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Constellations of Conflict: Violence, War and Writing the Nation in Daniel Ferreira's *Pentalogía (infame) de Colombia*

Thesis presented by

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This PhD thesis is dedicated to the memory of Cara Levey

Abstract

This thesis analyses the different representations of violence in contemporary Colombian author Daniel Ferreira's *Pentalogía (infame) de Colombia*. Using a broad palette of theoretical approaches to violence, I read critically the first four novels of the *Pentalogía* to examine how Ferreira narrates different periods of twentieth century Colombian violence, looking specifically at how the *Pentalogía* works to explore the cracks (*grietas*) in official accounts of history. In the introduction, I begin by setting the scene to the *Pentalogía* and situating Ferreira's novels within the long tradition of fictional narratives on Colombian violence, arguing that his work could best be understood as a continuation and renewal of Figueroa's concept of *novelas de la violencia*. In the first chapter, which focuses on *La balada de los bandoleros baladíes,* I analyse manifestations of violence that have been mainly unexplored in previous fictional accounts of the conflict such as paramilitary massacres from the perspective of the perpetrator, 'social cleansing'[1] and intra-family violence. My second chapter examines Ferreira's second novel, *Viaje al interior de una gota sangre*, and looks at cyclical violence and palimpsestic memory in the novel, analysing particularly how violence from previous eras haunts the present and future, like the writing on a palimpsest. In the third chapter, I examine the violence of a land conflict of the late 1960s and early 1970s in *Rebelión de los oficios inútiles*, and through dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, I explore the way the novel's peripheral voices resist official versions of history. In the fourth chapter, I posit that Ferreira adopts a Bildungsroman structure in *El año del sol negro* to narrate different representations of gendered violence in the Colombian civil war, *La Guerra de los Mil Días*. In my thesis, I argue that Ferreira's *Pentalogía* could be read as constructing various counter-histories around different periods of twentieth century Colombian violence.

[1] It is common in texts dealing with 'social cleansing' violence to write the term between quotation marks to comment on how the expression is phrased from the perspective of the perpetrators of these crimes and not from the perspective of the writer. I have opted to follow this convention in the thesis.

INTRODUCTION

Exploring the 'Cracks' Between Official Versions of Colombia's Twentieth Century Violence in Daniel Ferreira's *Pentalogía (infame) de Colombia*

Daniel Ferreira, born in 1981 in the Santanderean town of San Vicente de Chucurí, is recognised as one of Colombia's most talented and critically acclaimed contemporary writers. In his short literary career, he has published five novels (*La balada de los bandoleros baladíes* [2011], *Viaje al interior de una gota de sangre* [2011], *Rebelión de los oficios inútiles* [2014], *El año del sol negro* [2018] and *Recuerdos del río volador* [2022])[2] and one work of non-fiction entitled *Samizdat de la Habana* (2020). The five fictional narratives make up his ambitious project *Pentalogía (infame) de Colombia*,[3] a five-part set of novels narrating the human dramas of Colombia's cyclical twentieth century violence. This thesis, which is the first comprehensive study of Ferriera's oeuvre, examines, through close textual readings and recourse to diverse theoretical approaches on violence, spectrality, polyphony and memory, how Ferreira's novels narrate, represent and engage with the multifaceted manifestations of violence that occur throughout the different periods of the twentieth century narrated in the *Pentalogía*. The thesis argues that Ferreira's *Pentalogía* provides - through innovative literary devices - new and original means of narrating the different periods of violence to construct counter-histories that allow for a fresh understanding of various episodes of twentieth century Colombian violence, where perspectives and voices on the periphery are foregrounded in the narratives and inserted into historical memory.

In this introduction, I set out Ferreira's biography and oeuvre in more detail, including the novels examined in this thesis and their interconnections with violence and the *grietas* (cracks), which I understand as the unexplored narratives of Colombian violence. The second

[2] With few exceptions, hereafter in this introduction, and the rest of the thesis, I will refer to the novels using the following five abbreviated forms: *La balada*, *Viaje*, *Rebelión*, *El año*, and *Recuerdos.*
[3] Hereafter I will use *Pentalogía*.

section traces the explorations of violence in the Colombian literary tradition before turning, in the third section, to review the literature on Ferreira's fiction and set out this thesis' original contribution. The final part elucidates my original theoretical approach and close literary readings of the texts and offers an overview of the thesis' itinerary.

Narrating the Violence: Ferreira and His Work

Daniel Ferreira's first three novels were all awarded international literary prizes: *La balada*, Premio Latinoamericano de Primera Novela Sergio Galindo (2010); *Viaje*, Premio Alba Narrativa (2017); and *Rebelión*, Premio Clarín (2014). Paradoxically, despite these awards, Ferreira was, until recently, relatively unknown in his native Colombia. This lack of national attention was likely because the first three novels were originally published in Mexico, Cuba and Argentina, respectively. However, critical acclaim and favourable reviews brought national interest to his narratives, and all the novels have since been published or republished by the Colombian branch of publishing house Alfaguara. In addition to his novelistic production, Ferreira has also been a columnist and journalist for Colombia's oldest newspaper *El Espectador* and has written *crónicas* and essays for other magazines such as *Casa de las Américas*, *Letras Libres*, *El Malpensante* and *Hermano Cerdo*. Moreover, Ferreira is the author of the blog *Una hoguera para que arda Goya*, which was awarded the prize for best blog for cultural diffusion in Spanish by the Instituto Cervantes in 2013. Furthermore, in 2017, the author was also among the authors selected for Hay Festival's prestigious Bogotá39, a list of the top 39 Latin American writers of fiction under the age of 40, which includes renowned novelists from the region such as the Argentinian, Samantha Schweblin; Mexican, Valeria Luiselli; and Ecuadorian, Mónica Ojeda.[4]

In the five novels that make up the *Pentalogía*, Ferreira explores different periods of Colombian violence, which span the length of the twentieth century. The first novel to be

[4] hayfestival.com/bogota39/bogota39-en-2017.aspx

published, *La balada,* the subject of Chapter One, shines a light on extreme representations of violence of the late 1990s in the form of paramilitary and urban 'social cleansing' violence, as well as the trickle-down effects of the larger socio-political conflicts through extreme representations of social degradation within the family unit. His second novel, *Viaje,* examines, through a blending and confluence of disparate periods, the paramilitary violence of the late 1980s and its effect on the inhabitants of a small, rural Colombian community. From 1980s paramilitary violence, *Rebelión*, Ferreira's third novel, the subject of Chapter Three, moves back in time to the final years of *El Frente Nacional* (National Front),[5] to explore the land conflicts of the early 1970s in an archival and polyphonic (re)construction of an occupation by a campesino and workers' union and its leader, Ana Larrota. In the fourth novel of the *Pentalogía, El año,* Ferreira focuses on the period around the turn of the twentieth century and employs, as I argue later in Chapter Four of this thesis, a dual Bildungsroman structure, to narrate the journeys of José Celestino Sul and his pregnant lover Julia Valserra, separated during the War of a Thousand Days[6] and the Battle of Palonegro. In the fifth and final novel of the *Pentalogía, Recuerdos*, Ferreira instead explores the period surrounding the decades leading up to the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and El Bogotazo in 1948, narrating a mother's and brother's search for their missing son and brother. As the final instalment was published as this thesis was in its final stages, my analysis of Ferreira's *Pentalogía* will focus exclusively on the first four novels. However, I briefly address my thoughts surrounding *Recuerdos* and suggest possible avenues for future research in the conclusion of this thesis.

Although the *Pentalogía* is structured around various periods of Colombian violence, spanning the length of the twentieth century, it is evident that in Ferreira's narratives, the larger

[5] The National Front (1958-1974) was a period in Colombian history when the two hegemonic parties alternated power, consisting of two four-year Conservative periods and two four-year Liberal periods. I will discuss the National Front in more detail in Chapter Three of this thesis.

[6] The War of a Thousand Days (*La Guerra de los Mil Días*) was a civil war fought between Conservatives and Liberals from 1899 to 1902. More details about this conflict will be provided in Chapter Four.

historical and social-political events become the backdrop to the human dramas and subjective experiences of the characters situated in these violent periods of Colombian history. In various interviews, Ferreira himself has stated that rather than unpacking the historical events themselves, the novels that make up the *Pentalogía* are more interested in probing into the unexplored *grietas* between the different versions of official history than focussing on the more well-known historical events: "Lo que busco es explorar las grietas, no los sucesos en sí mismos. Del bipartidismo lo que menos me interesa es la muerte de Gaitán y el bogotazo, supuestamente lo más espectacular y lo más narrativo" (Ferreira, "El muchacho"). Ferreira's exploration of the 'cracks' between official accounts of history works in various original ways in the *Pentalogía*. I will discuss these now to contextualise my later analysis of the different manifestations of violence within the novels.

'La(s) grieta(s): Reading the Novels Against the Backdrop of Violences

In the four novels analysed in this thesis, the narrative focuses on the subjective experiences of characters caught up in the different cycles of violence of twentieth-century Colombia and not so much on the historical events per se. For instance, *Viaje*, which is the subject of Chapter Two of this thesis, begins with a collective paramilitary massacre, but rather than concentrating on the initial killing, the following chapters of the novel delve into the lives of the various individuals murdered in the carnage and illustrate the larger web of historical and interconnected violence, spanning different periods, that surrounds the opening bloodbath. Chapter Four of this thesis looks, instead, at *El año*, which, although set during the War of a Thousand Days, provides relatively few explanations about the origins of that conflict. Instead, the novel foregrounds the lives of peripheral subjects and, although they do feature briefly in the novel, relegates the better-known historical figures of the war to a secondary position. In the *Pentalogía*, more broadly, Ferreria prefers to avoid the more notorious historical events and opts instead to unearth episodes of Colombian violence that involve characters on the margins

of history or who are often written out of it entirely. This focus on the subjectivity of subaltern characters, normally absent from official accounts of history, is what Ferreira refers to as a "literature of the defeated": "Las historias que escribo son sobre derrotas morales y políticas, y derrotas de la utopía y derrotas del individuo, casi siempre derrotas, es decir que escribo una literatura de derrotados" (Ferreira, "El arte"). This focus on the 'defeated' of history is nowhere more present than in Ferreira's third novel, *Rebelión*, analysed in Chapter Three, where the projects of the three main characters, Joaquin Borja, Ana Larrota, and Simon Alemán, all end in calamitous defeat in "[una] historia [que] es un tríptico en el que la inutilidad es su eje central" (Gonzalez Echeverry 133). The emphasis on the lives and subjectivity of anonymous, peripheral characters seems to align with Ferreira's intention in writing the *Pentalogía*. According to Ferreira, his narratives attempt not simply to confirm existing accounts of history or provide accurate versions of events. Instead, through the prism of fiction, they add to collective memory by creating original fictionalised versions of the past that give prominence to unheard voices and provide, through a polyphonic counter-history, new perspectives and ways of understanding the past which eschew singular, official truths:

> La ficción es otra forma de la verdad y la imaginación es su territorio. Aunque la memoria ha sido tan importante para estas novelas que conforman *Pentalogía de Colombia* como la imaginación, hace rato abandoné la omnisciencia, la objetividad y el archivo por las leyes de la ficción. La literatura es una forma muy sofisticada de controvertir las verdades únicas**.** En este mundo donde ya no hay verdad sino interpretaciones la literatura puede ahondar un poco más en las realidades históricas o sociales. (Ferreira, "La novela")

Another means by which Ferreira explores the *grietas* in official accounts of history is by situating his fiction away from urban centres and focusing more on episodes of provincial and rural violence. Most of Ferreira's narratives, except for parts of *La balada*, take place in rural settings, and Daniel Ferreira's upbringing in the small Santanderean town of San Vicente de Chucurí has undoubtedly influenced his writing, as the author himself has stated: "Siempre ubico a mis personajes en zona rural, que es lo que conozco. En el ágora que es la dinámica de

la plaza de los pueblos. En el río donde me bañaba, a las montañas a las que iba […] todavía no he agotado esa época ni ese espacio para crear un universo narrativo" (Ferreira, "El escritor que"). Having spent his childhood and teenage years in this remote region of Santander, it is not surprising that most of his novels narrate the violence experienced by rural populations. Ferreira's focus on rurality distances his novels from much other contemporary Colombian fiction, which, according to Averis, has "a sharper focus on urban violence at the expense of the more widespread rural violence" (302). Recent novels about the Colombian conflict, particularly *narconovelas* or *sicarescas*, have narrated violence that has predominately taken place in urban settings. This lopsided representation of the conflict, according to Kate Averis, highlights the lack of visibility given to rural violence: "If most of the people who read and write novels are located in the city, […] it follows that rural victims of the Colombian conflict are written out of literature, and out of history" (302). Daniel Ferreira's novels, I assert, go against dominant trends in representing Colombian violence as predominantly urban, opting instead to narrate the plight of people affected by rural violence, which aligns with his attempt to narrate characters on the periphery of history.

Additionally, in the *Pentalogía*, Ferreira demonstrates his qualities as an experimental writer who uses various narrative techniques to provide new and innovative ways of exploring violent episodes from Colombia's past. In fact, Giulia Nuzzo posits that Ferreira's innovative narrative devices are an intrinsic part of Ferreira's attempt to dig deeper into the cracks between official versions of history: "El interés de su producción reside no solo en exigencias de naturaleza puramente formal, sino también, y sobre todo, a instancias profundas del proceso de rememoración y trasposición literaria del drama nacional" (140). Here Nuzzo is arguing that the experimentalism on display in Ferreira's narratives, which manifests through his deployment of a range of genres, narrators, registers, temporalities and voices, is not simply an adornment but, an integral part of the *Pentalogía*'s contribution to the construction of collective

memory around the Colombian conflict. As well as commenting on the construction of memory, as Nuzzo puts forward, I also argue in this thesis that the range of formal and technical narrative devices deployed by Ferreira also directly contribute to expanding the reader's understanding of how violence emerges, manifests and mutates. Furthermore, I argue that these formal technical devices provide the voiceless victims of the conflict with a new means of expression. It is important to note here that in the earlier novels of the *Pentalogía*, there is more of an emphasis on polyphony, through the use of multiple narrators, but in the final two books, although they incorporate different narrators, there seems to be a greater focus on the blending of other forms of textuality such as discourses, genres, registers and styles, as Ferreira points out in a recent interview for the promotion of his most recent novel, *Recuerdos*:

> […] intentaba ser fiel a la idea inicial de la Pentalogía de Colombia: un coro de voces que atravesaría un siglo. Pero tenía resistencia a la construcción de un discurso oral y al soliloquio; desde entonces exploré otras formas de narrar. En mis novelas siguientes busqué la voz en la textualidad, formatos como el diario íntimo en *El año del sol negro*, o las cartas en *Recuerdos del río volador*. De modo que el siglo se completó no como polifonía, pero sí como un puente entre lo íntimo, la historia y lo narrativo: registros y discursos de la memoria en un país que heredaba violencia sin hacer duelo ni encarar las verdades incómodas. (Ferreira, "El río")

Having provided background on Ferreira and his ambitious narrative project, which is the focus of this thesis, in the next section, I will outline the development of Colombia's long literary tradition on violence to situate the *Pentalogía* within its literary heritage and elucidate how Ferreira's oeuvre adds to this tradition by providing and suggesting new approaches to narrating and representing the varying expressions of twentieth-century Colombian violence.

La Violencia: Tracing the Origins of Colombia's Literary Tradition on Violence

An earlier precursor to the boom of fictional representations of violence published during *La Violencia* was José Eustasio Rivera's *La vorágine* from 1924. In the novel, Rivera condemns the rubber barons' violent treatment of indigenous populations in the country's Amazon regions during the height of the rubber boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Felipe Restrepo David posits that *La vorágine* should be viewed as a foundational

text for the new direction taken by Colombian literature on violence: "[Jose Eustacio Rivera] crea la que es, quizás, la gran novela nacional-fundacional: no porque celebre lo 'glorioso' de lo colombiano, no es un canto al 'patriotismo': fundacional en el sentido de que desnuda una dolorosa degradación social y cultural […]." This move away from narrating violence as a necessary component in the construction of the nation (Rueda, "Nación" 346) was an early example of the direction that Colombia's literary tradition on violence would take during the years of *La Violencia*, where "the project of national foundation became increasingly distant and improbable" (Martínez 6). It is during this period of Colombian history, the decades of heightened conflict during the late 1940s and 1950s, when the country's literary tradition of violence begins in earnest.

During *La Violencia*, partisan tensions reached a peak with the assassination of presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on 9th April 1948.[7] In this period, in the late 1940s and 1950s, various authors produced fictional accounts of the brutal violence consuming the country. Many of these narratives published in the years between 1948 and 1958, such as Pedro Gómez Correa's *El 9 de abril* (1951) or Daniel Caicedo's *Viento seco* (1953), were highly partisan, lacked sophistication in their use of literary and story-telling techniques and, instead of reflecting on the broader complexities of the violence, attempted to reproduce it through frequent gory and graphic descriptions. Figueroa referred to these early novels as *narrativas en la violencia*, with the preposition "en" denoting narratives that were so bogged down in the gruesome details of the violence that they were unable to reflect upon the broader historical and social issues surrounding *La Violencia*. Many of these narratives were written by supporters of the Liberal party and, in these novels, the horrific descriptions of Conservative brutality often led to the justification for the use of retaliatory violence and the continuation of

[7] The assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán subsequently resulted in *El Bogotazo* and fuelled a ten-year war between Conservatives and Liberals, lasting until the end of the 1950s with the start of the National Front.

the carnage: “Ese mismo lenguaje en cierta modo justifica la violencia como represalia, pues los horrores descritos parecen inducir en forma natural un deseo de venganza” (Rueda, *La violencia* 76). In 1959, writing in the newspaper *La Calle*, in an article entitled “Dos o tres cosas sobre ‘La novela de violencia,’” a young Gabriel García Márquez commented on the excessive, gratuitous violence of these early narratives, which he deemed to be lacking any real literary merit:

> Apabullados por el material de que disponía, se los tragó la tierra en la descripción de la masacre, sin permitirse una pausa que les habría servido para preguntarse si lo más importante, humana y por tanto literariamente, eran los muertos o los vivos. El exhaustivo inventario de los decapitados, los castrados, las mujeres violadas, los sexos esparcidos y las tripas sacadas, y la descripción minuciosa de la crueldad con que se cometieron esos crímenes, no era probablemente el camino que llevaba a la novela. (12)

As well as being excessively partisan, with most writers prioritising their ideological causes over aesthetic or literary concerns, part of the reason that these early narratives were unsuccessful at reflecting upon the broader complexities of the violence was the lack of emotional and temporal distance many of the writers had with the events they were narrating (Escobar 328). In many cases, authors had been direct witnesses to many of the horrors described in minute detail in their novels and, therefore, could not take a step back and narrate the violence more objectively. Very little time had elapsed between the real-life massacres and the fictional descriptions of that violence found in the narratives. Therefore, the authors did not have the distance to reflect more profoundly on this sudden eruption of violence in the country, as the pressing urgency to document the gruesome excesses of the opposing side took precedence over other concerns. Figueroa provides a damning description of the content of these *narrativas en la violencia,* which is illustrative of their many pitfalls, and the reasons they were ultimately unsuccessful at narrating the broader complexities of the conflict: “idolatría por la anécdota, privilegio del enunciado, poca elaboración del lenguaje, débil creación de personajes, linealidad de la trama, […] defensa de una tesis personal o partidista […]” (97).

According to Juan Fernando Duarte Borrero, a possible justification for the *narrativas en la violencia*'s exaggerated emphasis on the denunciation and forensic description of the violence was that the authors of these novels were, in the main, non-professional or semi-professional writers, who, at the time, were the only individuals in the country tasked with documenting the violence. Later, as Duarte Borrero argues, after the inauguration of the first sociology faculties in the country's universities, especially the one in Bogotá's Universidad Nacional, this responsibility would be undertaken instead by academics ("Abstract" 00:00:30-00:01:45). The new sociology faculties graduated many budding scholars and led to a flurry of sociological studies on the violence, which would therefore take the burden of documenting the horrors of *La Violencia* away from the fictional writers. These new scholarly studies moved away from the gory descriptions of the *narrativas en la violencia* and began to produce reflections on the violence that were focused on "sus aspectos estructurales, y con atención a su costo social, desde la perspectiva de las ciencias sociales" (Rueda, *La violencia* 90). Paradoxically, it is interesting to point out that even though these sociological studies avoided much of the graphic description characteristic of the *narrativas en la violencia,* many of the academics had read these novels and were informed and influenced by the gruesome accounts contained within "precisamente porque la gran mayoría declaraban estar basadas en hechos reales" (92). One critical sociological study, which attempted to shed light on the violence of previous decades, was *La violencia en Colombia: Estudio de un proceso social* (1962), written by sociologists Orlando Fals Borda, Eduardo Umaña Luna and Germán Guzmán Campos. *La Violencia en Colombia*, like many of the sociological studies of the 1960s, however, faced resistance from the two hegemonic parties of the National Front who, through a pact of silence, preferred to forget the violence of the previous decade, showing no real commitment to investigating the crimes committed by supporters of both political parties (90). Therefore, many of the studies published in the 1960s and later fictional narratives would undermine and

go directly against this pact of silence by unearthing episodes of violence that both sides, for political reasons, preferred to keep hidden (90). The 1962 study undertaken by Fals Borda, Umaña Luna and Guzmán Campos, in particular, generated a backlash among Conservatives, who felt that it gave highly partisan accounts of the events of *La Violencia*, in which they were identified as the principal instigators of the violence (91).

