author:

The film challenges a past shooting, which is shown fragmented and unresolved, with the shooting of the attempt to re-film something impossible. In the film the magic of cinema becomes established through a poetic licence of a spatial-temporal fold. That occurs in great films like *La nuit américaine*, *Singing in the rain* or *Fellini, otto e mezzo*, to which we could add titles like *All that jazz*, *Stardust memories* or *Der Stand der Dinge*, films in which the autobiographical reference is almost inevitable (Chumilla, 2014)³.

Despite this connection to the author personality, which is an irrefutable component in his productions, it should be noticed that the metafictional status is undoubtedly, the distinctive element of the two films. Therefore, in the morphological structure of *The Unmaking of*, we find a metalinguistic level (Prieto, 2008: 64) that is a new dimension of fiction which paradoxically, is near to reality. Because *The Unmaking of* is presented as a real documentary, whose artificiality becomes blurred, is set aside for showing an extreme narrative verism. If, as Billy Wilder indicated, “films must have something that spectators do not see everyday, but in which truth can be recognized” (Crowe, 2000: 143), *The Unmaking of* brings us a plausible version of a cinematographical reality that could have occurred, even though it is a fictional construction.

5. Conclusions

It has been confirmed how cinema within cinema is a frequent exercise in the course of the history of the film industry. We have also exposed that it is not so frequent to find films of this nature in the field of fake documentary, where only a dozen of titles have been filmed from the decade of the nineties. As happened with *Forgotten Silver*, the most emblematic film in this regard, in Spain we find *The Unmaking of*, a fake documentary that also re-elaborates an illusory history of the film industry, in this case, the free recreation of the shooting of *The promised Hell*, with which it establishes an ineluctable transtextual relation.

This subject matter, a hallmark of a cineaste who experiments with genre mixtures, is an exception in the Spanish documentary field. The metadiscourse in this fake constitutes a plot thrown itself to the task of analysing the universe of cinema, not only constructing a metafictional structure for revealing the *mise-en-scene*, or transforming its nature into a reflection, a constant quotation or a context, but turning into a tribute to the film industry. During the film, we find constant allusions to filmmakers and actors, to the relationships of the crew, to Herzog, Kinski, Chaplin, Welles or Fellini, and the insertion of passages of previous films of Juan Manuel Chumilla. This material results in a metalinguistic film that is not only a clear “stamp of cinephile” (Shikoda, 2006: 67), but is also defined by introducing the generality of the transtextual relations enunciated by Gérard Genette, as we have

² Text extracted from an interview carried out *ad hoc* with the filmmaker for this research.

³ Ibid.

provided evidence when analysing the categories intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality and hypertextuality.

Likewise, this film belongs to an author who tends to use generic hybridization, elaborating a cinematographical discourse which is an evidence exhortation to filmic reflexivity and self-referentiality. In addition, the metalanguage that conveys the structure of *The Unmaking of* is also a tribute to the cinematographic industry, constituting a reflexive and metalinguistical spiral that reaches its zenith when the camera films the fictional filmmaker Álex Fortuna (Juan Manuel Chumilla) looking at the camera, emulating the emblematic lithography “Hand with Reflecting Sphere”, made by M. C. Escher. On this occasion, Chumilla nods to the cinematographic metalanguage, ending the film at the same point where it started, namely: through the lens of a camera. In the words of the author: “every filmmaker have been tempted to talk about cinema within cinema throughout their career, and some of us have fallen into this temptation inevitably” (Chumilla, 2014)⁴.

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⁴ Text extracted from an interview carried out *ad hoc* with the filmmaker for this research.

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