Given that the onus was now placed on sociologists to document the violence, and to a lesser degree on non-professional or semi-professional writers, beginning in the 1960s, more sophisticated narratives of Colombian violence, which Figueroa categorises as *narrativas de la violencia*, started to emerge. These new narratives prioritised the aesthetic and literary concerns of the novel over the ideological grievances of the authors, and this evolution in the style and tone of the novels allowed for new approaches to narrating and reflecting on the violence of previous decades: "[Estas novelas] reelabora[n] hechos, ficcionalizándolos o reinventándolos, para crear espacios literarios donde la realidad transfigurada permite comprender más o mejor móviles ocultos, efectos desencadenantes o secuelas irresueltas de la Violencia" (Figueroa 98). Although most of these more nuanced narratives were published beginning in the 1960s, some early precursors were produced during the worst years of *La Violencia*, namely Jorge Zalamea's *El gran Burundún-Burundá ha muerto* (1952) and Eduardo Caballero Calderón's *El Cristo de espaldas* (1952). Later examples of *narrativas de la violencia* are Gabriel García Márquez's *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* (1958) and *La mala hora* (1962); Álvaro Cepeda Samudio's *La casa grande* (1962); Manuel Mejia Vallejo's *El día señalado* (1964); and Gustavo Àlvarez Gardeazábal's *Cóndores no entierran todos los días* (1972). These narratives distance themselves from the dense descriptions of executions, mutilations and torture of the earlier *narrativas en la violencia* and use more elaborate literary forms and techniques to narrate the broader structural causes and consequences of violence deeply embedded in the society and culture of the country:

> […] comienzan a salir a la luz aspectos más complejos y profundos de la "Violencia" que habían permanecido ocultos para los primeros observadores, demasiado obsesionados con los hechos atroces como para poder trascenderlos. La visión testimonial y directa da así paso a versiones más literarias, en las cuales el tremendismo espectacular cede ante interpretaciones menos sangrientas y serenas. (Restrepo 126)

After the noticeable improvement in the quality of the literary production beginning in the 1960s, later narratives of violence also began to incorporate, through various genres, styles and techniques, new manifestations of violence that began to arise during and after the National Front such as left-wing insurgency groups like FARC, ELN and later M-19; right-wing paramilitary militias; and drug trafficking cartels. In the mid-1980s, these new expressions of violence were captured in testimonial narratives. The turns towards the testimonial genre in Colombian narratives of violence, it should be noted, is in keeping with a long tradition of testimonial writing in Latin American that includes foundational texts such as Miguel Barnet's *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1968) and Rigoberta Menchú's *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983).[8] The testimonial genre in Colombia allowed victims and perpetrators alike, through the mediation of a journalist or sociologist, to give their accounts of the horrors of the evolving violence. Testimonies included in these texts were normally anonymous, which allowed for protection of the individuals involved so that, "[…] el conocimiento de su experiencia se beneficie la comunidad a la que pertenecen, que podría en el futuro protegerse de acciones similares" (Rueda, *La violencia* 129). The first testimonial narrative on Colombian violence is usually credited to Alfedro Molano's *Los años de tropel* (1985), a compilation of testimonial accounts by participants in *La Violencia*. Another notable text in the Colombian testimonial genre is another of Molano's works, *Trochas y fusiles* (1994), which brings together detailed descriptions of the conflict by combatants of the FARC. Molano would go on to publish over twenty testimonial texts where victims and perpetrators from some of Colombia's most remote regions were able to recount in anonymity their experiences of

[8] I explore the testimonial genre in more detail in Chapter Three of this thesis.

different periods of violence. Later, because of Molano's reputation as a *cronista* of the unheard victims of the conflict, and prior to his death in 2019, he became a member of the *Comisión de la Verdad*, which was formed as part of the 2016 peace accords with the FARC. Other notable examples of testimonial narratives were Gonzalez Uribe's *Los niños de la guerra* (2002), a collection of testimonial accounts by children and adolescents recruited as soldiers by various armed groups and *No nacimos pa' semilla* (1990), by journalist Alonso Salazar, which details the lives of young men recruited as *sicarios* in poor neighbourhoods of Medellín during the height of the drug violence in the late 1980s. The principal aim of these testimonial narratives was to create a chorus of voices where victims could anonymously give first-hand accounts of their horrific experiences: "El deseo predominante en estos relatos es el de señalar el daño que causa la violencia, describir cómo ocurrió, y por qué fue tan devastadora" (Rueda 134).

As well as in testimonial texts such as *No nacimos pa' semilla*, the influence of the effects of the illicit drug trade on the conflict and Colombian society is evident, for instance, in the inception of the *sicaresca* genre, which emerged in the mid-1990s. These narratives, such as Fernando Vallejo's *La Virgin de los sicarios* (1994) or Jorge Franco's *Rosario Tijeras* (1995), dealt with the effects of drug trafficking on marginalised neighbourhoods of Medellín, focusing on the figure of the contract killer in novels that "dan cuenta de la decadencia moral y social del país, lo que significativamente se manifiesta en la constante muerte como hecho violento" (Giraldo 17). An important shift in these narratives is how the stories now occur in urban spaces rather than the rural settings featured in the novels published in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Juana Suárez points out, however, that a link can be made between the violence in the urban settings of the *sicaresca* novels and the early *novelas en la violencia*, as it was precisely the horrendous violence narrated in these 1950s novels that led to the mass migration of the rural Colombian population to the cities in the decades during and following *La Violencia*, which morphed into new urban violence in 1970s, 80s and 90s and influenced "[la] dramática

y veloz transformación a lo urbano" in later narratives of Colombian violence such as the *sicaresca* (120).

In addition to narrating the influence of the drug cartels, many novels of the last two decades have turned to the rural battles between the guerrilla, paramilitary and state forces, with many narratives concentrating on the horrific crimes committed, especially, by paramilitary forces, such as Evelio Rosero's *Los ejércitos* (2007) and Ricardo Silva Romero's *Érase una vez en Colombia* (2016); in that regard, the first two novels of Ferreira's *Pentalogía*, *La balada* and *Viaje*, can also be added to this growing list of fictional representations dealing with paramilitarism. There have also been many other narrators whose novels have dealt directly or indirectly with Colombian violence, such as another of Evelio Rosero's narratives, *En el lejero* (2003), which, taking place in a 'Rulfian' and dreamlike landscape, addresses the issue of forced disappearances. Another interesting narrative is Lorena Salazar Masso's *Esta herida llena de peces* (2021), which deals with the theme of maternity in the context of armed groups and violence on the Pacific coast. Finally, honouring the legacy of Alfredo Molano's testimonial narratives, journalist Patricia Nieto has continued his work and produced various *crónicas* and *testimonios*, which have narrated the armed conflict from the perspective of the victims; these testimonial works have recently been compiled in her latest publication *Crónicas del paraiso* (2022).

In this thesis, I will demonstrate how Ferreira's novels continue and renew the literary tradition of Colombian violence laid out above. I posit here that Ferreira's *Pentalogía* can be best understood as a continuation of the tradition of novels that Figueroa refers to as *narrativas de la violencia*, as the narratives in the *Pentalogía* go beyond the gratuitous descriptions of violence of the *narrativas en la violencia* and the sensationalism of some narratives in the *sicaresca* genre. Instead, through an array of innovative formal and technical devices, the novels analysed in this thesis engender more profound reflections on the violence and

foreground the unnarrated human dramas, especially of those individuals on the periphery of official history. Having traced the literary heritage of the *Pentalogía*, I will now provide an overview of the scholarly work that has been published in recent years on Ferreira's narratives.

Critical Studies and Writing on Daniel Ferreira's Oeuvre: Reviewing the Literature

When I began working on this thesis, there were very few critical studies on Ferreira's oeuvre. Nonetheless, as the final novels of the *Pentalogía* were published, the amount of criticism on Ferreira's narratives gradually started to increase. Most of the critical studies on the *Pentalogía*, however, have been published in relation to just *Viaje* and *Rebelión*, with very little written about *La balada*, *El año* and *Recuerdos*. In the case of the fourth and fifth novels, the lack of criticism might be explained by their recent publication dates, in 2018 and 2022. The studies focussing on *Rebelión* have addressed issues, such as the representation of human rights in the novel and the exploration of the characters using the theory of non-utility. Criticism about *Viaje*, on the other hand, has been related more to the construction of collective memory and connections between 1980s paramilitarism and earlier periods of Colombian violence. Up to this point, though, there has not been a comprehensive study that focusses on the representation of violence throughout the *Pentalogía*. In the following paragraphs, I will provide a more detailed breakdown of each of the critical studies published to date on Ferreira's work.

The first critical study of Ferreira's work was Giulia Nuzzo's "La pentalogía (infame) de Colombia de Daniel Ferreira: Una aproximación a su obra," published in 2017. In this article, the author provides a critical introduction to the first three novels of the *Pentalogía*, with particular emphasis given to *Rebelión*, but Nuzzo begins by situating Ferreira's writing, as I have done above, within a long tradition of Colombian fictional writing on violence. She states that tracing *the Pentalogía*'s literary heritage should be the first line of enquiry for any future critical interest in Ferreira's narratives. Afterwards, she argues that his works are

particularly worthy of critical attention because of the way the author experiments with a variety of literary forms and techniques as a narrative tool for the construction of memory of the Colombian conflict. Nuzzo then goes on to briefly analyse *La balada*, stating that, through its hyperbolic tone and language, which she likens to Fernando Vallejo's *La Virgin de los sicarios*, Ferreira demonstrates that he is unafraid to go into the territory of the gruesome descriptions of *novelas en la violencia*. According to Nuzzo, Ferreira, in *La balada*, does not hold back in his representations of grotesque and surreal violence in images that are "continuamente llevadas hacia el umbral del engrandecimiento pornográfico, de la evidencia escabrosa de los detalles anatómicos […]" (144). When analysing *Viaje*, Nuzzo emphasises the novel's formal experimentation with space and temporality where, "el tiempo se hechiza aquí en un envolvimiento circular, retrocediendo como por una especie de hipnosis maléfica hacia el momento de la matanza" (147). The author compares the experience of reading *Viaje* to that of Gabriel García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, where the fates of the characters have already been announced at the beginning of the novel, "en un 'viaje' a rebours en hilos de la 'sangre' que fluyen de las vidas de la pequeña comunidad reducidas a amasijo de cadáveres en los capítulos inicial y final" (148). In her analysis of *Rebelión*, Nuzzo begins by linking the novel to the genre of non-fiction novels or testimonial narratives, such as Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* or Rodolfo Walsh's *Operación masacre*. However, she states that although *Rebelión* does bear a certain resemblance to these aforementioned texts, which blend fiction with journalistic and testimonial writing, she believes that the novel ultimately defies orderly categorisation because, [Rebelión] no hace nada para presentarse como algo distinto de una novela, escondiendo cuidadosamente todos los elementos verídicos […]" (154). Secondly, Nuzzo analyses the inclusion in the novel of a variety of fictional documentary materials, such as reports, recordings of court proceedings and photographs. She argues that the use of the "documento fingido" or "documento apócrifo" (154) brings up interesting questions about the

intertextual relationship that exists with the real-life documents that these fictional documents are based upon, which problematises "el sutil juego entre historia y ficción instaurado por la obra […]" (154). My study of the *Pentalogía* differs from Nuzzo's in that it includes research on Ferreira's fourth novel, *El año*, and also provides more extensive and in-depth analyses of *La balada*, *Viaje* and *Rebelión*.

In a more recent critical study of *Rebelión*, Carlos Gardeazábal Bravo, in "Towards Emancipatory Human Rights Narratives: Reflections on Dissent, the State of Siege, and Embodiment in Daniel Ferreira's *Rebelión de los oficios inútiles*" applies the theories of Jacques Rancière, Andrew Rajca, Robert Meister and Elizabeth Anker to demonstrate how the novel challenges the sentimental commercialisation of violence in fiction by proposing alternative emancipatory approaches to narrating human rights abuses. In the article, Gardeazábal Bravo posits that Ana Larrota and the other members of the workers' union act as "an embodied enactment of […] an emancipatory conception of rights […]" (ch.3). The author believes that Ana Larrota's and the workers' union's resistance to the violence they undergo is an example of how the novel eschews a sentimental portrayal of human rights, where victims are normally granted little agency to resist violence. Instead, the author suggests that the novel, through a range of narrative techniques, provides alternative emancipatory solutions to the violence and human rights abuses. Furthermore, the author argues that *Rebelión* avoids melodramatic representations of victimisation by encouraging readers to question their complicity in the violence through their indifference towards the victims. Overall, Gardeazábal Bravo views *Rebelión* as an example of a "poetics of embodiment and humanization" (ch.3), where the cold, official statistics of human rights abuses are given a face and a name, "[providing] an account of the popular appropriation of the language of rights, and with it, an embodied, non-abstract view of them" (ch.3).

A further study on *Rebelión* is Angela González Echeverry's article "Una guerra sin monumentos: *Rebelión de los oficios inútiles* de Daniel Ferreira," which applies William S. Jevons's marginal utility theory of value to demonstrate how the novel's main characters and their life projects are determined by their non-utility, in which "[…] la estética de la inutilidad plantea […] una manera particular de narrar el no valor y la inutilidad" (137). González Echeverry argues that the main characters of Borja and Larrota, alongside her *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*, are deemed by society to have no utility as their professions are of no economic value or of low social status, which makes them dangerous and subversive and allows them to be stripped of their rights. The author believes that Ferreira divides the different groups of people in the novel along the lines of utility and non-utility: "privilegiados, dueños, terratenientes, útiles ciudadanos, hombres de bien versus desafortunados, pobres, mal educados, inútiles, criminals" (139). She concludes her article by stating that *Rebelión*, "una poderosa narrativa de la inutilidad" (144), also articulates the stigmatisation of current-day social movements in Colombia, such as the 2021 protests against the Iván Duque Government, where, according to the author, the discourse of non-utility was used to discredit and repress protestors in the country.

In addition to scholarship on *Rebelión*, in recent years, there have been several critical studies on Ferreira's second novel *Viaje*. For instance, in "Estética de la destrucción: Los objetos materiales en *Viaje al interior de una gota de sangre* de Daniel Ferreira," Jessica Gálvez Granada examines, through the lens of materiality, the symbolic and semantic function of various objects in the novel. In her analysis, she categorises material objects in the novel into two types: empirical and representational. The author posits that empirical objects are used to comment in the novel on the social dynamics of the rural community, such as Edelmira Peñaranda's bible and her son Patricio's gun being kept in the same household. Additionally, she argues that materiality also takes an active position in many of the sentences, where objects

such as bullets, machine guns and machetes become protagonists over the human subjects and carry out many of the lethal actions, "en medio de un giro poético que busca inscribir la violencia en un registro alterno" (198). In terms of representational objects, such as Delfina's photo album or the mural in the church, Gálvez Granada believes these are used in the novel to reflect on broader and more profound issues related to the construction of collective memory in the novel, which she argues ties in with Ferreira's overall aims for the *Pentalogía*: "recordar una vez más las manchas ignominiosas del pasado nacional" (204).

Moving away from materiality in the novel to focus on temporality, Juanita Bernal Benavides's article entitled "Cerco paramilitar en *Viaje al interior de una gota de sangre* de Daniel Ferreira" looks at the layering of time and space in the novel. In her analysis, Bernal Benavides posits that *Viaje* works to question the reductionist view that paramilitarism arose simply as a form of counterinsurgency or response to the actions of the guerrilla. Bernal Benavides argues that, through the exploration of the victims' past, particularly the character Arquímedes, the novel demonstrates how the phenomenon of paramilitarism can trace its roots back much further than the generally agreed upon starting point of the 1980s, to more distant historical periods such as the 1920s. It is important here to point out that Bernal Benavides's article, which was published towards the final stages of the writing up of this thesis, does share some commonalities with the analysis of *Viaje* I undertake in Chapter Two. However, my approach differs significantly from Bernal Benevides's through my use of spectrality and palimpsestic memories to analyse the spatio-temporal layering of memories in the novel.

In addition to Bernal Benavides's study, other researchers such as Juliana Espinal and, Danilo Santos and Ingrid Urgelles have focused on the theme of paramilitarism in the novel. In Espinal's analysis, she believes *Viaje* belongs to a group of novels she categorises as post-conflict narratives, where the focus is on the victims of paramilitary violence and where violence is depicted obliquely, using more subtle and subdued techniques. Santos and Urgelles,

on the other hand, argue that, through multiperspectivism, *Viaje* can be understood as an attempt to give voice to anonymous victims of paramilitary massacres while, at the same time, also purposefully concealing the identities of the victimisers.

As indicated above, there has been very little scholarly work published on *La balada* and *El año*, Ferreira's first and fourth novels, respectively. However, *La balada* is included, along with Antonio Ungar's *Tres ataúdes blancos* (2010) and Juan Gabriel Vásquez's *El ruido de las cosas al caer* (2011), as one of the primary texts under analysis in Gerardo Ferro Rojas's master's thesis entitled "La literatura de la neo-violencia en Colombia: Manifestaciones thanáticas en el siglo XXI." In this study, Ferro Rojas locates *La balada* within a category of literature in Colombia that the author defines as 'una literatura de la neoviolencia,' which he believes is the successor to *narrativas en/de la violencia*, *literatura sicaresca* and the *narconovela*. The author posits that these twentieth-century novels mark a shift from the traditional novels of violence in that the violence is not carried out by traditional political actors but by anonymous and faceless agents. Rojas Ferro posits that in these novels the violence is governed by new thanatic relationships, where violence has become depoliticised and normalised.

Given *El año*'s recent publication date, the only critical study on the novel is Rodrigo Bastidas Pérez's "Voz y metonimia en la violencia Colombiana" (2019). In this short analysis, Bastidas Pérez argues that *El año* employs Idelber Avelar's conception of metonymic memory, which brings together past and present. The author argues that, "entre las dos tierras de lo histórico objetivo y lo novelesco íntimo está el lugar en el que nos ubica Ferreira para producir lo metonímico." The author believes that the tensions that can be created by blending historical information, the novelistic text and an epic structure are resolved, in particular, in *El año*'s experimentation with voice. He adds that the overarching voice of the novel is that of nature, "el lenguaje de la naturaleza, del campo, del paisaje colombiano" (77). Furthermore, he argues

that the mastery of *El año* is in allowing each character in the novel to find their voice "para convertirse en sujeto en medio de un conflicto que elimina el yo en pro de una historia monumental" (77). Finally, it is through the use of voice that a metonymic effect is created and where the novel subtly traces the connections that exist between the violence of the early 20th century and today.

While there are several studies, for the most part in Spanish, on Ferreira's individual works, this thesis is the first full-length study to consider the *Pentalogía* in detail and offer a comparative reading of four of the texts against nuanced and overlapping histories of violence. In the next section, I turn to this thesis' original contribution and approach in more detail, outlining my analysis of the various depictions of violence in the *Pentalogía* and showing how it can contribute to the existing literature.

Theoretical Approaches to Violence and Chapter Overview

This thesis is the first comprehensive study in English of the multifaceted representations of violence contained within the first four novels of Daniel Ferreira's *Pentalogía*, drawing on a range of theoretical concepts to offer a nuanced approach to the novels themselves and recent Colombian history more broadly. My analysis examines, through close textual readings of key passages from the novels and diverse theoretical approaches, how the narratives depict multifaceted expressions of violence. My discussion of Ferreira's oeuvre engages, therefore, with the gamut of manifestations of violence present in the texts, which encompass broad categories such as subjective, systemic, structural and historical violence but also the more specific manifestations of these broader categories, including sexual violence and rape, extreme social degradation, 'social cleansing,' paramilitary massacres, state violence, and domestic and intra-family violence. In my analysis of the way Ferreira narrates multiple forms of violence, I wanted to answer the following three research questions: How are the multidimensional expressions of violence, spanning across different decades, narrated and

represented in the *Pentalogía*? How do Ferreira's narratives continue and renew the long-standing tradition of Colombian fictional literature on violence? What formal and technical narrative devices and strategies does Ferreira employ to narrate and explore between the 'cracks' of official accounts of history?

Throughout the chapters in this thesis, I pay close attention to the range of innovative and original narrative devices and techniques that Ferreira uses (the merging of spatio-temporalities, the blending of history and fiction, and experimentation with literary and journalistic genres and registers, among others) to build on the previously discussed literary tradition of *novelas de la violencia*. I explore how, through his novels, Ferreira provides fresh perspectives and reflections on the violence that has plagued Colombia throughout the 20th century. Furthermore, I argue that Ferreira uses original strategies to narrate the violence to construct counter-histories where the victims' voices, typically subjects on the periphery, are foregrounded in the narratives. To analyse the manifold depictions of violence contained within Ferreira's *Pentalogía*, my close textual analysis is undergirded with a variety of theoretical approaches which encompass abjection, palimpsestic memories, polyphony, spectrality and multiple theories on violence such as Rossana Reguillo's typology of *violencias* and Slavoj Žižek's reflections on objective and subjective violence. Finally, I will provide a brief explanation of the content of each chapter in this thesis. To facilitate coherence and cohesion, I have decided to sequence the chapters in the order the novels were published as part of the *Pentalogía*.

My hope with this study of the *Pentalogía* is that it will make an important contribution to the existing studies on Ferreira's work and in the areas of Colombian violence and Colombian literary studies, more broadly. My thesis makes an original contribution to the current studies on Ferreira's work as it is the first that looks at the different representations of violence across four novels of the *Pentalogía*, particularly how Ferreira, with his narratives,

produces counter-histories of Colombian violence. Finally, with this thesis, I would like to aid recognition of Ferreira's work in the English-speaking world as Ferreira's narratives are making an important contribution to the construction of collective memory of Colombian violence because of the way they attempt to unpick the multi-layered lived experiences of violence through national histories with a focus on submerged and disenfranchised perspectives normally ignored or erased from historical records.

In Chapter One, entitled "Communities of Violence: Abjection, Perpetrators and Social Cleansing in *La balada de los bandoleros baladíes*," I scrutinise extreme expressions of violence in the first novel of the *Pentalogía*. The chapter focuses on those representations of violence that have surpassed the original political and ideological justifications and have now morphed into the most unfathomable horrors and brutality, penetrating all spheres of society. I divide my study into the primary expressions of violence represented in the novel: Paramilitary massacres, urban 'social cleansing' violence, and domestic and intrafamilial violence. To unpick the diverse representations of violence, the chapter employs a range of theoretical approaches including Rossana Reguillo's typology of *violencias*, Brad Evans and Henry A. Giroux's notion of disposability, Giorgio Agamben's conception of *homo sacer* and Julia Kristeva's ideas around abjection, all of which provide a lens to better understand the ways that violence has filtered down into every aspect of society. Additionally, this chapter explores how the novel, by delving into violence on the fridges of the larger socio-political conflict, attempts to blur the lines between victim and victimiser. Finally, I put forward the argument that *La balada* attempts to show a more complex and nuanced depiction of the conflict by shining a light on forms of violence, social degradation and erasure underrepresented in previous works of fiction on Colombian violence.

Chapter Two, entitled "Palimpsests of Violence: Haunting and Spectrality in *Viaje al interior de una gota de sangre*," examines cyclical and interconnected violence through the

lens of spectral haunting and palimpsestic memories in Ferreira's second published novel. The chapter begins by exploring the opening paramilitary massacre at the start of the novel and then branches out to analyse how the initial collective carnage connects to other episodes of violence from each of the individual victims' pasts. In this chapter, through close readings of three key chapters in the novel, it is possible to trace how the main characters are haunted by a past violence that shadows the present and future events. Furthermore, the chapter examines how this spectral haunting manifests through a confluence of disparate spatio-temporalities in the form of palimpsests. Jacques Derrida's notion of spectrality buttresses the discussion of cyclical and historical violence in the novel to demonstrate how past violence haunts the present and future in the novel. Additionally, the chapter employs Max Silverman's conception of palimpsestic memory to analyse how the haunting creates palimpsests, a confluence of disparate spatio-temporalities where different moments in history converge and where traces of past inscriptions are visible in the present and future.

Chapter Three, "A Polyphony of Violence: The (Re)Construction of a Land Occupation in *Rebelión de los oficios inútiles*," explores, in Ferreira's third novel, the violence of the final years of the National Front and how *Rebelión* undertakes an archival and polyphonic (re)construction of an occupation of land by a workers' and *campesino* union as a form of counter-history to hegemonic narratives and voices. Using Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony, heteroglossia and dialogism, the chapter argues that Ferreira subjects the hegemonic voice of the authorities to a process of fracture by exposing it to a multitude of *campesino* counter-voices that work to undermine and question notions of official history. Additionally, this chapter also looks at the inclusion in the text of an assortment of documentary materials, inserted genres and different registers to demonstrate further how they act as counter-voices and provide a more nuanced and complex (re)construction of the plight of unionist leader Ana

Larrota and revolutionary journalist Joaquín Borja and the tumultuous final years of the National Front.

Chapter Four, entitled "The Gendered Violence of War: Narrating *La Guerra de los Mil Días* through the Dual Bildungsroman in *El año del sol negro,"* explores gendered representations of violence and experiences of war in *El año* through the prism of the classic male and the more feminised Bildungsromane. In the chapter, I posit that Ferreira deploys a dual Bildungsroman structure in the novel to illustrate better how civil war impacts men and women differently. I argue that the Bildungsroman structure allows the novel to explore not only the more apparent subjective violence of war but also the systemic and structural violence, such as patriarchy and coloniality,[9] which surround the immediate violence of the battlefield. In the chapter, the history of the Bildungsroman is outlined, particularly concerning its genesis as part of a discourse that promoted the founding of the nation-state. However, the chapter also examines how Ferreira questions and subverts in original ways the classic Bildungsroman structure, particularly in the case of the male Bildungsroman, in what may be read as a bleak commentary on the continuing cycle of violence narrated throughout the *Pentalogía* and the failed attempt to unite the nation through civil war.

Overall, this thesis will explore, through the four main chapters outlined above, how Ferreira's *Pentalogía* reshapes, through the use of innovative literary devices, our understanding of different periods of twentieth century Colombian violence. Furthermore, I argue that Ferreira's narratives construct counter-histories and alternative perspectives on violence which contribute to the construction of collective memory on the Colombian conflict where, according to the author, the fiction is a tool to explore "en los vacíos que hay entre la

[9] 'Coloniality' describes the legacy of colonialism in former colonies and its lingering effects on those societies today. The term was first employed by Aníbal Quijano is his 1989 essay "Coloniality, Modernity/Rationality."

historia y la realidad. […] ahí es donde la literatura y el arte pueden ofrecer una nueva resignificación de la vida cotidiana" ("Las escrituras").

CHAPTER ONE

Communities of Violence: Abjection, Perpetrators and Social Cleansing in *La balada de los bandoleros baladíes*

I begin my analysis of *La Pentalogía* chronologically with Ferreira's first published novel, *La balada*. In this chapter, I focus on extreme manifestations of violence in the novel, which are on the edges of the larger socio-political conflict and have permeated all levels of society. The analysis draws from, in the main, Rossana Reguillo's typology of *violencias* (structural, historic, disciplinary, diffuse and expressive) as a means of exploring the multifaceted and often unexplored expressions of violence in the Colombian conflict. *La balada* was awarded the literary prize Latinoamericano de Primera Novela Sergio Galindo in 2010 and was subsequently published in 2011 by Universidad Veracruzana in Mexico before finally being republished in Colombia by Alfaguara in 2019. Ferreira begins the *Pentalogía* historically in reverse chronological order as *La balada* is the most contemporary novel of the five in terms of subject matter and historical period, dealing with violence in the specific period between 1997 to 2002, during the consecutive governments of Ernesto Samper, Andrés Pastrana and Álvaro Uribe. The novel revolves around four different characters, each one exemplifying a distinct representation of extreme violence and social degradation: Escipión, a paramilitary mercenary involved in rural massacres; Malaver, an indigent rubbish recycler whose son is killed in an episode of urban 'social cleansing'; and two examples of domestic violence and abuse: *la bestia*, a human-animal hybrid who is excluded from society by his mother and *el enfermo*, an abused child who turns to parricide. *La balada*, like most of Ferreira's oeuvre, is highly fragmented, divided into 39 chapters, and jumps back and forth between the different characters and their different representations of violence. During the tumultuous period in which the novel takes place, the Colombian conflict worsened as other actors such as the guerrilla, paramilitaries and the state forces were engaged in a bloody war for territory and control of drug production and trafficking (LaRosa and Mejía 118-120). With

a lack of state presence in many rural areas of the country, the guerrilla and the paramilitaries filled the void, controlling large swathes of land. The period saw the expansion of paramilitary groups across the country, which culminated in their merging under the name Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) in April 1997, an event that sparked the beginning of, arguably, the most cruel and ferocious period of the armed conflict (Ronderos 26). Many of the attacks carried out against the guerrilla by the paramilitaries, often with the complicity of state forces, were under the banner of counterinsurgency: "El carácter contrainsurgente de las AUC fue uno de los factores que permitió establecer alianzas con las Fuerzas Militares, las cuales trajeron consigo apoyos logísticos por parte del Estado colombiano y facilidades para que los paramilitares actuara con total impunidad" (López Perez and Barbosa Amaya 189). After the dismantling of the Medellín Cartel, paramilitary groups also fought to control much of the drug trafficking business and take over coca plantations (López Perez and Barbosa Amaya 190). Paramilitary groups committed hundreds of atrocious massacres against civilians, especially those who were forced to collaborate with the guerrilla. According to data provided by Rutas Del Conflicto, these horrific massacres peaked between 1998 and 2003, which appear to be, although not made explicit by the novel, the years in which *La balada* is set. Despite massacres also being carried out by the guerrilla and state forces, López Jerez and Barbosa Amaya argue that they pale in comparison to the crimes committed by paramilitary forces:

> Las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia alcanzaron a perpetrar altas y escalofriantes cifras de asesinatos selectivos, masacres, torturas, desapariciones, desplazamientos forzosos, entre otros crímenes de lesa humanidad que triplicaron los actos cometidos por las FARC y el ELN en su conjunto durante más de medio siglo de acciones armadas. (190)

As well as the fierce battle between the paramilitary, guerrilla and state forces in rural areas, in this period major Colombian cities were still suffering the effects of the drug trafficking business and the drug cartels with high levels of violent crime and examples of severe social degradation.

Therefore, this chapter will examine the different representations of extreme violence from this historical period in *La balada*. I argue that Ferreira moves away from violence directly associated with the larger socio-political conflicts to examine violence on the fringes of the Colombian conflict, illustrating its complexity by depicting its multifaceted wide-ranging manifestations. In *La balada*, political violence has branched out and sunk its tentacles into all levels of society, resulting in expressions of extreme social degradation and unfathomable human cruelty, which Reguillo refers to as diffuse violence as it is "[…] impossible to prevent because it does not follow an intelligible pattern" (par.21). The novel deals, on the one hand, with the brutality of paramilitary executions and social cleansing massacres and, on the other, with the sordidness of abject and intrafamily violence. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that the representations of violence in the novel frequently blur boundaries between victim and victimiser. This ambiguity creates an unsettling feeling for readers who cannot clearly distinguish victim from perpetrator and therefore cannot identify with any character. The analysis is divided into three sections, each focusing on a different manifestation of extreme violence in the novel. Firstly, the focus is on violence connected to paramilitary executions from the perspective of the perpetrator where I use Rossana Reguillo's typology of *violencias*, particularly expressive violence, as the basis for my analysis. I then weave in her description of disciplining and diffuse violence, Giorgio Agamben's concept of *homo sacer*, and Brad Evans and Henry A. Giroux's ideas around disposability to analyse the representations of urban 'social cleansing' violence in the novel, before finishing by examining abject violence that takes places in domestic settings, here drawing on the work of Julia Kristeva.

From *Raspachín* to Mercenary: Perpetrator Violence

In this first section of the chapter, it is possible to chart how *La balada de los bandoleros baladíes* incorporates alternative ways of understanding the Colombian conflict by

foregrounding the perspective of the perpetrator of paramilitary crimes, depicting a problematic form of violence, rarely alluded to in the context of Colombian violence, that shifts the point of view away from the victim to that of the victimiser. This representation of the perpetrator sets *La balada* apart from other novels that will be examined later in this thesis, such as *Viaje* and *Rebelión*, which place the victim's perspective of violence at the heart of the narratives. In contrast, *La balada* centralises the perspective of the perpetrator and, in doing so, also problematises the representation of the victimiser as a one-dimensional evil killer by presenting a character who is morally and psychologically complex, which "[alerts the reader] to the essential humanity lurking behind such radical acts of malevolence […]" (Pettitt 361). Although Escipión, the character in question, does indeed kill in the novel, he is depicted as an abused and tortured individual from a troubled household who, because of the violent social context which has moulded him, has become involved in various forms of violent criminality, including paramilitary executions.

Escipión, or Putamarre, as his mother names him for his inability to roll his r's, narrates retrospectively in first-person from his prison cell after having served 25 years of a 45-year prison sentence. He tells the story of his life from a twelve-year-old coca leaf picker (*raspachín*) for the guerrilla to his time as a mercenary for a paramilitary unit and as a violent criminal along with his friend Malaver. Escipión is the first-person narrator in ten chapters[10] of the 39 that make up *La balada*. He introduces himself for the first time in the ninth chapter "La máquina parlante y el ejército de recolectores" and immediately identifies himself in the first sentences as one of the two murderers, along with his friend Malaver, who kill a defenceless woman, the mother of *la bestia*, in the first chapter of the book: "A mí no me gusta matar mujeres. Menos viejas. Pero a la cucha la matamos, porque ya nos conocía. Y aunque no nos

[10] "La máquina parlante y el ejército de recolectores"; "El día que seas millonario"; "Desquite a la hora de la siesta"; "Niños que sueñan con papá"; "Un bus que te lleve a ninguna parte"; "El vientre del dragón; Ordalia, viaje al infierno"; "Abominación de la sangre"; "Morfeo que no llega" and "Arena de desierto blanco."

conociera, de todos modos no quería vivir: lo vi en sus ojos. ¿Sí me entiende?" (39). In Escipión's opening remarks, readers are made aware that this first-person narrator is, in fact, the voice of a perpetrator of violent crime who, additionally, appears to be narrating his story directly to the readers, addressing them in the formal third-person singular: "¿Si me entiende?" (39) or "¿Qué más quiere que le diga?" (109).

This first-person narration by Escipión, who later in the novel becomes a participant in mass paramilitary executions, is a forceful expression of perpetrator fiction within the Colombian context. Perpetrator fiction has mainly been studied in the context of Holocaust fiction, where several critical studies have been published in the last few years. Joanne Pettitt defines perpetrator fiction as "fiction that examines the social, political, psychological motivations of Holocaust perpetrators" (363). Pettitt also believes that the main reason for the existence of perpetrator fiction is to distance itself from one-dimensional representations of perpetrators as evil and reveal the victimisers' humanity. According to Pettitt, "This process of humanization allows us to move beyond simplistic explanations of culpability (s/he did it because s/he is evil) and explore the range of social, psychological and political conditions that enabled genocide to occur" (363). In *La balada*, Escipión's humanity is depicted mainly, through a focus in the narrative on the character's inner world, his subjective experience of participating in violence, and how the character deals with bearing witness to such harrowing acts of cruelty.

Additionally, like much Holocaust fiction, the text also explores the political and social reasons behind Escipión's recruitment by the paramilitary, which it demonstrates is a direct result of the character's violent upbringing and social context, a depiction which further complicates and problematises his identity as an evil perpetrator and reveals another layer of complexity to this manifestation of violence. Escipión's actions and involvement in paramilitary executions are shown to be shaped by the violence that has surrounded him

throughout his life, where he has had limited agency and choice to alter its outcome. Many years later, Escipión, in his jail cell, is perturbed by memories of his involvement in the mass killings with the paramilitary and is haunted by horrific visions from his past. *La balada'*s exploration of the complexity of the perpetrator and its representation of Escipión as also being a victim of his social circumstances, however, puts the reader in an uncomfortable position as the text appears to be eliciting a level of empathy for a paramilitary mercenary, a figure involved in unspeakable violence and widely repudiated by most Colombians; this approach to narrating the perpetrator has also been commented on within the genre of Holocaust fiction:

> One can understand the reluctance of serious fiction writers to portray a Nazi perpetrator's inner life. The extended representation of a character's subjectivity—not only actions but feelings, perceptions, opinions, and way of being in the world—necessarily requires a degree of empathy, on the part of both the author and reader; even if the character is loathsome, he or she must at least be recognized as human, hence sharing some characteristics with the rest of us. But empathy for a perpetrator of genocide—even if it coexists with revulsion and moral condemnation—puts both author and reader on uncomfortable ethical ground, and on uncomfortable aesthetic ground as well. (Suleiman 2)

Applying Suleiman's understanding of Holocaust perpetrator fiction to the Colombian context, *La balada*'s approach to narrating violence is also controversial as it too makes uncomfortable ethical demands of its readers by asking them to question the dividing line between victim and victimiser and, through recognition of the character's humanity, compels readers to identify, on some level, with a perpetrator of horrific paramilitary violence. I will now examine how Ferreira's depiction of the character questions the standard depiction of the paramilitary mercenary, adding a layer of complexity to this representation of extreme violence and the Colombian conflict more broadly.

In the chapters where Escipión narrates in first person, he works backwards from his childhood to explain his time as a coca leaf picker, then his recruitment by a paramilitary unit involved in mass executions and, finally, his involvement in the murder of the mother of the *bestia* in the first chapter of the novel. In chronological order, this initial chapter takes place at

the end of the narrative, and it links Escipión's story with that of the mother of the *bestia*, which will be discussed in a later section. Escipión begins by describing his hatred for his own mother and justifies the killing of the mother of the *bestia* because she reminded him of her: "Hubiera preferido no matarla, pero algo en ella me recordó a mi madre. Mi madre es la peor mujer que conocí. Siempre la recuerdo diciéndome que quería morirse, que esta vida mugrosa, que este valle de lágrimas, que ya estaba harta de fregarse el culo por mí, por un hijo ingrato, desobediente y feo" (39). Escipión's initial depiction of his mother, in this passage, as "la peor mujer que conocí" is striking, particularly in Colombia, and Latin American culture more broadly, where traditionally veneration of the maternal figure has been the norm. Furthermore, the hatred and disgust manifested toward the maternal figure is an example of originality in the novel, and another way Ferrera aims to test the limits and thematic boundaries of the novelistic genre in Colombia. Escipión's mother's treatment of her son and this seemingly abusive relationship drives Escipión to leave his home and work as a *raspachín*, at age 12, supplying coca leaves to produce cocaine: "Me fui de la casa de doce años, a raspar hoja de coca al otro lado del río, solo para estar lejos de ella. Un mes después tenía las manos ampolladas como un leproso" (40). According to Escipión, most *raspachines* worked for the guerrilla but, in his case, as he states, he had no specific allegiances: "[…] en mi combo de raspachines le trabajábamos al que mejor pagara" (40). During his time as a *raspachín*, Escipión narrates being caught in the middle of a brutal war between the guerrilla and state forces, with retaliatory killings taking place between the belligerent groups:

> Los primeros seis fueron masacrados en un barrio de las afueras de un pueblo, por la guerrilla. Luego le tocó poner los muertos a la guerrilla: dieciocho muñecos en la discoteca de un barrio lleno de milicianos. Once más por la guerrilla en el mismo pueblo de la primera matanza. Diecinueve de respuesta, en el pueblo vecino. Hubo tregua y luego cayeron seis miembros del partido en el pueblo de más allá. Y el año terminaron con broche de oro los guerrilleros con ventiséis obreros de una finca bananera que fueron bajados de un bus, tendidos en la carretera, amarrados algunos de pies, otros de manos, y los fueron quemando uno a uno, tiros de gracia en la nuca, y el último tuvo que escuchar ventiséis pepazos *¡tas! ¡tas!*. (40-41)

In the above passage and other passages analysed in this chapter, it becomes evident how *La balada* employs a series of rhetorical strategies to add another level of complexity to Escipión and problematise his depiction as a clear-cut perpetrator. These strategies work to represent the way that Escipión manages to endure witnessing and later taking part in horrific acts of extreme violence, and, in the above passage, they can be evidenced in the way Escipión dehumanises victims of violence by conceiving them simply as numbers ("seis fueron masacrados," "dieciocho muñecos en la discoteca," "Once más por la guerrilla"). Numbering here appears to be a blocking device that allows Escipión to process the harrowing experience of hearing about and witnessing such atrocities. A further blocking mechanism, evident in the same passage, is the way Escipión uses sounds through onomatopoeia such as "¡tas! ¡tas!" (41), when narrating the cold-blooded shooting of workers by the guerrilla, or "¡Bum!" (76), evidenced in a later passage, to describe bodies of *raspachines* being blown apart by the explosion of landmines. These two early examples already begin to demonstrate the complexity of the character's depiction as a perpetrator of violence: despite being involved in and witness to appalling violence, Escipión is not immune from its ill effects and has had to develop mechanisms and strategies to survive.

At age 14, after making money picking coca leaves, Escipión is free of his mother and precociously starts drinking and having sex with prostitutes: "Nunca volví a la casa de mi madre. Bajé de la chalupa con cuatro millones de pesos metidos en una media. Tenía catorce años y si a los catorce eres capaz de conseguir cuatro millones de pesos con tus propias manos ya no necesitas de una madre" (43). At this point, he also acquires a gun and kills a hotel owner who tries to steal his money, demonstrating his ruthless streak from a young age. In the chapter "Un bus que te lleve a ninguna parte," Escipión then travels to a location only referred to in the novel as "el Sur" where, according to the character, he spends thirteen months "haciéndome hombre entre raspachines" (75), picking coca leaves in the middle of a war of attrition, with

states forces attempting to displace the guerrilla from the territory through constant aerial bombardments:

> La guerrilla pensó que reinaría para siempre en esas lomas. Pero pronto empezaron a recibir golpes: milicianos acribillados, plomo amangulado de avión y helicóptero, espías y sapos por todos lados. Los combates a diario por ese monte repercutían a lo lejos. De noche se oía el estropicio de misiles y de bombas de quinientas libras. Cada bomba abre cráteres en la selva, tumba árboles, quema todo, y después, en esos huecos que quedan, la mata de coca pega fácil. (75)

Escipión then narrates how his fellow *raspachines*, despite working in fields littered with landmines, would go on picking coca leaves despite the threat to their lives as there was nowhere else for them to go. Escipión's description of being caught in the middle of a dirty war between the guerrilla and state forces here complicates later depictions of his involvement in paramilitary executions by portraying him as a product, and a victim, of the poverty and violence that surrounded him throughout his early life. This violence, which started with his mother's abuse and neglect, forces him to leave home and work for the guerrilla picking coca leaves to survive:

> A veces, cuando pasaba una semana entera de no ir, encontrábamos todo en ruinas. Las avionetas asperjaban lluvias de veneno blanco y las hojas de todos los árboles y del cultivo se rostizaban y la piel se llenaba de manchas rojas como de lepra. La guerrilla trató una y otra vez de meter más gente, de recuperar terreno, de cobrar la deuda ambulante, pero no pudo. Entonces puso minas entre los sembrados. Había raspachines que se arriesgaban a seguir en el cultivo y a raspar entre campos minados, pero con sólo sacudir una rama, activaban la bomba. ¡Bum! Caían manos, cabezas, piernas cortadas. Y, sin embargo, para nosotros, lo más fácil era seguir raspando, porque lo más difícil era largarse. ¿A dónde? No se podía. (76)

It is interesting to note in this passage how Escipión's description of life working as a *raspachín* foregrounds the collective experience ("para nosotros"). His use of the first-person plural speaks to a problem of structural violence, "which is linked to the consequences and effects of systems (economic, political, cultural), which operate on bodies that are considered 'surplus,' mainly the poor and socially marginalized" (Reguillo, par.19). This structural violence manifests, in the case of Escipión, through exposure to extreme poverty coupled with growing up in a dysfunctional state engaged in a war of attrition with guerrilla forces. This collective

situation of structural violence has forced this violent lifestyle on a generation of young men who become collectively entrapped in a complex network of violence with a lack of agency, choice or control.

At the end of the chapter "Un bus que te lleve a ninguna parte," Escipión escapes the coca plantation: "Cuando supe que debía salir de esta tierra aunque me mataran en el intento, me embarzalé, caminé tres horas por el monte hasta hallar la carretera y allí esperé el bus de línea" (76). Between this chapter and the next, "El vientre del dragón," Escipíon has already gone from working as a *raspachín* for the guerrilla to enlisting as a mercenary for the paramilitary, with this rapid temporal shift appearing to hint at the character's seamless transition from one violent context to another. In this chapter, Escipión has already been recruited by an unnamed paramilitary unit and is travelling aboard a Russian-built plane along with other paramilitary members being flown to the rural location where the mass execution of a small settlement will take place: "El lugar al que íbamos era un caserío a orillas de un río de aguas oscuras y espesas que parecía mazamorra. Yo no sé si el pueblo aún existe, o qué fue de él cuando lo abandonamos, pero entonces era sólo casas de tabla cubierta con hojas de zinc y pisos de barro repujado" (84). Escipión narrates that there were roughly 300 recruits from all over the country, and many came without any training or idea of what mission they had signed up for. In the next chapter "Ordalía, viaje al infierno," Escipión describes his arrival in the small village and how his unit was tasked, during the night, with going from house to house and rounding up all the people on a blacklist. The captees are then taken to a football pitch illuminated by floodlights, handcuffed and placed face down on the ground, with Escipión describing the desperate pleas of the victims as, "un clamor de súplicas y lloriqueos en voz baja" (101). Here, as seen previously, the narration evokes violence through sound in the cries of the victims, and this passage, along with the previous examples of onomatopoeia used when

narrating his time as a *raspachín*, raises interesting questions about the ability of literature and words to capture horrific acts of violence accurately.

In this regard, in *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry argues that it is ultimately beyond the capacity of language and words to express the experience and sensations of pain. In her text, Scarry quotes Virginia Woolf, who had previously described the difficulties of articulating the sensation of physical pain in words: ""English […] which can express the thoughts of Hamlet and the tragedy of Lear has no words for the shiver or the headache…The merest schoolgirl when she falls in love has Shakespeare or Keats to speak her mind for her, but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor and language at once runs dry"" (4). Scarry then builds on Woolf's ideas by positing that pain not only evades language, but it ultimately leads to its destruction, "bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (4). This difficulty of evoking pain and violence through language is seen in *La balada* in the choice of onomatopoeic words used by Escipión to describe the atrocities he witnesses and in the unintelligible cries and screams of the victims before they are massacred. Because of the resistance to language of such gruesome acts of violence, the text resorts to novel means such as auditory descriptions, particularly onomatopoeia, to fill in sometimes for visual descriptors. Furthermore, throughout his narration, as well as the auditory descriptors, Escipión employs other sensory signifiers such as smell and taste to attempt to approximate the carnage. This can be seen, in particular, in the passage, many years later, when Escipión remembers the blood dripping through the cracks of the wheelbarrow as he cleans up after the massacre and is reminded of "[…] las palabras del pelao […]" (105), where another mercenary uses taste to describe how he felt after witnessing the bloodshed: "*no vuelvo a comer higado ni chunchullo en la puta vida*" (104). Furthermore, Escipión also uses sense of smell many times in his narration, particularly when remembering the stench of the blood that stuck to him weeks after the massacre: "quedó mi

cuerpo impregnado de aquel hedor sangroso que no se iba aunque me bañara, que seguía en mi pelo aunque lo enjuagara con rinse y champú y clorox y gasolina" (105).

As well as employing different sensory descriptors to articulate the violence he was witness to more closely, Escipión also uses additional tactics to block out, rationalise or, at times, trivialise the brutality of the crimes he was involved in. As seen with previous examples of the numbering of victims when working as a *raspachín* for the guerrilla, Escipión uses dehumanisation strategies through animal metaphors, where he reduces the massacre to the act of slaughtering of livestock: "Matas y rematas, y no sientes nada, como esos tipos que despresan reses. Yo maté reses antes de matar gente. Pero lo dejé, porque aborrecí el olor de la sangre" (39). At another point, one of the captees on the illuminated football pitch begins to scream at the paramilitary mercenaries to finish him of. The man is then shot, but he survives as they miss vital organs. Escipión reflects on the failure to kill the man by employing yet another dehumanising metaphor, trivialising the murder, by comparing it to the act of felling a tree: "Matar a alguien es como tumbar un árbol: si usted no da en el punto, el árbol sigue en pie o se le viene encima" (102). At this point in the mass execution, the paramilitary leader referred to as El Cabo becomes angry with his unit's inability to finish off the victims and orders them to start up the electric chainsaws to finish off the job: "Mandó traer las motosierras y me señaló la primera que le trajeron. Usted, dijo: ¡hágale¡ La tomé del manubrio y aceleré y sentí el rugido y el frío que me subía por la espalda y vi que tenía las arterías de mi brazo inflamadas" (103). With the man on the ground in front of him, Escipión begins to describe his victim's face as "sereno y [con] un lunar bajo la boca" and then switches his gaze to the interiority of the victim, focalising the narration through his victim's eyes at the moment before his death: "Hay un momento en que el dolor se pasma y la conciencia le dice al cuerpo: *ya nada sientes, ya nada te duele*" (103). Escipión's description of his victims' feelings of serenity and nothingness before their death once again allows the character to rationalise or justify his

involvement in violent acts. It even mirrors how Escipión himself describes feeling before carrying out the murders: "matas y rematas, y no sientes nada […]" (39). Moments before the brutal dismemberment of his victim, Escipión also recalls a childhood memory of his father and describes himself as being more scared than the executee, which once again deepens his one-dimensional portrayal as an outright perpetrator with the reader:

> Recuerdo que vi su cara y no parpadeaba. Era extraño. Desafiante. Su cara tenía el gesto armonioso y delicado de un rostro de mujer. Recuerdo que me trastornó esa mirada, como cuando niño veía que mi papá se volteaba los párpados hacia atrás para perseguirme por toda la casa…No era él; de los dos, tal vez el que tenía más miedo era yo. (103)

Before Escipión is about to execute his victim with the chainsaw, he is saved from carrying out the killing by a nosebleed, which the character describes as happening frequently during his childhood: "Al crecer, fue menos constante, pero a veces, ante cosas raras, sangraba. Ya llevaba dos años sin sangrar y preciso me venía ahí, delante del jefe" (103). This physiological response to having to enact violence frees Escipión from active involvement in the dismemberment of his victim as he is sent away by El Cabo to clean himself up. When he returns to the football pitch, the carnage has already taken place and, with the floodlights now turned off, Escipión describes the scene in front of him: "Miré las formas de lo que debía ser un montón de cuerpos en el centro de la cancha, picados" (104). Along with another recruit, he is tasked with collecting all the severed limbs in a wheelbarrow and disposing of them in the river: "Luego de la matanza todos se fueron, y nos dejaron con el trabajo sucio: recoger los muertos y echarlos al río antes que amaneciera" (104). On the journey back from the scene of the massacre, Escipión describes a dream he had of being followed by vultures, enticed by the stench of death, where he once again employs olfactory descriptors to narrate the violence: "En realidad lo sigo soñando ahora, treinta y ocho años después. ¿No huele raro, como a mortecino, como a flores pichas? Soy yo. Es mi aliento" (106). By employing multisensorial signifiers such as smell, sound and taste; blocking or rationalisation devices such as animal metaphors

and numbering; descriptions of his physiological reactions to violence; and shifts in focalisation to that of the victim, Escipion's narrative presents a more complex and nuanced portrayal of the perpetrator, where his subjective responses to witnessing and being involved in acts of extreme violence become foregrounded in the text. This focus on the inner state of the perpetrator, which elicits a level of empathy in readers, points to a more complex depiction of the socio-historical period, where paramilitary brutality is placed within a larger context of poverty, neglect and a dysfunctional state, and the dividing line between victim and victimiser becomes blurred.

In addition to complicating and problematising Escipion's status as a perpetrator, the depiction of Escipión's involvement in the paramilitary massacre also evidences the use of violence as a form of spectacle. In these chapters, the victims are rounded up and taken to a football field illuminated by floodlights. The victims are then brutally dismembered with chainsaws in front of an audience of 30 spectators. When the massacre has concluded, the floodlights are once again turned off, resembling the end of a sports or theatrical performance: "Cuando volví todo había acabado. Los reflectores estaban apagados. La cancha olía a óxido" (104). The paramilitary's conversion of violence and torture into a spectacle recalls Foucault's analysis of public torture and execution in seventeenth-century France from *The Spectacle of the Scaffold*. In a Foucauldian analysis, public execution and torture are understood as not only a judicial ceremony but also political and "it belongs, even in minor cases, to the ceremonies by which power is manifested" (Foucault 47). In this chapter from *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes how the aim of the public execution was not simply to act as a form of redress for the crime committed, but it was also to demonstrate publicly the unquestionable and absolute power of the sovereign, who the crime has affronted:

> Its aim is not so much to re-establish a balance as to bring into play, as its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength. Although redress of the private injury occasioned by the offence must be proportionate, although the sentence must be

> equitable, the punishment is carried out in such a way as to give a spectacle not of measure, but of imbalance and excess; in this liturgy of punishment, there must be an emphatic affirmation of power and its intrinsic superiority. And this superiority is not simply that of right, but that of the physical strength of the sovereign beating down upon the body of his adversary […] who seizes upon the body of the condemned man and displays it marked, beaten, broken. (49)

Although in the case of *La balada,* we are not dealing with a display of power by a sovereign, the same principle could be applied to the novel where the mass execution described by Escipión seems to function not simply as a form of retribution but as a demonstration of the absolute power of the paramilitary through the conversion of violence into a spectacle.[11] The spectacle of violence here functions as a way of displaying power through the torture of the victim's body. In this regard, Escipión later recalls another night where his unit rounded up another 26 people on the blacklist and describes some of the horrific violence carried out as part of what Foucault refers to as a "liturgy of punishment" (49), where victims are taken to a local slaughterhouse and tortured in the most unspeakable manner: "[…] a todos se los llevaron al matadero municipal y allí cortaron cabezas y las patearon como en un partido de fútbol, y rajaron niños y les sacaron las menudencias y cortaron los labios y las orejas de un abuelo para que dejara de ser chivito y el negro saporreto de la cobra en el brazo rajó a una embarazada y sacó el feto y mandó preparar sopa y esa noche obligó a comer de ese sancocho a los demás condenados" (105-106).

In many of Escipión's memories of the violent acts he witnessed throughout his time in the paramilitary, violence that has been converted into a spectacle certainly stands out as the predominant form. Rossana Reguillo, in "The Narco-Machine and the Work of Violence," creates a typology of the four main *violencias,* which she names structural, historic, disciplining and diffuse. Reguillo, however, adds another type, which she believes is the predominant form of violence used by Mexico's drug cartels, which she names expressive violence. Reguillo's

[11] More on spectacular violence as part of neoliberal structures of power and subordination can be seen in Evans and Giroux (2015), and Cavarero (2009).

expressive violence, as with Foucault's "liturgy of punishment", has the exhibition of total and unbridled power at its centre. Through its repertoire of violent acts inscribed on the bodies of its victims, the narco-machine flaunts its power, as Reguillo points out:

> My ongoing research strongly suggests that the narco-machine has been increasing its expressive dimension. By this I mean the exercise of total and unquestionable power, using the most brutal and at the same time sophisticated forms of violence against the body that has already been stripped of its humanity (decapitated bodies, bodies strung from bridges, dismembered bodies strewn on the streets).

Like the drug violence in Mexico, expressive violence is the predominant type used by the paramilitary unit in *La balada.* It can be evidenced in the chapter "Morfeo que no llega," when Escipión is kept awake at night in his prison cell 38 years later by the terrible images of the violence he witnessed in the past. The chapter is made up of short sentences, resembling a stream of consciousness, with each one describing a different horrific form of expressive violence that Escipión was a witness to but seemingly not an active participant in. Each sentence in the chapter begins with the phrase "me acuerdo de" followed by descriptions of unimaginable violence and cruelty, and occasional interspersions of visions of natural beauty. These digressions, describing the splendour of nature, are in stark contrast to the list of atrocities and appear to work as another tactic to dilute the expressive violence and enable Escipión to process such acts of cruelty:

> Me acuerdo de los ojos cosidos. De los penes derretidos por el ácido muriático. Me acuerdo de cera caliente en los oídos. Me acuerdo del *corte de franela*: la lengua que asoma igual que una corbata por el corte en el pescuezo. […] Me acuerdo del martirio de un hombre, colgado de las clavículas, de su mirada eléctrica, del temblor de sus pies. Me acuerdo de un cuerpo despanzurrado, hundiéndose en el río. Me acuerdo de mujeres empaladas en estacas al borde de la carretera más polvorienta de este país. Me acuerdo de Santa Verónica: el rostro desollado. De Santa Águeda: los senos cortados. De Santa Lucía: los ojos sacados. Me acuerdo que vi atardecer en el Atrato y el Magdalena y en el Orinoco y en el Putumayo y en el Meta y en Guaviare, y una tarde comprendí que todos los soles de mi vida estaban pintados con sangre. […] Me acuerdo de las flores de amapola que vestían un cerro de gala, y me acuerdo de lo que pensé en la cima: que era lo único bello que mis ojos verían en este mundo. (109-110)

Towards the end of the passage, the random and disparate stream of expressive violence begins to take the form of a narration of Escipión's final days before escaping his life as a paramilitary

mercenary. In this passage, we find out that Escipión was married, and his wife gave birth to a child. It is then revealed that he disobeyed commands to kill her and the baby and ended up escaping from the paramilitary camp, revealing an intimate and emotional dimension to the depiction of the perpetrator by portraying him as a victim of the paramilitary violence he was involved in at an earlier point in the narration:

> Me acuerdo de "Mata a tu mujer, porque es chivata". Me acuerdo de desobedecer la orden. Me acuerdo de cavar mi propia tumba bajo del sol de la canícula. Me acuerdo de huir en la noche y de los aullidos de mis perseguidores. Me acuerdo de una mujer parir sobre la arena. Me acuerdo de una mariposa azul que lamía los omoplatos de la misma mujer desnuda y muerta. Me acuerdo de ella, me acuerdo que la amaba, me acuerdo de su muerte por chivata, y su belleza. Fueron los días más oscuros que me viví. Me hice viejo antes de tiempo. Manos arrugadas y rostro escaldado por el sol. No tenía a dónde ir y andaba solo en el reino de la muerte. (110)

In this passage, it is interesting to note how Escipión's experience of violence has impacted directly on the body as he describes his face scalded from the sun and his wrinkled hands. Together with the blocking devices, sensory descriptors and physiological reactions discussed earlier in this chapter, this depiction of the marks of violence on the body works to paint a more complex and nuanced picture of the perpetrator, an individual who has been forced, through poverty and entrapment, into participating in horrific acts and on whose body remain the indelible marks of cruelty and violence. Additionally, the closing phrase of the passage, "el reino de la muerte," is noteworthy as it brings to mind Achille Mbembe's notion of necropolitics, which is an illustrative concept when examining the different manifestations of violence in this and other parts of *La balada*. With necropolitics, Mbembe expands on Foucault's notion of biopolitics, which describes how biological processes, with the aim of the proliferation of life, could be recorded, managed and harnessed to control the population. Mbembe, however, argues that biopolitics alone is insufficient to describe contemporary political power, which is better understood as "the subjugation of life to the power of death" (39). Mbembe's necropolitics describes, therefore, how different forms of death and terror, more than life, determine large parts of contemporary politics. He argues that many people are

now confined to what he calls "death-worlds," sites where citizens are viewed as expendable bodies, living in a state of limbo, constantly exposed to death: "[…] in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead" (40). He gives various examples of necropolitics throughout history where people have been governed more through their exposure to death than the proliferation of life, namely slavery and the plantation, the colony, Apartheid and townships and the Palestinian settlements in the West Bank, where Palestinians are in a suspended state between life and death by being exposed to cruel forms of necropower. In this and other sections of *La balada*, the protagonists' circumstances are governed by their exposure to death and their confinement to "death-worlds," which is captured in a line at the end of Escipión's time as a mercenary when looking back on his life: "No tenía a dónde ir y andaba solo en el reino de la muerte" (110).

The chapters in which Escipión narrates his life as, first, a coca leaf picker for the guerrilla and then as a paramilitary mercenary portray a character involved in violence on the fringes of the conflict and considered taboo. By allowing a perpetrator of violence to narrate his own experience in first-person, Ferreira adds a layer of complexity to the discussion of 1990s paramilitary violence that most victim-focussed narratives do not allow by showing the fluid relationship that can exist between victim and victimiser and the cycles of violence that persist over space and time. In the following section, I will examine another form of violence on the margins of Colombian violence related to the urban phenomenon of 'social cleansing.' I will argue, that like the paramilitary perpetrator brutality in Escipión's story, Ferreira attempts to shine the light on form of violence that is underrepresented in Colombian fiction. Furthermore, I argue that Ferreira's depiction of 'social cleansing' violence works to

demonstrate the complexity of a form of violence that has resulted in unimaginable levels of social degradation and human cruelty.

'Social Cleansing': Phantasmagoric Violence and Disposable Bodies

The second of the two *bandoleros baladíes* who features along with Escipión in the attack on the mother of the *bestia* in the novel's first chapter, "Asalto a mano armada," is Malaver Gaviria, an indigent rubbish recycler and childhood friend of Escipión. In three chapters of *La balada*, Malaver narrates his life as a homeless rubbish recycler where he recounts the losses of his wife and son, to suicide and a massacre outside the Machox-Bar. The main narrative thread of the Malaver's story, however, is the murder of his son, Cristóbal, who is killed by the 'cleansing' squad named *Mano Negra*, which guns down transvestites and drug dealers in the streets of an unnamed city in the chapters "Machox-Bar, una matanza*"* and "La noche de ratas." In the chapters of *La balada* that are told from Malaver's perspective, he roams the city streets at night remembering his life leading up the death of his son and the fateful night on which he discovers Cristóbal's wounded body, "[con] dos pequeños orificios en la espalda" (135). The Machox-Bar massacre, in which Cristóbal is killed, depicts a form of violence that has been common in Colombian cities since the late 1970s, widely known as 'social cleansing' ('*limpieza social'*). 'Social cleansing' is a violence that aims to eradicate marginalised or impoverished sections of society, including destitute persons, prostitutes, transvestites, drug addicts, or anyone classed as '*desechable*,' a term closely associated with the act of 'social cleansing' in Colombia. In this section, I analyse 'social cleansing' in the novel as another form of extreme violence on the fringes of the Colombian conflict. Here, I turn again to Rossana Reguillo's typology of *violencias*, on this occasion, drawing on her discussion of *disciplining* and *diffuse* violence. I argue that 'social cleansing' violence manifests itself phantasmagorically as it is difficult to locate, predict or prevent, being carried out by elusive and shadowy 'cleansing' squads. I also incorporate Brad Evan and Henry A.

Giroux's ideas around disposability and Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer* to show how the violence in these chapters of *La balada* acts on the bodies of those reduced to bare life and considered surplus to society.

To contextualise my analysis of discipling and diffuse violence in this section of the novel, it is relevant here to understand 'social cleansing' from a historical perspective. 'Social cleansing' or *'limpieza social'* is a practice that originated in 1979 in the Colombian city of Pereira when the city's security council, given the rising levels of crime, began the practice of marking alleged thieves' faces and hands with indelible red ink. This practice of marking suspected criminals with red ink led to many extrajudicial shootings in the city and created what would become a new form of violence, where death squads would roam the city, eliminating criminals (Rojas 16). In subsequent years, this practice would spread to other cities, most notably Bogotá, Medellín, Calí and Bucaramanga, and the victims of this violence also widened to incorporate not only thieves and criminals, but also other marginalised social groups considered disposable. In their 2015 report, *Limpieza social: una violencia mal nombrada*, *El Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* lists some of the main groups that have been most affected by acts of 'social cleansing':

> El exterminio mata delincuentes, personas ligadas al mundo de la droga, trabajadoras y trabajadores sexuales, transgeneristas, pandilleros, jóvenes, habitantes de la calle, violadores, enfermos mentales. El prolongado listado de víctimas es susceptible de ordenarse en cuatro categorías: delincuentes, consumidores de droga, improductivos y transgresores de la sexualidad. […] Todos tienen en común poseer una identidad socialmente conflictiva […]. (51)

A typical modus operandi of many 'social cleansing' massacres follows a similar pattern: Mercenaries wearing balaclavas drive into a 'conflictive' neighbourhood and open fire, sometimes from a moving vehicle, on the marginalised urban poor such as drug addicts, prostitutes, rubbish recyclers, or homeless children who are on the street in that moment. According to Carlos Rojas, many of these entities would even name themselves after the marginalised groups that they wished to eliminate: "'Muerte a Atracadores de Manizales',

'Muerte a Bazuqueros', Muerte a Gamines', entre otros" (26). Very little is known about the identities of the perpetrators of 'social cleansing' groups, but there is evidence to suggest the involvement of members of the Colombian police force and DAS (*Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad*), but many years later most of the murders have gone unpunished and the identity of the perpetrators, in most cases, remains shrouded in a cloak of mystery (19).

This history of '*limpieza social'* is vividly brought alive in three chapters of *La balada*,[12] as Malaver Gaviria narrates, in first-person, his life as a destitute rubbish collector and recycler in an unnamed Colombian city. Malaver's narration is, in fact, a series of diary entries that he has written to describe the circumstances surrounding the Machox-Bar massacre that took place 16 years prior, when his son, Cristóbal, was caught up in an episode of 'social cleansing' that Malaver himself was complicit in: "Yo mismo me encargué de guiar la caravana y de mostrarles punto por punto del mapa, los lugares a neutralizar […]" (134). An unidentified group of hooded men then exits a jeep, armed with machine and shot guns, under orders to "barrer con el callejón de expendio y la esquina de los travesties y el andén de los desechables, y salir […]" (134).

In the first chapter in which Malaver narrates in first-person, "El hombre que hurga en la basura," he describes the night, sixteen years earlier, when two jeeps with tinted windows pulled up and the occupants massacred prostitutes, transvestites, drug dealers and also his son Cristóbal, who managed to escape from a room where Malaver had locked him away to keep him safe from danger:

> Una noche llegaron dos cuatropuertas de vidrios ahumados y le dieron tres vueltas al barrio. Nadie podía ver quién iba dentro de esas camionetas, pero desde dentro, lo miraban todo y a todos, y de paso desaseguraban metralletas. Los carros se detuvieron a la cuarta vuelta, cuando muchos empezaron a esfumarse llenos de presentimientos. Cristóbal, se llamaba mi hijo. Pero le decían El Ratón. Se escurría con la velocidad del ratón, con los pies más ligeros que hayan masajeado el lomo de estas calles, pero esa noche no alcanzaron pies ni piernas para ponerse a salvo de las Ingram que escupieron balas y partieron en dos a mi hijo cuando de las camionetas se abrieron las cuatro

[12] "El hombre que hurga en la basura," "Barajas" and "Fabricación de un hado"

> puertas y diez hombres salieron uno detrás de otro y rafaguearon a la gente del barrio. (23-24)

This 'social cleansing' massacre, described by Malaver in this chapter, is then narrated omnisciently in further detail in the chapters "Machox-Bar, una matanza" and "La noche de las ratas." While the former describes the violence perpetrated against the transvestites outside the Machox-Bar, the latter narrates the massacre of the drug dealers in an adjacent street. This narrative switch between chapters, frequent in much of Ferreira's oeuvre, seems to be evidencing how different voices and sectors are each affected by the violence.

Returning to Reguillo, the violence enacted by the 'social cleansing' squads closely mirrors two types of violence that she describes in her typology of *violencias*. The first type of violence relevant to the analysis of the 'social cleansing' massacre is disciplining violence, "that seeks to name the forms of violence exercised to bring others into submission by exemplary punishment" (par.20). The other form of violence that is a useful lens through which to view the massacre is diffuse violence, "violence which is 'gaseous,' whose origin is impossible to attribute to anything other than phantasmagoric entities (narcos, terrorism), and which is almost impossible to prevent because it does not follow an intelligible pattern" (par.21).

In terms of diffuse violence, the Machox-Bar massacre of transvestites and drug dealers is a form of violence carried out by a faceless perpetrator, which is phantasmagoric in nature, and not attributable to any specific group. The faces of the perpetrators are concealed "con las cabezas forradas por capuchas" (Ferreira, *La balada* 71), carrying out their attack under the shadow of darkness. The anonymity of the 'social cleansing' squad in the novel reflects the real-life circumstances of social cleansing massacres as, according to the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*, most 'social cleansing' massacres have gone unpunished with the perpetrators' identities concealed: "De los 3.699 registros de la base de datos de CINEP, en el 76 por ciento de los casos se deconcoce la identidad de quien victimiza. La ausencia de un

rostro—suelen operar con capucha y ruana cubriendo la cara y el cuerpo—es otra evidencia de la degradación del conflicto en Colombia […]" (*Limpieza* 53). The omniscient narrator in the chapters "Machox-Bar, una matanza" and "La noche de las ratas" underscores the tinted windows of the jeep, which function as a metaphor for the anonymity of the victimisers and faceless violence. The transvestites on the street, referred to as *Las Machorras,* search for a face but are unable to make out anyone behind the windows: "Los ojos de los travesties trataban de escudriñar una forma humana a través de los cristales ahumados" (Ferreira, *La balada* 46). As the perpetrators are leaving the scene of the crime, after carrying out the carnage, the chapter once again refers to the perpetrators concealing their identity behind the blacked-out windows: "Recogieron a los rezagados, se ocultaron tras de los vidrios ahumados, despacio, con la misma parsimonia con que llegaron" (73). Furthermore, the use of the words 'despacio' and 'parsimonia' to describe the perpetrators' movements also adds to the phantasmagoric nature of the massacre, which recalls the description of Reguillo's diffuse violence as 'gaseous.' In this case, the violence, like a gas, lingers in the air, carrying out its cruelty, and then dissipates slowly, aware of its ability to act with impunity: "Las camionetas se fueron como llegaron: con parsimonia" (24).

In addition to the actions of the *Mano Negra,* diffuse violence seems to have plagued Malaver's life and killed those around him, including his son Cristóbal, with its victims unable to escape or prevent it. The inevitability of this type of violence manifests as a game of chance with no escape once the die has been cast. Starting in the chapter "Barajas," Malaver describes how his son's death and the other deaths in his life can be traced back to the bad omens of certain playing cards that he begins to find in different places around the city: "Hace años que sin buscar encuentro, tirados en la calle, los naipes de la baraja inglesa" (55). This string of bad luck begins before Malaver becomes a rubbish collector, as, ironically, an anti-narcotics police officer, when he comes across his first card: "El primero lo ví en un agujero atiborrado de

basura en pleno fragor de la carrera séptima. Dejé todo lo que tenía en mente. Olvidé el semáforo en rojo. Perdí de vista el culo de la mujer que me distraía con su bamboleo. Y fui hacía él, embrujado, como si el destino lo hubiese puesto de señuelo para mí en medio de la nada" (55). As a result of picking up the card and looking at it, a bomb explodes, killing the police *capitán* and disfiguring his other colleagues. On another occasion, he is handed a jack of clubs while on duty in a violent neighbourhood of the city, where a shootout takes place, which results in the death of fellow antinarcotic police officers: "Ese día dieron de baja a seis antinarcóticos. Yo no tuve un rasguño. Por eso me retiré de la élite. Por eso me dediqué al póquer" (56). His wife, and the mother of Cristóbal, Rafaela Soler, also suffers a similar fate when she picks up an ace of spades and then commits suicide after years of abusive relationships: "Fue a la gasolinera, compró un galón de combustible, volvió a la casa, se amarró los pies con una chipa de alambre dulce, para no correr, salpicó el bidón sobre el vestido, sobre su pelo abundante de rizos pardos, se bebió varios sorbos y se prendió fuego sin más, allí, un nuestro patío" (56). On the night of the Machox-Bar massacre, Malaver discovers that his son Cristóbal managed to escape the room where Malaver had locked him away to protect him from the planned '*limpieza*.' He follows a trail of blood and discovers Cristóbal's wounded body with his hand tightly gripping a joker card: "El niño aún respira: un susurro que se oye mal. Rasgo su camiseta y limpio la sangre, pero no veo heridas. Háble me, le digo. Y entonces descubro dos pequeños orificios en la espalda. ¡Cristóbal!, le llamo. Y entonces veo que se aferra a algo que aprieta en la mano. Es un comodín. El *joker*, de la baraja inglesa" (135). Malaver himself finds the same joker card 16 years later in a recycling bin and, at this point, he knows that his destiny will become intertwined with his son's through violence that functions like a game of chance as it cannot be prevented or avoided: "Le costó a ella y costó la de mi hijo y cobrará seguramente la mía, porque precisamente hoy encontré el segundo comodín de esa baraja escondido en los barriles de reciclaje frente al convento de las monjas

clarisas" (57-58) "No sé cómo voy a morir ni quién me va a matar. Pero sé muy bien lo que este comodín significa: mi muerte" (133). As an urban rubbish recycler, Malaver would be, historically, one of the groups susceptible to acts of 'social cleansing,' and in the novel it is the joker card that seals Malaver's fate: "Ahora estaba obligado a aceptar mi suerte negra una vez más […] era el joker que tanto temía: una carta que en el casino es un gran aliado, pero que en los presagios resulta un emisario de maldad" (133). Rubbish recyclers, who walk the Colombian city streets at night looking for recyclable products, have been the victims of numerous acts of 'social cleansing': "El oficio de recoger, procesar y transportar basura a lo largo de las calles—objetos que resulta inútiles y sucios para el resto de la población—convierten a las personas recicladoras en víctimas de la matanza social" (*Limpieza* 60). The allusion to the playing cards and the broader theme of destiny links *La balada* to other novels analysed in this thesis such as *Viaje* and *El año* that, at different moments, also depict Colombian violence as playing out like a game of chance where violent acts appear to be random and inevitable, and characters are powerless to stop them.

As well as the 'social cleansing' massacre displaying traits of diffuse violence, it also exemplifies a form of discipling violence that serves as a warning to other "disposable" groups of what awaits them if they do not fall in line. In 'social cleansing,' disciplining violence uses the bodies of those killed as a means of setting an example to other marginalised groups to dissuade them from remaining on the streets. In her work on the narco-machine, Reguillo states that a combination of disciplinary and diffuse violence is what is most commonly seen in Mexico: "Its brutal calligraphy inscribes itself in the production of control and submission, as it hides behind its inapprehensible nature" (par.23). In the case of *La balada*, after the *Mano Negra* 'cleansing squad' has carried out the massacre, they paint their symbol on a nearby wall as a reminder to others that the same fate could also befall them: "En una pared quedó pintada la silueta de una mano negra y debajo un letrero que decía: 'Muerte a desechables- Aqui estuvo

la justicia'" (24). The form of disciplining violence seen in the 'social cleansing' massacre in *La balada* resembles Foucault's discussion on torture in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as a form of terror: "to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign. The public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power" (49). This notion of disciplining violence acting as a mark of the power of the 'social cleansing' squad, and its ability to act with impunity, also mirrors Reguillo's ideas around disciplinary violence in Mexico when she states that: "[…] the bodies disciplined by the work of violence act as *indexes* of its power."

Linked to the idea of violence as a mode of disciplining unruly others is the category of disposability, eloquently theorised by Brad Evans and Henry Giroux and which can help us to analyse the victims of the 'social cleansing' massacre in *La balada*. These are groups of people whose lives are deemed devoid of any value or relevance and can, therefore, be simply discarded "just like anything that gets hauled off and dumped in a landfill" (Evans and Giroux 45). In the chapters "Machox-Bar, una matanza" and "La noche de las ratas," groups of transvestites and drug dealers are massacred by the anonymous *Mano Negra* 'cleansing' squad. It is evident from the descriptions of the victims that before their killing they had already been converted into disposable lives, confined to urban spaces of exclusion and misery, or what Mbembe terms "death-worlds," (40) with the complicity of the rest of society: "Al interior del callejón se expendía droga. La policía lo sabía, el gobierno lo sabía, los ricos lo sabían, pero todos guardaban silencio, porque las ciudades para dormir tranquilas necesitan saber que hay un barrio bajo, donde la vida no vale nada y allí pueden mantenerse muy bien vigilados y muy bien resguardados los hijos del hampa" (Ferreira, *La balada* 71). In discussing disposable lives within the context of the novel, at this point it would be useful to refer to Giorgio Agamben's concept of *homo sacer*. *Homo sacer* is a figure from archaic Roman Law who could be excluded from life of the polis and "may be killed and yet not sacrificed" (8). *Homo sacer* is

excluded from political life and is deemed unworthy for sacrifice, therefore also implying his exclusion from religious life. In essence, *homo sacer* is a life stripped of all value, so much so that he can be killed with complete impunity. In discussing *homo sacer*, Agamben uses the phrase bare life (*zoē*), taken from one of the ancient Greek words for life, to refer to individuals who are excluded from involvement in the political sphere (*bios*) and are reduced simply to their physical body. Agamben talks about *homo sacer* within the context of Foucault's biopolitics, and he sees modern biopolitical states as being conducive to the production of bare life:

> It is as if every valorization and every "politicization of life (which, after all, is implicit in the sovereignty of the individual over his own existence) necessarily implies a new decision concerning the threshold beyond which life ceases to be politically relevant, becomes only "sacred life," and can as such be eliminated without punishment. Every society sets this limit; every society—even the most modern—decides who its "sacred men" will be. (139)

According to Agamben, in biopolitical states, *homo sacer* is not limited to a few people but can now apply to anyone, as we all have the possibility of becoming *homines sacri* (115). He goes on to state that "Bare life is no longer confined to a particular place or definitive category. It now dwells in the body of every living being" (140). In this sense, the transvestites and drug dealers that the faceless *Mano Negra* kills in the Machox-Bar massacre are reduced to *homines sacri*, individuals converted to bare life, who are confined to zones of exclusion and then eliminated by phantasmagoric entities with complete impunity.

Part of the act of reducing the victims of 'social cleansing' to bare life is also their prior linguistic degradation, which lends legitimacy to the act of 'social cleansing' itself. In the report *Limpieza social: Una violencia mal nombrada*, *El Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* describes a leaflet which was disseminated before an imminent '*limpia*,' in which the disposable individuals are degraded and dehumanised in the following terms: "Ahora le toca el turno a las malparidas putas bazuqueras y sidosas, vendedores de drogas, ladrones, violadores callejeros y apartamenteros, jaladores de carros, secuestradores y jóvenes

consumidores…No estamos jugando gonorreas, perros asquerosos" (73). The use of degrading language to refer to the targets of 'social cleansing,' according to the report, "cumple la función simbólica de suprimir el rostro de la víctima abriendo paso al odio donde resulta fundada su eliminación […] La operación de 'limpieza' encuentra su primer engranaje en el despojo simbólico de la víctima" (73). This symbolic annihilation of the victims, before their physical destruction, can clearly be seen in *La balada* in the omniscient narrator's descriptions of the four prostitutes in "Machox-Bar, una matanza." The four transvestites murdered by the *Mano Negra* are converted to bare life by being reduced to their physical bodies and sexual functions. This can be seen, for instance, in the epithets that each of the prostitutes are given, which refer to aspects of their physicality or sexuality, standing in for their last names: Jadira *La Reina De Las Mamadas*, Luz *La desvergada*, Alexa *Mediopolvo*, Katty *La Machorra*. The four prostitutes are also dehumanised through descriptions that sexually objectify them and reduce them to the mere physicality of bare life:

> El más alto llevaba plataformas de diez centímetros, minifalda y prótesis de silicona por valor de cinco millones de pesos, […] Cerraba el círculo Alexa *Mediopolvo*, travesti provinciano recién llegado a la ciudad. Tenía sida y se le echaba a notar en las pústulas de la piel y la demacración de la cara afiebrada y por andar en los puros huesos […] Si se pasaron la noche pichando, eso no es un polvo, sino una polvareda, dijo Jadira *La Reina de las Mamadas*, bajándose el escote para exhibir un pezón, […] Grande ésta dijo el provinciano sidoso que llamaban Alexa *Mediopolvo*, y levantándose la falda dejó ver una verga flaca pero alargadísima que basculaba como el péndulo de un reloj hasta el medio muslo. (Ferreira, *La balada* 45-46)

In this section, I have shown how 'social cleansing' converts its victims, prior to their murders, into *homo sacer* or disposable lives, stripped of any humanity. Additionally, this section demonstrates that 'social cleansing' massacres employ a combination of *disciplinary* and *diffuse* violence. By examining urban 'social cleansing' violence, I argue that Ferreira is shining a light on a manifestation of violence that, like the perspective of the perpetrator in paramilitary violence, is on the margins of the conflict and is often underrepresented in the literature on the Colombian conflict and Colombian violence more broadly. In the previous

passage describing the massacre in "Machox-Bar una matanza," certain descriptions of the four transvestites' physicality, such as "las pústulas en la piel" and "la demacración de la cara afiebrada," brings to mind the concept of abjection, which, although briefly touched on in Malaver's section, is fully developed in the chapters narrating the mother and *la bestia*, and *el enfermo*. Therefore, the following sections of this chapter will look more closely at abject violence within the domestic setting. This abject violence, like the paramilitary massacres and the 'social cleansing' events, manifests as a by-product of the broader political conflicts, as it has trickled down to penetrate all spheres of society, including the family unit, and resulted in the most horrifying levels of human degradation.

Abject Violence: The Mother and the Beast

The third narrative thread of *La balada* tells the story of the mother, murdered by Escipión and Malaver in the first chapter, "Asalto a mano armada," who is burdened with caring for her son and who is referred to simply as *la bestia*. It is not clear what type of physical and mental disability is suffered by her son as the omniscient narrator provides very few physical descriptions of him, but he resembles a human-animal hybrid who is mentally and physically disabled. The narrator refers to *la bestia* using several derogatory appellatives, such as "el semoviente," "el subnormal," "el cenutrio" and "el contrahecho," all of which point to her son's animalistic and beast-like nature. Although the mother tries to treat *la bestia* as an ordinary son at first, she is so repulsed by him that, after some years, she has a prison cell built in her garden, and she strips him naked and keeps him locked up, which the narrator describes as, "lo mismo que cuidar un cerdo" (20). Throughout this story, the mother attempts, through various means, to distance herself from her son out of feelings of disgust and fear of identifying with the beast as his mother, and she finally rids herself of the repulsive burden by committing an act of maternal filicide in the final chapter "Madres que aman a sus hijos."

For the analysis of this section, Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection is particularly relevant given how this part of the novel deals with a subject that blurs the boundaries between human and animal, causing feelings of repulsion and threatening the mother's sense of self. Kristeva first explores the concept of abjection in her book *Powers of Horror*: *An Essay on Abjection* where she takes the word "abject", which etymologically means "to cast off" or "to throw away," and repurposes it to refer to any harmful element that cannot clearly be recognised as subject or object and that threatens the boundaries of self as it, "disturbs identity, system order […] [and] does not respect borders, positions, rules" (4). She begins her book by describing a basic form of abjection related to food loathing, which, she states, "is perhaps the most elementary and archaic form of abjection" (2). She describes the moment when, as a child, she came across skin on top of milk, an encounter that causes feelings of revulsion that provoke physical manifestations such as nausea and gagging. The feelings of horror and disgust that Kristeva feels, in this case, are a form of protection against abjection, to maintain distinguishable boundaries between herself and the abject.

Additionally, Kristeva discusses bodily fluids, such as blood, urine, and mucous, as examples of the abject because they are neither subject nor object once they are outside the body. Even though the fluids are separate from the body and seemingly objectified, they still belong to the body image and, therefore, disrupt the stability of the self. This blurring of boundaries between subject and object causes feelings of abjection, which, in turn, bring about the violent expulsion of the abject entity. Kristeva traces the notion of abjection, which is underpinned by Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, back to the pre-Oedipal stage when the child rejects the mother's body as abject to establish clear boundaries for the self: "Abjection comprises the period when the child begins to separate from the figure of the mother. Prior to the child's misrecognition of itself in the mirror, it must first become estranged from this mother" (Ayra, "Abjection Interrogated" 49). In this sense, the abject threatens the borders of

self. Still, the rejection of the abject is crucial in establishing clear boundaries of selfhood, which is part of the reason why the abject both disgusts but also intrigues and captivates: "[The abject] has the propensity to shatter the unity of self, yet we are also fascinated by it because it takes us to the heart of our being, defines our identity and makes us feel more alive" (Arya, *Abjection and Representation* 6). Furthermore, once the abject is expelled, it is still nevertheless a threat and lurks in the background as "something rejected from which one does not part" (Kristeva 4), highlighting the constant susceptibility of subjectivity to abjection: "Abjection is not a stage 'passed through' but a perpetual process that plays a central role within the project of subjectivity" (Tyler 3).

The first description of *la bestia* occurs in the chapter "La bestia," in which an omniscient narrator describes how the mother keeps her son at arm's length by locking him away in a rudimentary prison cell built in her backyard: "Lo mantenía encerrado, desnudo, en un cuarto sin luz y con reja de cárcel. Mierda y baba escurrían de ese cuerpo imbécil que deambulaba a cuatro patas y daba alaridos noche y día por habitaciones desiertas" (19). This early description of the beast casts him immediately as an abject figure through the allusion to bodily fluids such as "mierda" and "baba" that trickled down "ese cuerpo imbécil." In addition, the disturbing blurring of boundaries between the human and the animal portray *la bestia* as an abject creature because, according to Ayra, there is "an inextricable connection [that] lies between disgust and our animal nature" (*Abjection and Representation* 33). The narrator then goes back to an earlier time before the mother decided to lock the beast away in a cell and describes how every evening, she would undress the beast and wash all his excrement-stained clothes, which leads to stripping her son naked and locking him away in a makeshift prison cell:

> Ya en la noche, debía desnudarlo y lavarle la ropa manchada de mierda. Pero año tras año parecía más escuálida y enjuta y asqueada de realizar el mismo oficio. Fregaba con un gesto de repulsión la ropa embarrada todos los días. Se recriminaba de haber parido una bestia en lugar de un hombre. Decidió entonces adecuar la habitación más oscura

> como jaula para el semoviente. Quitó la puerta. Le puso reja. Tapió las ventanas con ladrillos herméticos y levantó el piso para instalar un desagüe. (Ferreira, *La balada* 19)

In this passage, the words "asqueada" and "repulsión" point to the mother's sense of abjection in her relationship with her son. Consequently, to distance herself from the abject, she treats her son as she would an animal by locking him away in what Escipión and Malaver, who later dig a hole in the mother's garden where the corpse of the beast is buried, describe as "una cochera" or "una cárcel" (98). The mother's initial attempts to distance herself from the abject figure of the son can also be seen in the narrator's description of the mother's new bathing routine for the beast, which consists in cleaning the excrement from his body with a high-pressure hose:

> Ahora podía cagarse cuanto quisiera, porque no pensaba invertir tiempo ni volver a fregar una prenda de ropa embadurnada. Ahora lo lavaría dos veces al día de lejos, con una manguera, a presión, descamando los pegotes de excremento entre sus nalgas. Luego barrería todo hasta el desagüe y sería lo mismo que cuidar de un cerdo (20).

The high-pressure hose with which the mother could now bath her son twice a day, "de lejos," symbolises the distance that the mother wishes to maintain between herself and the abject figure to ward off any threat to the boundaries of the self, which, in the case of the mother, would signify her identifying with the beast and recognising him as part of herself.

In a desperate attempt to salvage the fraying edges of her selfhood and put further distance between herself and the abject, the mother hires a housemaid to look after the beast in her place, freeing herself from the servitude she has been under for over a decade:

> Doce años después decidió que no podía más con ese encierro por partida doble. Llevaba muchos años privándose de todo viaje, de todo paseo, de toda celebración. No podía asistir a fiestas. Debía cuidar al enfermo, porque era su madre, y nadie más que su madre podría tener la conciencia feliz del esclavo. Entonces buscó a una sirvienta compasiva que cuidara bien de su pobre bestia sin alma. (21)

As the mother is now somewhat removed from the abject, she begins to reclaim parts of her life that she had had to give up: "le dio un año de entera tranquilidad a la madre, lejos de cuidados y atenciones a la bestia" (35). Once again, as with the description of the high-pressure

hose she uses to bathe the beast, the narrator uses the word "lejos" when describing the mother's new relationship with her son. The space that the mother has created between herself and the abject figure, where she does not have to be confronted with daily feelings of repulsion, allows the mother to partially reclaim her sense of self, which is illustrated by the metaphor of her thriving fabric shop: "fue un buen año para vender telas. Y todo porque la terlenka, el velo y la seda volvieron a ponerse de moda entre las mujeres del pueblo, y sus viejo saldos invendibles empezaron a perder metros y metros en la vitrina, y pudo entonces contemplar la opción de volver a la ciudad y renovar mercancía vetusta" (35). This new sense of freedom, away from the burden of caring for her abject son, is illustrated also by the descriptions of the mother's first visit to the city in twenty years, where she experiences a series of sensory pleasures: "Fue el primer viaje en veinte años y encontró la ciudad llena de luces y vehículos jamás vistos por sus ojos hasta entonces. […] El mundo estaba lleno de automóviles, de humo y de niños, pensó. Sobre todo eso: niños" (36). The mother even remodels her fabric shop and is able momentarily to imagine herself as happy and free from the burden of her monstruous son: "El ambiente parecía de feria. Sacó un viejo disco de vinilo y lo puso en el tornamesa. La música brotó por los parlantes, al principio con interferencia, pero después con una gracia de anticuario a la que su oído se adecuó poco a poco como si mudara del presente a una época idílica, donde acaso fue feliz" (37).

The presence of the abject, however, is never far away and, despite her newfound sense of freedom, she is constantly reminded of the losses she has suffered because of giving birth to a beast. She remembers that after the birth of the son, her daughter, who in the early days would share the burden of caring for her brother, becomes pregnant and abandons the mother, and her husband, who "[…] nunca le perdonó haber parido a un hijo enfermo, [y] por arrastrar en la sangre un antepasado idiota" (108), leaves the mother for another woman, stealing a whole month's takings from the fabric shop and leaving the mother to care for the beast alone:

"comprendió que habían pasado muchos años, que su marido le había abandonado, que su hija nunca volvería al pueblo, que estaba sola, y que su proprio rostro reflejado en el vidrio de la escotilla, no mentía: estaba vieja" (38). The inability of the mother to fully reclaim her selfhood, and free herself from the abject, resonates with Kristeva's description of the ever-present danger of the source of abjection on the subject: "Abjection is above all ambiguity. Because while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it— on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (9). The looming threat of abjection in the mother's life is foreshadowed, in the chapter "Etamina, velo y tul," by the fabric shop losing its customers and the metaphor of the setting sun to symbolise the coming to an end of the mother's short-lived reprieve from the abject: "Algo falló con la aguja y el vinilo cuando las palomas iban volando al pedregal y el lugar se quedó en silencio […] Esa tarde, nadie vino a comprar telas, y un mes después, el depósito volvía a ser como antes: arañas trabajando el cielorraso y polvo suspendido sobre los rayos de sol del atardecer" (Ferreira, *La Balada* 38).

The following day, the mother catches a glimpse of her son masturbating alone in his prison cell: "Vio su torso desnudo y la mano que empuñaba el miembro tieso y se deslizaba una y otra vez con torpeza […] ella nunca pensó que la bestia descubriera, por si misma, la masturbación humana" (61). Unlike previous encounters with her son, where the mother felt only repulsion, watching her son masturbating provokes feelings of repugnance and fascination in equal measure. The mother is drawn in by the scene of her masturbating son and is compelled, even intrigued, to watch on, which is exemplified by the narrator's descriptions of the mother's reactions to witnessing the masturbatory scene: "Esa mañana vio al idiota con otros ojos," "Quiso estudiar más de cerca su cara," "Salió de allí con una mezcla de paroxismo y náusea por el olor a sexo penetrante de su proprio hijo," "Pasó la mañana entera intrigada por lo que había visto" (61). The power of the abject to recapture the attention of the mother and

draw her back in can be understood by reconsidering Kristeva's discussion of *jouissance*. Although the abject disgusts and repels, it can likewise fascinate and captivate, "setting up a cycle of repulsion and attraction, fear and intrigue" (Ayra, *Abjection and Representation* 2). In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva describes *jouissance* in the following terms: "One does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it (on enjouit). Violently and painfully. A passion. […] One thus understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims—if not its submissive and willing ones" (9). The discovery of her son masturbating, once again lures the mother back, and she becomes curious to find out what has brought about this change in the beast, again exposing her to the figure of abjection:

> Algo había cambiado en la bestia, sin duda, y en su ausencia. Pero lo inquietante es que tras veinticinco años de estar cuidándolo día y noche, no podía saber a ciencia cierta qué tipo de cambio era. Pensó que tal vez lo había descuidado mucho en los últimos meses, confiada en los cuidados de la criada, y que por eso cualquier señal de progreso o de recaída iba a ser mérito o culpa de una campesina palurda contratada por ella. Trató de imaginar la mejor razón para entender el cambio que se oficiaba en su hijo al entrar en contacto con otra mujer. Pero recordó que llevaba casi doce meses desentendida de la bestia. No sabía si la guisa le daba comida a horas fijas, o si lo bañaba a la hora más caliente del sol para mitigar el frío del calabozo. Entonces cerró el depósito de telas antes del mediodía, y decidió volver y averiguarlo. (61-62)

Curiosity about a transformation in her son, who she starts to see as more human, forces the mother to sneak back into the house one morning, without alerting the maid, where she catches *la bestia* and the maid engaged in sexual intercourse. In this scene, pornographic in nature, the mother is subjected to a moment that could be described as the height of abjection, which the narrator describes as "la escena más asquerosa que había debido presenciar en cuarenta años de vida" (65), when she witnesses the moment of ejaculation of her beastly son: "la madre pudo ver por vez primera el semen espeso que salía de la verga de su hijo idiota y le embadurnaba de blanco los senos y los párdados a esa mujer empeñada en tragarlo" (63). The narrator then describes the mother having a series of violent bodily reactions to witnessing this display of extreme abjection: "Se estremeció de golpe," "Luego caminó dando tumbos y sintió que el olor a sexo y semen del calabozo seguía en su nariz," "Se apretó el estómago con las palmas

crispadas y trató de contener el arrojo," "Dos pasos más y la atacó el mareo," (65). The mother's bodily reaction to witnessing this moment of intensified abjection chimes with Kristeva's own reaction to seeing the skin on top of milk:

> When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk—harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail pairing—I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly, and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with side-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream. (3)

In her essay *Abjection Interrogated*, Rina Ayra discusses how the bodily manifestations of abjection mirror the phenomenology of disgust. She describes three stages of disgust, which can be seen in the Kristeva's experience with milk in the above passage and in the mother's encounter with her copulating son in *La balada*. The first stage involves the initial encounter with the abject, which fully captures the attention of the subject; the second stage involves physical reactions to the feelings disgust in the form of gagging or nausea; the third stage relates to what Ayra describes as "purification rituals" such as, in the case of Kristeva, spitting out the milk (55-56). The mother, after witnessing the abject figure of her son involved in a sexual act with the maid, appears to carry out purification rituals by, firstly, reciting a prayer, and then by attempting to expel the abject by vomiting: "Y empezó a rezar una letanía, pero a la mitad del rezo no pudo más: tuvo arcadas, y vomitó, de rabia" (Ferreira, *La balada* 65).

The mother's attempts to rid herself of feelings of abjection, at this point in the narration, however, seem to fail and her boundaries of selfhood begin to break down as she starts to identify with her monstrous son. Whereas before she had managed to stave off any identification with her son by keeping the abject at a safe distance, now she is overwhelmed by feelings of abjection that force the mother to see herself reflected in her son: "Fue una revelación súbita: en medio de dos parpadeos, la mujer miró a la bestia y se vio a sí misma reflejada en el gesto del hijo idiota. Soy su madre, aceptó […] Es mi hijo. Se coge la cabeza igual que su madre. Se duerme bocabajo, igual que su madre. Y … pensaba en los detalles que

lo convertían en un trozo de su propia carne" (81). The blurring of the boundaries of the mother's selfhood begin to produce physical manifestations in the form of involuntary tremors where she is unable to keep a firm hand to cut the fabrics in her shop. The tremors and shaking here mirror the instability of her borders of self, the breaking down of bodily systems, and the inability to separate herself from her monstrous son:

> El temblor involuntario en el párpado que se había mantenido intermitente durante los últimos cinco años se volvió frenético, expandió sus dominios al tendón del labio superior que ahora parecía tirante como el hocico de los perros bravos. […] Una mañana, al tomar un sorbo de café notó que ondas concéntricas golpeteaban de un lado a otro las paredes del pocillo y era incapaz de mantenerlo firme. […] En el depósito de telas llevaba muchos días sin el pulso firme para poder sacar un corte perfecto. (79)

In what appears to be a last-ditch attempt at a purification ritual, which also foreshadows the final act of filicide in the last chapter "Madres que aman a sus hijos," the mother buys a goat for Christmas, which she sacrifices in the yard with her son watching on. As she is sacrificing the goat, she whispers to her son "La herida de cuchillo no duele. Lo que duele, lo que asusta, es el borbollón" (81). This same sentence then reappears in the final chapter while she is cutting the throat of the beast and finally ridding herself of the abject figure of her monstruous son: "La anciana tomó el cuello con delicadeza y lo llevó a una posición adecuada: la de los cabros para el sacrificio. […] Y enseguida sacó fuerza de la trombosis y clavó la hoja en el cuello esponjoso. La sangre brotó a chorros y salpicó su vestido. Con cada gemido brotaba más sangre" (144). The mother then drags the cadaver of the beast out of the prison cell and buries him in the backyard, in a hole in the ground that Escipión and Malaver had dug a couple of days prior, in the chapter "El Tesoro," connecting the narrative threads of Escipión and Malaver to *la bestia*'s and linking the paramilitary and 'social cleansing' violence to the abject violence seen in the chapters dealing with *la bestia*, showing how the larger socio-political conflict has seeped through into the family unit in another display of unspeakable violence and extreme social degradation. In this final section of this chapter, I will look at a further representation of intra-family violence that exemplifies how the ubiquitous violence in Colombian society has

filtered down to the family unit and has resulted in the cruellest forms of social exclusion and erasure.

Intrafamilial Violence: El Enfermo

The fourth narrative thread of *La balada*, which I will now explore in this final section of this chapter, deals with, as is the case of *la bestia*, violence that takes place in a domestic setting and the intimate space of the family. As with other narratives in the novel, the violence depicted in this section represents forms of violence that exist on the fringes and at the extreme limits and, in this case, on the outer regions of the family unit. The forms of physical and psychological abuse on display in this story exemplify, as with the other narratives in *La balada*, the decomposition of the social fabric brought about by the broader socio-political conflict. In addition, the portrayal of the character *El enfermo* paints a picture of a child who is victim of appalling abuse and exclusion but who, like Escipión, also turns perpetrator when he takes revenge and brutally murders his father and sister in the penultimate chapter of the novel, "Liberación del origen." The blurring of the boundaries here between victim and victimiser complicates the reader's relationship and identification with the character and reveals a problematic and unsettling complexity to manifestations of violence in the Colombian conflict. The story of *El enfermo* is told over seven short chapters[13] by a teenage boy narrating in first-person, who remembers the physical, psychological and sexual violence he was subjected to by his family, in particular by his father. The boy narrates, in the chapter "El idiota de la familia," how he despises his parents and his sister, and early on he begins to conceive a plan to set his family members on fire:

> […] odiaba mi casa. Odiaba a mi padre haciéndose pajas en su taller. Odiaba a mi madre al verla sentada, enseñándole las tablas de multiplicar a mi hermana. Odiaba a mi hermana y su pelo de oro. Quería acabarlos a todos. Un día dejé regar la gasolina del taller a propósito. Supongo que fue entonces cuando concebí la idea de incinerarlos dentro. Pero no encontré el método para prenderle fuego al combustible y el olor

[13] "Humo en el kilómetro 16*,"* "El idiota de la familia," "En el palacio de líquido amniótico," "Alto cilindraje," "Y cuando la esclava ya no estuvo," "La Carrera de los cien kilómetros" and "Liberación del origen"

> penetrante alertó a mi padre que nunca supo cómo hice para llevar el bidón tan pesado desde el lugar más seguro de su taller. (15)

The boy, whose name is never revealed and is referred to by his father as *El enfermo,* narrates his experiences of exclusion and erasure by his family, with the physical and emotional violence inflicted causing him to lash out aggressively at his sister, towards whom he harbours feelings of toxic envy and jealousy. In the chapter "El idiota de la familia," the boy narrates how, because of his sister's outstanding science exam results, he cuts off her hair with a kitchen knife, for which he says, "mi padre apaleó mi cara esa tarde y escupí sangre y, entre la sangre, iban dos dientes. Mi madre me llevó al taller oscuro y me encerró para que pensara bien lo que había hecho. Pero lo único que pude pensar, mientras escuchaba sus gritos de echarse la culpa de uno a otro, fue en la gasolina de mi padre, en las maravillas que haría sobre la carne desollada" (16). In this passage, we see a repetitive cycle of violence in the household as the boy commits an act of malice against his sister but is subjected to extreme physical violence, losing two teeth, which in turn stirs the boy's violent thoughts about incinerating his family. After the episode with his sister, the father takes the boy to a psychologist, who does not detect anything untoward, declaring him "un niño normal" (17); however, the boy's father is not satisfied with the psychologist's evaluation and takes matters into his own hands: "[…] mi padre no le creyó ni una palabra al loquero y decidió tratarme como amenaza" (17). The father then decides to isolate and exclude his son from the family by moving his bed to a storeroom at the back of his workshop and, from then on, refers to him as *El enfermo*: "Escondió cuchillos y tijeras, botellas y navajas de afeitar. Sacó mi cama de la habitación compartida con mi hermana, me echó al cuarto de rebujo, el más alejado, tras el taller, y desde entonces me llamó *El enfermo*. Ven, *enfermo*. Lava la loza, *enfermo*" (17). The boy's description of his father's cruel treatment, who views him as an "amenaza" (17) and moves him to the storeroom, "el más alejado," erasing his name and replacing it with the pejorative term *El enfermo,* casts the boy, like the *la bestia*, as another example of an abject figure in the domestic space. The boy, who

exists at the boundary and on the edge of his family, is excluded and expelled by other family members. This relates, like *la bestia*, to Kristeva's notion of the abject, summarised here by Barbara Creed: "In general terms, Kristeva is attempting to explore the different ways in which abjection works within human societies, as a means of separating out the human from the non-human and the fully constituted subject from the partially formed subject" (51). As with the beast, the boy is rejected and viewed as a threat by other family members, being "radically excluded" (Kristeva 2) and subjected to the vilest forms of physical and emotional violence.

The violence and exclusion that the boy undergoes are present from an early age and are illustrated in a dream-like scene in the chapter "En el palacio del líquido amniótico" when the boy, who cannot be sure whether he is recalling memories or parts of a dream, narrates different moments from his childhood, where he is subjected to most cruel forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence: "Ahora tengo cuatro años. Mi padre desabotona su bragueta y viene a mí. Me aprieta con sus manos ásperas. Me da la vuelta. Me baja los pantalones. Me penetra. Ahora tengo dos años. Mi madre me acerca a la estufa y enseña el caldero: 'Lo voy a echar al aceite hirviendo, para que se frite'. ¿Es mi madre? ¿Es mi padre?" (31). At a certain point in this sequence of memories, the boy evokes a memory from inside the womb when hears his father rape his mother when she was pregnant with both him and his twin sister:

> Aguzo el oído y escucho una conversación que viene del otro lado de la panza. Es mi padre que le reclama a mi madre por una noche de amor que nunca llega. Ella no quiere hacerlo. *Estoy preñada*, dice. *Pero ni mierda, porque hace tres meses que no lo hacemos*, responde él. Siento una gran sacudida. Es peligroso para los mellizos, dice mi madre, pero a él no le importa […] Mi madre llora y gime, pero hacia dentro. Sólo yo, que vivo en su barriga, puedo oírla. (32-33)

After the rape has come to an end, the mother tells the father that she intends to name the daughter after him and she asks how they should name the boy, to which the father responds, "No debería nacer" (33). This recollection displays the boy's early exposure to intrafamilial violence and his marginalisation within the family unit even before he was born. At a later stage in the novel, *El enfermo*, seeming to address his own, or even the reader's, disbelief at

his ability to recall memories from the womb, states the following: "[pensé] en las mil sensaciones que yo conservaba del vientre de mi madre. Nadie en el mundo puede recordar el vientre de su madre, el tuntún del corazón, el gluglú del intestino, las voces externas amortiguadas por el líquido amniótico; pero yo, en cambio, si" (140).

Another recollection he has from the womb is of his early feelings of hatred toward his sister, mirroring Escipión's description of hatred for his mother, alluded to earlier in this chapter of the thesis. Floating in the amniotic fluid next to his sister in his mother's womb, he remembers his first impressions of her embryo: "Ahora tengo ocho meses en el vientre de esa mujer. A mi lado se encoge como renacuajo el embrión vecino que será mi hermana. No puedo verla, pero sé que es mi enemiga, y que está ahí, que respira mi aire, que usurpa mis glóbulos, robándome la vida" (32). This initial rivalry with his sister indicates a pattern of violent behaviour that the boy demonstrates towards his sister throughout the novel. At one point in the narration, the boy cuts his sister's hair, which he calls her "pelo de oro," denoting her status as the golden child, with a kitchen knife. At other moments, he tears her clothes to shreds with a pair of scissors and submerges her, to the point of suffocation, in a bucket of water. The boy is constantly made to feel inferior to his sister by his father, and his acts of malice stem from these feelings of envy. At one point, he describes his sister as always shiny and new, whereas he is dressed in worn-out, ragged clothes: "Los zapatos son nuevos, acharolados. La piel, brillante, Toda ella resplandece de hebra, de ropa estrenosa, porque ganó el año y yo lo perdí, porque soy un burro. Estoy a su lado con mis harapos de siempre" (16). In another episode, the boy describes his shame at school as he was paired with his sister as a dance partner, but because he is lame in one leg, his sister was able to outperform him, utterly humiliating him: "Mi pierna endeble de poliomielitis me dejó en evidencia: yo era un lisiado y ella, perfecta" (16). The treatment that the boy receives from his parents, in particular his father, is replicated by his sister, who refers to her brother using insults that draw attention to the boy's physical

disability caused by a poliomyelitis infection: "¡Cojo hijueputa, cojo malparido! ¡Ni crea que va a vivir para siempre en esta casa! ¡Esta es mi casa! ¡Inválido! ¡Lisiado!" (68). This sibling rivalry in the novel between the boy and his sister, with the brother taking revenge on his sister at the end of the novel by murdering her and then burning her corpse, resembles many of the foundational religious and mythological narratives about intense sibling rivalries, for instance, in the biblical story of Cain and Abel, in the Roman story of Romulus and Remus, and in the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Set, where one sibling, envious of the other, commits a form of fratricide, or in the case of *La balada* sororicide.

As well as receiving physical and psychological abuse from the father and sister, after the death of his mother, the father forces the boy into domestic slavery, "imponiéndome su carga" (69) with the abusive treatment worsening as he fills in for his mother around the house:

> Entonces abandoné el colegio y me convertí en su manteca. Ahora era yo quien debía preparar el almuerzo, barrer la casa, lavar el ropero de mi hermana y ayudar en el taller como un esclavo. Él, en pago, usaba el viejo método de la patada en el culo. Me golpeó con manguera, con cruceta, con estaca, y un día trató de abrirme la carne con un atornillador. *El enfermo*, me decía. Cállate, *enfermo*. Barre, *enfermo*. Trapea, *enfermo*. Muérete, *enfermo*. Ve a buscar a tu hermana, *enfermo*. ¿Ya está listo el almuerzo, *enfermo*? (69-70)

El enfermo is also made to look after his sister's new-born baby, product of a relationship with a soldier, as she neglects the child and refuses to feed him, turning *El enfermo* into his nephew's primary caregiver: "Al niño le gustaba, y si lograba verme, se volvía loco de alegría. Tal vez pensó que yo era su madre […] Yo ponía el tetero en su boca y lo sostenía hasta que desocupaba el frasco" (67). At the end of the novel, after murdering his father and sister, the boy spares his nephew's life and takes him along with him on his motorbike. The first mention of his mother's death comes, in fact, in the memorial sequence in "En el palacio del líquido amniótico": "Mi madre acaba de morir. La veo, tras el vidrio del cajón, pálida como si fuera un maniquí en el museo de cera, amarilla la cara, cuello amoratado, casi negro" (32). The boy initially believes his mother's death was due to her late-stage breast cancer. However, in a later chapter, he

discovers that his father and sister complicitly poisoned the mother to save money on her treatment. At her funeral, he makes a promise to his dead mother that he will set his father and sister on fire: "*Lo prometo, mamá: pagarán caro lo que hicieron. Los fritaré en tu nombre, madre mía. No quedará nadie. Ni cenizas de tus malos recuerdos quedarán por casa*" (95). In the final chapter "Liberación del origen," *El enfermo* follows through with the promise made to his mother. In a disturbing act of extreme violence, he delivers ten hammer blows to his father's head before "[él] tuvo el gusto de decirme *enfermo* por última vez" (139), and then he murders his sister by hitting her over the head with an iron bar. He then pours gasoline over the corpses, furniture and house, paying special attention to the storeroom in his father's workshop where his father had banished him to: "el cuarto del rebujo donde quedaba la pieza del *enfermo*" (140). After committing acts of patricide and sororicide, he decides to spare his baby nephew's life, taking him along with him on his journey. He then sets fire to the house and rides off on his father's motorbike watching the blaze in his rear-view mirror. This final act of revenge in "Liberación del origen" is, in fact, the continuation, from an early chapter in the novel, "Humo en el kilómetro 16," of a scene where, at that point, an unidentifiable character describes pouring gasoline over his house and setting it ablaze. In this chapter, *El enfermo* describes the joy he felt at seeing his family home go up in smoke: "No había nada que produjera más placer a mi mirada. Había quemado la casa de mi padre como había prometido. Yo, el enfermo. El idiota de la familia" (13). This final scene concludes the story of *El enfermo* in circular fashion with the boy going from the victim of violence to becoming the perpetrator of two horrendous murders, mirroring Escipión's journey from abused child and *raspachín* to paramilitary mercenary and the mother's transition from a victimised position of caring for a beast to committing filicide. However, the humanity that *El enfermo* shows at the end of the story when he takes his baby nephew along with him demonstrates a level of

compassion that further complicates his portrayal as a perpetrator and, once again, blurs the clear division between victim and victimiser seen throughout *La balada*.

This chapter has considered different representations of violence from *La balada* on the margins of the larger social-political conflict. The manifestations of violence, such as paramilitary massacres, urban 'social cleansing,' and abject family violence evidence horrifying levels of social exclusion and erasure and show forms of violence that are, in the main, underrepresented in works of fiction about the conflict. Additionally, the violence portrayed in the novel allows for a more nuanced and complex understanding of how the larger socio-political violence has seeped through into all areas of society by depicting characters that are, at the same time, victims and perpetrators of violence. This ambiguity shows how violence has become so ubiquitous in Colombian society that it has muddied the waters, making it, on some occasions, almost impossible to separate victim from victimiser. After having examined extreme representations of 1990s Colombian violence in *La balada*, in the following chapter, I will analyse 1980s paramilitary violence in Ferreira's second novel *Viaje*, discussing specifically how historical violence haunts the present and future and creates palimpsests of disparate violent spatio-temporalities.

CHAPTER TWO

Palimpsests of Violence: Haunting and Spectrality in *Viaje al interior de una gota de sangre*

As with *La balada*, *Viaje* was published initially by Universidad Veracruzana in 2011 and then republished by Alfaguara in 2017. The second novel in Ferreira's *Pentalogía*, *Viaje* travels back a decade from *La balada*'s historical setting to examine the period during the early paramilitary massacres of the latter years of the 1980s. In this second chapter of my thesis, I will explore cyclical violence through a lens informed by haunting and palimpsestic memories in *Viaje*. The chapter will draw from Jacques Derrida's ideas around hauntology in *Specters of Marx* in dialogue with Max Silverman's notion of palimpsestic memories in *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* to demonstrate that earlier acts of violence haunt characters in the novel, and that this haunting elucidates, through the lens of the palimpsest, the interconnectedness of different forms, spaces and temporalities of violence in Colombia. I show that past violence haunts the present, takes on new forms, and returns in a cyclical nature. Furthermore, I argue that the characters' attempts to work through and understand individual and collective histories of past violence fall short as trauma is simply re-enacted, repeated and relived, with violence, at times, being passed down transgenerationally. I specifically engage with Derrida's spectrality to demonstrate how violence in the novel blurs temporal boundaries with violence from one era merging with the violence from another. I employ Max Silverman's theory of palimpsestic memory to show how the novel emphasises the interconnections between disparate memories of violence, bringing different spaces and temporalities into dialogue. In the chapter, I analyse specific characters' interactions with the spectres of violence and examine the propensity of these memories to inform present and even future events. Firstly, I briefly summarise *Viaje* while analysing the author's approach to representing violence in the novel. I then outline the theoretical framework of haunting and palimpsestic memories that I employ to analyse the

novel. Finally, I scrutinise various chapters through the lens of hauntology and palimpsestic memories to demonstrate the haunting effect of violence on specific characters and the palimpsestic merging of time and space in the novel.

Viaje opens with the collective massacre of a small, unnamed, rural town whose inhabitants are accused of collaborating and siding with the armed left-wing guerrilla group. As the people are preparing for the town's annual beauty pageant and its obligatory festivities, at 5.55pm on 23rd September of an unspecified year, paramilitary group *Muerte a Secuestradores* storms into the main square and begins to kill the inhabitants in cold blood. Using an omniscient third-person narrator, the chapter recounts unemotionally the final moments of many of the people gathered in and around the main square as they prepare to watch the pageant. Before being shot with a single bullet to the head, Matilde Sopetrán, a street food vendor, is working at her stall, "sin saber que el charco de sangre que escurre por la acera no es de ternera sino del cuerpo de su compañera Cristina Dulcey, ahora muerta sobre las morcillas sangrosas" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 23). Patricio Peñaranda, who rushes to the *plaza* to save his sister, tries to repel the attack by shooting a few rounds at the paramilitary convoy but, "enseguida un tableteo de fusil le responde y lo deja tendido sobre el empedrado" (19). Later, Miguel Espitia and his wife, who helplessly watch as their daughter, Carol Naomi, is shot and killed, are executed while on the floor, "con las manos entrelazadas, fingiéndose muertos" (23). Alberto Deca, the primary judge of the pageant, then takes to the microphone on stage to plead with the paramilitary soldiers that the people are innocent and simply caught in the crossfire between the guerrilla and the paramilitary: "Somos gente de testimonio. ¡Somos gente de paz!" (24).

It is essential at this point to note that in this opening chapter, "La hora de las sombras largas," the narrator emphasises the first and last names of many of the people who are killed in the massacre, which can be seen as an apparent attempt by the novel to reclaim the identity

of the victims, whose names and lives are so often forgotten in the collectivity of similar real-life occurrences. In addition, in this chapter, and in most of *Viaje*, the omniscient narrator eschews the exploration of the subjectivities and identities of the paramilitaries; instead, they are depicted as an anonymous and homogenous group, simply referred to as "encapuchados" or "los hombres" (Urgelles and Santos 129). This shift away from a focus on the perpetrators of paramilitary violence and towards an exploration of the victims of such massacres is, according to Juliana Espinal, a characteristic of novels depicting Colombian paramilitary atrocities since the mid-2000s (8). Espinal posits that many contemporary novels narrating paramilitary violence have opted instead to bring the victim to the centre of the narrative and relegate the perpetrators to a secondary position. Furthermore, she states that much recent literary production on paramilitary violence has avoided the gratuitous violence viewed from the perspective of the victimiser as seen, for instance, in the popular *sicaresca* or *narconovela* genres (8). The victim-oriented focus of *Viaje* sets it apart from the novel analysed in the previous chapter of this thesis, *La balada*, where the focus is clearly on the perpetrator of paramilitary violence.[14] Daniel Ferreira, in an interview at *La Feria del Libro de Bogotá* 2017, made specific reference to the importance of giving visibility to the victim in the representation of paramilitary violence, an issue he appears to want to rectify in writing *Viaje*:

> Es una novela sobre el destino colectivo. El destino colectivo es una matanza. Lo que yo quería observar eran los destinos individuales que avanzan a destino colectivo. Hay toda una época de matanzas en Colombia donde los destinos individuales se borraron por la barbarie, y eso ocurrió porque había fuerzas políticas que gobernaban la vida, y no eres dueño de tu destino cuando alguien quiere dominar tu territorio. (Penguin Colombia 00:04:30-00:04:50)

After the bloodshed of the massacre has ended, the omniscient narrator concludes by surveying the scene of a rural town converted into a killing field: "Tres mil casquillos de balas disparadas y medio centenar de cuerpos yacen en el corazón del caserío […]" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 31). With

[14] *La balada* is therefore an exception to Juliana Espinal's commentary about the recent trend of victim-focused paramilitary narratives.

the initial act of violence brought to a close, the subsequent chapters then move away from the collective carnage of the massacre and instead delve into the pasts of a selection of the characters killed in the opening chapter. This exploration of the victims' pasts and the way the novel limits the majority of the paramilitary violence to the opening chapter is another indication of how *Viaje* opts to give prominence to the victims over the perpetrators.

After the opening massacre, the following chapters,[15] which make up the bulk of the novel, jump back and forward in time to elucidate the main characters' violent pasts and the connection of these spectres of past violence to the massacre in the opening chapter "La hora de las sombras largas." The narrative focus of the subsequent chapters, therefore, becomes a spiral of cyclical violence, where the opening massacre is revealed to be only the continuation or re-emergence of various waves of violence that have hit the town and its inhabitants over the years. In a personal interview I conducted with Daniel Ferreira in 2019, he commented on the novel's theme of reoccurring and interconnected violence:

> A esa conexión la llamo agujero negro. Y tiene que ver con las espirales de violencia en la Colombia del siglo XX. Un hecho violento lleva a un anterior. Si usted investiga sobre el nacimiento de la violencia paramilitar, va a encontrar vasos comunicantes con los problemas sociales de la tierra en los años 70 y a la vez en los 70 vínculos con los alzamientos y las prácticas anticomunistas de los años 60. En Santander, la región donde nací, hay una continuidad de todas las violencias y por eso la vida de ese pueblo arrasado es solo la capa más superficial de unos sustratos violentos que estaban en el pasado (imaginario) de los personajes.

This 'black hole' of violence that Ferreira alludes to here is explored in the subsequent chapters of *Viaje* as individual characters' memories of their violent pasts are gradually uncovered, revealing the violence that the small town has endured over a prolonged period. This exploration of the spectres of violence commences in Chapter 2, "Las mujeres locas que asesinaron a Orfeo," which, narrated in first-person, focuses on the boy survivor's memories of, as a child, spying on Delfina, while she swims naked in the river with her friends. In Chapter

[15] "Las mujeres locas que asesinaron a Orfeo," "La bañista," "El último bolchevique," "El hotel," "Divagación al pie de la horca," and "Una hoguera para que arda Goya"

3, *La bañista,* Delfina, killed on her way to the river by the paramilitary convoy in the massacre, is haunted by the presence of her dead father and her sexual abuser, Urbano Frías. The chapter explores how Delfina is forced by her mother to sell herself to Urbano Frías, the local Mafioso, who sexually abuses her at his ranch. In addition to being haunted by memories of sexual violence, she is also coming to terms with the loss of her father, who was killed some years earlier by the same paramilitary group that murdered Delfina in the opening massacre. Delfina spends her time examining a photograph of her father and reminiscing about how he taught her to swim in a nearby river. By examining fragmented memories of her and her father's past, Delfina's death at the hands of the paramilitary unit in the opening chapter is shown to be a prolongation of violence that has gone before, with the boundaries of time and space beginning to break down and merge. In the following chapter, "El último bolchevique," we are introduced to drunken local schoolteacher Arquímedes, who is connected to Delfina as he was her teacher before she graduated from the school. On her way to the river, where her father taught her to swim, Delfina walks past and greets Arquímedes moments before they are both cruelly massacred. In this chapter, through the exploration of Arquímedes' past, we find out that the reason he ended up in the small town was because of his quest to shed light on the life of his grandfather, shot and killed in the same town in a failed Bolshevik revolution in 1929. By unravelling the story of his grandfather's life and death in the town, Arquímedes finds out that he too has eerily relived events from his grandfather's past. Both men are homosexual, and both lose their lovers to illness and go on a self-destructive path, which in the case of his grandfather resulted in his death back in 1929. In the chapter, the haunting presence of Arquímedes' grandfather still casts its shadow over events in the present and, ultimately, leads to Arquímedes' death by the paramilitary unit in the opening chapter, the moment when two seemingly disparate spatio-temporalities begin to converge. In a later chapter, "El hotel," it is revealed, through the memories of a boy, who is the sole survivor of the opening massacre, and

narrates in first-person in two chapters,[16] that the town has suffered similar atrocities over the years, with a connection being made between the opening massacre and violent events he witnessed in his past. The boy, from the vantage point of adulthood, 30 years after the massacre, remembers the violence that runs deep in the region's history as he reflects on a period of his childhood when a massacre at a *campesino* and trade union protest took place, which, like the opening massacre in "La hora de las sombras largas," also ended in bloodshed. The next chapter, "Divagación al pie de la horca," on the other hand, examines local landowner Urbano Frías's past, with his death in the opening massacre and his spectres of past violence imbricating, where two temporalities cross over and overlap. In the penultimate chapter, "Una hoguera para que arda Goya," local priest Bernardo, schooled in liberation theology and active in *campesino* movements, enlists the services of Enoc, who becomes his sacristan, to paint a fresco behind the altar of the church as a form of remembrance for the victims of past massacres and as a denunciation of the perpetrators. The fresco painted by Enoc depicts the past victims of massacres but also, uncannily, disrupts temporal boundaries between past, present and future and presages the massacre that occurs in "La hora de las sombras largas."

After exploring the pasts of a selection of characters in Chapters Two to Seven, the final chapter of the novel, "Polvo suspendido," then returns to the opening massacre and is a description, narrated in third-person omniscient, of the boy narrator, a survivor of the paramilitary atrocity, watching as the convoy of paramilitaries leaves the scene of the massacre while he wanders through the streets of the town and surveys the carnage that they have left in their wake: "Es el perro el primer animal muerto que vio aquel día, y es su amigo Pedrarias el primer hombre muerto que verá en su vida. No serán los únicos. Los siguientes los verá pocos pasos más adelante […]" (134). In this way, the opening and closing chapters of *Viaje*, which

[16] "Las mujeres locas que asesinaron a Orfeo" and "El hotel"

detail the massacre and its aftermath, work to bookend the middle six chapters that each delve into the pasts of the victims of the killings.

A clear thread running through *Viaje* is the spectre of past violence and the interconnectedness of violence's various spaces and temporalities. Therefore, in the next section of this chapter, I will expound my theoretical lens of spectrality and palimpsestic memories before proceeding to close readings of three key chapters[17] to demonstrate how spectral haunting elicits a palimpsestic layering of disparate spatio-temporalities.

Haunting through the Palimpsest: The Layering of Disparate Violences

My analysis of *Viaje* will engage firstly with theories of hauntology and spectrality as a lens through which to examine the interconnectedness of time and space as, according to O'Bryen, "spectres […] disrupt the ordering of time in ontological terms of a succession of 'états presents.' They are 'revenants', 'the return of the repressed', but belong neither to past, present or future exclusively. Instead, they bring about the experience of a more profound 'anachronicity', putting time itself 'out of joint'" (23). Additionally, given that the past haunts the present in *Viaje*, this chapter of the thesis will also use the concept of palimpsestic memories to show how "the relationship between the past and the present therefore takes the form of a superimposition and interaction of different temporal traces to constitute a sort of composite structure, like a palimpsest, … [where] one layer of traces can be seen through and is transformed by another" (Silverman 3). By engaging with palimpsestic memories, I will demonstrate that in *Viaje* one memory of violence conceals within it another connected memory where "[…] distinct moments in time and space are recomposed to create a different spatio-temporal configuration" (3).

The theory of hauntology emerged from Derrida's 1993 book *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Written in response to

[17] "La Bañista," "El último bolchevique" and "Una hoguera para que arda goya"

Francis Fukuyama's notion of the 'End of History' in *The End of History and the Last Man*, published in 1992, Derrida argues that Western liberal democracy is not, as Fukuyama posited, the final incarnation of world government. In its place, Derrida posits that Marxism has, in fact, always been and will continue to be spectral, its haunting presence looming large over the world, and, according to Shaw, "[…] the fall of the Berlin Wall will not simply negate its presence" (5). In contrast to Fukuyama, Derrida does not view history as a series of events that culminate in liberal democracy as its endpoint. Instead, Derrida argues that Marxism haunts society and "reshapes history by disrupting its conventional structure of chronology" (del Pilar and Peeren 14). Hauntology is not merely the idea that the past will repeat itself in the same form; instead, it is the notion that the past still holds some sway over the present and the future, blurring the lines between temporalities and bringing into question certain historicisms. Fredric Jameson discusses Derrida's notion of spectrality in his essay *Marx's Purloined Letter*:

> Spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past (and maybe even the future they offer to prophesies) is still very much alive and at work, within the living present: all it says, if it can be thought to speak, is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us. (39)

In the Colombian context, several critical studies use hauntology to examine fictional works related to episodes of Colombian violence. In *Literature, Testimony and Cinema in Contemporary Colombian Culture: Spectres of Violence*, Rory O'Bryen employs Derrida's theory of spectrality to examine Colombian literary and cinematic production that deals with *La Violencia*. In discussing the spectrality of *La Violencia* in Colombian fiction, he quotes Derrida by stating that, "like so many other spectres *La Violencia* appears 'historical but not dated,' troubling the ordering of time 'according to a linear succession of a before and an after, between a present-past, a present-present and a present-future,' and forcing us to question the contemporaneity of both past and present to themselves" (O'Bryen 23-24). Like O'Bryen's spectre of *La Violencia*, the spectre of unresolved, past violence returns, in a repetitive loop, to

haunt the characters in *Viaje* and culminates, in most cases, in their deaths. Any attempt to engage or interact with the spectral memories of violence culminates in its return, taking the lives of these various characters. Building on O'Bryen's work on spectrality and the period of *La Violencia*, Juliana Martínez, in her book *Haunting without Ghosts: Spectral Realism in Colombian Literature, Film and Art*, coins the phrase 'spectral realism' to describe, "[…] a mode of storytelling that takes the ghost seriously but not literally. Rather, it formally assumes the disruptive potential of the spectre, shifting the focus from what the ghost *is* to what the spectre *does*" (3). 'Spectral realism' is also helpful as a way of understanding the type of haunting that takes place in *Viaje* as, although there are no apparitions of ghosts in the novel, the spectre of past violence, with its haunting capabilities, still has the potential to cast its shadow over the present, as noted by Martínez when discussing the novels in the corpus of her study in *Haunting with Ghosts*: "[…] in the disruptive force of spectrality, they all find a way to explore the unresolved absences and truncated histories that haunt them" (4). In *Viaje*, past violence is demonstrated to be still of relevance to the events in the present, and this is why spectrality is a helpful tool for analysing narratives about the Colombian conflict, where violence has been long-standing and ongoing, and the search for peace, truth and justice has been largely elusive: "[…] what spectrality questions is the 'fixity' and 'pastness' of historical violence, or the portrayal of violent situations as enclosed and bygone events that do not, and should not, affect, much less disrupt, the present" (Martínez 31).

In my analysis of *Viaje*, I will build on O'Bryen's and Martínez's work by arguing that the violence in the novel can be understood by placing theories of hauntology and spectrality alongside the concept of palimpsestic memories. In other words, haunting in the novel is demonstrated through the past impacting on events in the present, but palimpsestic memory is a way of examining how this haunting manifests itself on a narrative level through the layering of different memories, histories of violence, testimonies and temporalities, which when layered

reveal hitherto concealed connections. Therefore, the historical violence in the novel resembles the writing on a palimpsest where the original traces of a text wiped clear are still visible under the new inscriptions, and by delving into one buried memory of violence, another gradually becomes visible. In *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*, Max Silverman, who is building on work done by Freud in "A Note upon the Mystic Writing-Pad," Walter Benjamin's notion of the 'constellation,' and Andrea Huyssen's 'urban palimpsest,' posits that memory, "functions […] according to a complex process of interconnection, interaction, substitution and displacement of memory traces in which the particular and the universal, and memory and history, are inextricably held in an anxious relationship" (28). Silverman goes on to state that he believes that artistic, imaginative and poetic works may be best suited to "making visible the complex interaction of times and sites at play in memory […]" (28). My exploration of violence in *Viaje* takes Silverman's view here as a starting point for my analysis and concurs with it by arguing that Ferreira's fictional work provides interesting opportunities to elucidate the often-concealed interconnections between disparate spatio-temporalities.

Palimpsestic memory also converges with Michael Rothberg's concept of memory as multidirectional, which directly counters memory as a competitive "zero-sum game," where multiple memories crowd each other out (176). Rothberg argues instead that "collective memories of seemingly distinct histories are not easily separable from each other, but emerge dialogically" (176). Following this logic, Rothberg argues that Holocaust memory can be tied to other spatio-temporal memories of human suffering such as slavery and colonialism, which may, at first glance, appear to have no direct link. Palimpsestic memory therefore dovetails with multidirectional memory as Silverman also posits that palimpsestic memory "[…] is a memory which puts the present into contact not with one past and one ethno-cultural community but […] with a complex history" (5). Palimpsestic memory emphasises that

memories are constantly in communication with one another, "the present […] always contaminated by multiple elsewheres" (5), where there is "the possibility of viewing 'different' histories in terms of interconnecting sites in which the trace of one is always in the other" (7). In *Viaje,* we see the interaction of different periods of violence, which bring together distant moments of the characters' and Colombia's past and reveal hidden connections, "producing a chain of signification which draws together disparate spaces and times" (3). In the following sections, through a close textual analysis of three key chapters in *Viaje*, I will examine how the novel's cyclical and interconnected violence can be understood through the lens of spectrality and palimpsestic memories.

The Confluence of Violent Spatio-temporalities: Delfina and the River

The spectral presence of past violence that shadows the present and merges disparate spatio-temporalities appears as a central theme for the first time in the third chapter, "La bañista," which examines the memories of Delfina, one of the victims of the paramilitary massacre in "La hora de las sombras largas." By delving into Delfina's memories of her life in the town leading up to her shooting in the massacre and then by examining recollections of her father's violent murder some years earlier, the chapter elucidates the interconnectedness of the violence in her past and present. By the end of the chapter, various temporalities spill over into one another, blurring the lines between past and present, "and forcing us to question the contemporaneity of both past and present to themselves" (O'Bryen 24). With Delfina on her way to her encounter with *Muerte a Secuestradores* at the river's edge, the chapter then moves back in time to explore different overlapping palimpsestic memories: her father, Rubén, teaching Delfina to swim in the river; memories of Delfina's abusive mother, who has coerced her daughter into prostitution; and vivid flashbacks of Delfina's rape. The event that weaves together all the other memories is that of her father's ill-fated smuggling trip from Maracaibo to Medellín, where he and other smugglers are brutally massacred by the same paramilitary

group that murders Delfina in the opening chapter of the novel. As the chapter progresses, the spectre of her father's murder is shown to shadow the later violence that Delfina suffers at the hands of Urbano Frías and *Muerte a Secuestradores* in the opening massacre.

After Ruben's death during the smuggling trip, Delfina's mother forces her daughter into prostitution with Urbano Frías, with the aspiration that Delfina will end up marrying the town *cacique*, thereby solving the family's financial woes: "Es lo único que espera, ella, su madre, la bruja: casar a su hija con Urbano Frías, al que llama 'U', con pleitesía, un hombre rico con que las sacará de pobres y las convertirá en propietarias de esa hacienda que su hija visitó la semana anterior" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 44). As the chapter moves forward, with the omniscient narrator layering different temporalities of violence, the connection between Rubén's murder at the hands of *Muerte a Secuestradores* and the bullying that forces Delfina to prostitute herself becomes clearer, where "the present is shown to be shadowed or haunted by a past which is not immediately visible but is progressively brought into view" (Silverman 3).

Rubén and his convoy are killed some years earlier while on a contraband trip from Venezuela to Colombia where, accused of "auxiliadores de guerrilleros" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 51), he and the other goods smugglers are massacred by *Muerte a Secuestradores*, who trick the convoy by passing themselves off as *guerrilleros*. The paramilitary group then takes the smugglers to the banks of a nearby river, slaughters them with chainsaws and machetes and throws their remains into the murky waters. Therefore, one form of violence, the killing of her father at the river's edge, can be understood as shadowing the present and informing a subsequent episode of violence: Delfina's sexual abuse and rape. The shadow of Ruben's violent death casts itself even further as it is revealed that Urbano Frías also had a hand in her father's murder: Frías was supposed to be part of Rubén's smuggling convoy, but it is revealed that he missed the trip and double-crossed his fellow smugglers by tipping off the paramilitary

group about the mission so he could take control of and monopolise the town's contraband business. Delfina is, in fact, unaware of the role Urbano Frías has played in the disappearance and murder of her father and believes that he simply missed the trip from Medellín to Maracaibo due to illness, putting the local Mafioso's newly acquired wealth down to a stroke of good luck:

> "Urbano Frías, 'U', entrada en confianza, es el antiguo socio contrabandista de su padre, que sobrevivió a aquel viaje porque estaba enfermo y no pudo sumarse a la caravana. Debido a su buena suerte, Urbano Frías en menos de cuatro años se volvió rico y figura ahora como dueño del monopolio del contrabando, ganadero, propietario de quinientas cabezas de ganado vacuno, de siete carros, de las mejores casas […]. (54)

However, in a later chapter, "Divagación al pie de la horca," which delves into Urbano Frías's own past before his death in the opening massacre, a paramilitary reveals the real reason he was absent from the trip: "¿Tiene miedo, señor Frías, --espeta el encapuchado--. ¿Cómo no sentía miedo cuando delató a los contrabandistas? Ni una réplica. Pero un músculo, en su mandíbula, se tensa" (104). It can therefore be argued that the spectre of Rubén's violent murder returns, crossing the generational divide, to haunt Delfina, who "[…] cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by *coming back*" (Derrida 10-11). This revenant of violence shadows the present as Delfina is oblivious to the fact that she is sexually abused by the very person who betrayed her father to the paramilitary group *Muerte a Secuestradores*. Even though Delfina is unaware of Urbano Frías's indirect participation in her father's murder and its connection to her current plight, she does, however, begin to imagine how her life could have been different if her father had returned safely from the smuggling trip: "Pensó de nuevo en su padre contrabandista. Por un momento pensó en lo que hubiera sido de su vida si acaso regresa vivo de aquel viaje. Entonces no hubiera tenido apremios. Entonces no hubiera tenido que dejarse estuprar de un impotente, solo por conseguir un puñado de dólares. Entonces hubiera vivido en la ciudad" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 48).

The river is a central location in Delfina's haunting as it is the site where she can sense her father's presence and where Rubén's spectre seems to have been deposited. Delfina is drawn to the river and her thoughts return constantly throughout the chapter to a period in her childhood when her father taught her to swim, "a perder el miedo por el ahogo" (43). After her father's death, she returns frequently to the river, first by herself and then accompanied by friends, to bathe naked in its waters, where she can rekindle memories of her deceased father. For Delfina, the river represents a return to childhood innocence and paternal protection, where the sensation of drowning is described as a "reminiscencia del líquido amniótico" (43). Therefore, the river becomes a site of memory for Delfina, where she shared her fondest moments with her father: "No puede ver el río sin imaginarse dentro de sus aguas. No puede verlo sin pensar en su padre. Sin pensar en la primera vez que él mismo la llevó de la mano por aquella carretera y en solo dos tardes caniculares de agosto le enseñó a nadar" (42). Whenever Delfina seeks relief from her mother's constant abuse and intimidation, she leaves the house and heads for the river: "A simple vista, el río. El pozo donde solía llevarla su padre. El sitio ideal para olvidarse de todo: de la salmodia eterna de la madre, quejándose otra vez de la escasez de plata y del hambre que padecen […] Prefiere tenerla lejos. Prefiere irse a nadar" (44). However, despite the river being a place of solace for Delfina, where she can reconnect with elusive childhood memories of a loving and protective father, the presence of Rubén's violent murder lurks beneath the surface of its waters and, ultimately, lures Delfina to her death in the opening massacre. Early in the chapter, the river is described as a place of innocence and comfort, where Delfina can wash "las manchas del cuerpo como si fueran manchas del alma" (64). However, as Delfina investigates her father's murder on the banks of a similar river, the chapter then subverts the original representation by depicting the river as a site of death, where there is a confluence of disparate spaces and temporalities of violence.

In the chapter, Delfina's memories revisit the period leading up to Rubén's murder in failed smuggling mission where "[…] hombres encapuchados […] desviaron el cargamento de la carretera principal y no se volvió a saber nada de ellos" (42-43). In a final recollection, towards the end of the chapter, Delfina is looking through an album of newspaper clippings that she has collected related to her father's murder, "de cada indagatoria y cada artículo en que se mencionó aquel crimen" (62). The narrator describes how an investigative team of judges, looking for clues into the murders of the smugglers, is also massacred by *Muerte a Secuestradores*, "quienes bajaron y desaseguraron los fusiles y luego dispararon desde todas las direcciones contra los jueces que habían llegado demasiado lejos con sus pesquisas" (63). However, three of the investigative team survive the shooting and manage to reveal that *Muerte a Secuestradores*, as well as being the paramilitary group behind the killing of the judges, was also responsible for the murder of Delfina's father and the other goods smugglers: "[…] el mismo grupo que acababa de masacrar a los judiciales fue el encargado de interceptor la caravana de contrabandistas para llevarlos luego a la orilla de un río donde les destazaron los intestinos y desmembraron sus cuerpos con machetes y sierras para impedir el flote, y lanzaron las partes al fondo del agua lodosa" (64). Because Rubén's corpse was discarded in a river, the spectre of his violent death becomes deposited there and constantly shadows Delfina's present. It is significant, therefore, that the violence Delfina undergoes in the chapter takes place nearby or in the river water. When Urbano Frías sexually abuses Delfina at his ranch, it occurs on a small island built in the middle of an artificial lake, made by flooding a field with the river water. While she is being subjected to violent sexual abuse, she looks out over the water for consolation in the river, but she is unable to perceive the haunting presence of her father's violent murder contained within the same water. Additionally, Delfina's death in the opening massacre takes place at the river ford, close to the site where her father taught her to swim as a child. At the moment of her death, parts of her body are in contact with the river water. When

she is shot and killed, her left leg is submerged in the river ford and her blood seeps into the water, which the boy narrator observes as he is walking back through the town and surveying the scene of the massacre in the final chapter "Polvo suspendido": "Es el cuerpo de una muchacha, blusa ombliguera, pantalones cortos. El río lava la pierna izquierda y la otra está doblada bajo su peso. La boca está abierta y la sangre tiñe de rojo el agua que se desliza sobre el vado" (131). Arquímedes also witnesses her death near the river before he too is shot at the end of the chapter "El último bolchevique": "[…] la estremece una ráfaga de fusil que hace saltar chorros del río y parte a la muchacha a la altura de la cintura. El cuerpo cae de espalda y queda lavado por el agua que fluye" (81). At the moment of her death in the paramilitary massacre, the spectre of her father's murder some years earlier haunts Delfina as her body, like her father's, is in contact with the flowing waters, in a confluence of their violent pasts and her present. The river, therefore, resembles a sort of palimpsest of the natural world where "[…] distinct moments in time and space are recomposed to create a different spatio-temporal configuration" (Silverman 3). This layering of violent memories and convergence of spaces and temporalities, consequently, brings together disparate episodes of violence and elucidates the interconnectedness of different periods of paramilitary brutality, with the tragic effects felt by two different generations of the same family within the same watery spaces.

As well as the merging of Delfina's and Rubén's histories of violence in the water, their corpses also come into contact with the spectre of the Colombian conflict, where victims of violence have, historically, been cast into the waters of Colombia's rivers, a practice that "goes back to the civil wars of the nineteenth century and continues up to the present with purpose of concealing the traces of the crime—whether by making the victims disappear or by carrying them far from their home territories, impeding determination of the locale of the crime and therefore its investigation" (Mutis 145). The river in *Viaje*, therefore, becomes a receptacle of the historical and cyclical violence, with Delfina and her father's corpses merging with the

many corpses that have travelled down Colombia's rivers over the centuries. In a personal interview I conducted with Daniel Ferreira in 2019, he also highlighted the river's significance as a site of death: "Los ríos han sido la fosa común de Colombia. El río Magdalena y el Cauca y otros grandes ríos han sido los depositarios de los desaparecidos y de los masacrados de todas las épocas de barbarie. El río es a la vez sepulcro y olvido e impunidad. En todo lo que escribo siempre reaparece el río de los muertos." The river in *Viaje* symbolises the confluence of different spaces and temporalities of cyclical violence, where disparate memories of violence wash together in an unabating current. This meeting of violent histories in the river also elucidates a specific reading of the title of the novel, *Viaje al interior de una gota de sangre*, which, according to Bernal Benavides, could be understood as describing time in liquid form where different temporalities blend together in a single drop of blood: "[…] un viaje que emprende la narración en forma de inmersión en una dimensión líquida, donde los tiempos fluyen y confluyen, y no como progresión en forma lineal" (112).

The murder of Rubén and his convoy seems, furthermore, to accurately reflect the historical reality where the river in Colombia has been a location where corpses, and sometimes just severed limbs, have been disposed of by various armed groups over the decades and centuries. Although some guerrilla groups have employed this method of disposing of bodies, the practice has mainly been used by paramilitary groups, in 68% of cases (Rutas del Conflicto, *"Más de mil"*), to conceal their crimes. *El Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* in Colombia confirms that over 1080 bodies have been recovered from over 190 rivers in Colombia (Rutas del Conflicto, *"Más de mil"*). To this day, it is still used as a method by various active armed groups for specific strategic reasons: "En la mente criminal, el hecho inhumano de utilizar un río para desaparecer un cuerpo es una decisión táctica, ya sea para camuflar evidencia, infundir terror o impartir castigo […]" (Rutas del Conflicto, *"Más de mil"*). There has been a drive in recent years to shed light on the circumstances surrounding the victims of violence, including

those whose corpses have been thrown into Colombia's main rivers and tributaries. *Rutas del Conflicto*, a group associated with the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*, which began as a resource to facilitate access to information regarding specific Colombian massacres, started an investigative project called *Ríos de vida y muerte,* which collects, maps and publishes testimonies of victims of the armed conflict whose bodies have been disappeared in rivers. The project is an attempt to create collective memory by identifying and honouring victims, some of whom are still unaccounted for and may be lost forever to the river waters. In *Viaje, Muerte a Secuestradores* dismembers Rubén and the other smugglers using machetes and chainsaws before throwing their body parts into an unnamed river. This method of disposing of bodies mirrors many of the testimonies of relatives of real-life paramilitary victims. For instance, in violent massacres committed by *Paramilitares del Norte del Valle*, taking place between 1986 and 1994, testimonies repeat the same story about the paramilitary group torturing victims through dismemberment with chainsaws before throwing their remains into the Cauca river: "Las víctimas eran llevadas hasta una hacienda donde las descuartizaban vivas con una motosierra, algunos hombres eran castrados, y eviscerados aquellos que serían lanzados a las aguas del río Cauca; a plena luz del día y con total impunidad" (Rutas del Conflicto, "Río Cauca"). The first recorded instance of paramilitary groups using this method of torturing and killing victims was during the Massacre of Trujillo; it was then replicated in other parts of the country by other armed groups. In a separate incident at another location in the country, Luz Amparo Henao provides a testimony of her husband, Rafael Carvajal Lozano, who was murdered by a paramilitary group in Puerto Boyacá, which demonstrates that this method of disposing of the bodies appears to have been widespread: "La información Luz Amparo recibía sobre el paradero de su marido le llegaba por terceros y no era muy esperanzadora. Un hombre que estuvo retenido junto a Rafael y que fue dejado en libertad le contó a Luz que a su marido lo habían cortado en pedazos con una motosierra y que lo habían lanzado al río" (Rutas del

Conflicto, "El silencio"). In addition to mirroring reality, the trope of the river as a metaphor for death is also common in many Colombian fictional narratives. The image of dead bodies floating down the river was particularly prevalent, for instance, in the novels published during *La Violencia*, "which evokes the horrors of the conflict between Liberals and Conservatives during the 1940s and 1950s, [and] has as one of its central images that of corpses floating on the river, reflecting a common practice of the period whose purpose was to terrorize the rural population" (Oquist qtd. in Mutis 145).

In addition to the river, there are many other moments in "La bañista" where Ferreira blends historical events from Colombia's past with the fictional elements of the novel. For the most part, these references to history are indirect, with the fiction often altering many of the important coordinates that would allow readers to trace them back to one specific historical event. A common trait of Ferreira's writing, which can be evidenced in other narratives analysed in this thesis, is how the novels create a new fictional reality by amalgamating several similar historical episodes, as seen, for instance, in the borrowing of details from multiple paramilitary military massacres that occurred in different locations and at other times to create a new fictional version. For example, in the case of the *Viaje*'s opening massacre, the way the massacre is carried out while the town's festivities were underway appears to be a coming together of many similar massacres that occurred in rural villages and small towns of Colombia from the early 1980s onwards:

> [...] el reinado, parecería que fuera un cliché, pero lo interesante no es el reinado sino el modus operandi de como entraban estos comandos […] entrenados en predios de Puerto Boyacá o mercenarios internacionales y que empezaban a hacer las primeras matanzas espectaculares para dominar un territorio. (Ferreira, "Al Calor" 00:15:22-00:15:48)

While the novel does not use one single paramilitary massacre as the model for the mass murder that takes place in "La hora de las sombras largas," it does, however, bring to mind one massacre that made international news that took place in the village of El Salado in 2000, where

as many as 450 paramilitary soldiers from the group *Paramilitares del Bloque Norte* stormed the village and murdered 60 people over several days (*Rutas del Conflicto*). The narrative does not follow strictly the events from El Salado, though. Instead, it appears to take elements from the massacre and merge them with hundreds of similar massacres perpetrated by other paramilitary groups.

Although many of the historical references in *Viaje* are, for the most part, diluted and implicit, Ferreira is more direct in the way he draws from the Rochela Massacre and incorporates it into the narrative. Towards the end "La bañista," Delfina recalls how an investigative team of judges travels to the area where the smugglers were last seen, "a rastrear todas las pistas sobre el extraño caso relacionado con la caravana de desparecidos en una expedición de contrabando que iba de Colombia a Venezuela" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 62). The investigators are intercepted by *Muerte a Secuestradores* and are shot in cold blood. Although there are no specific names or dates mentioned, this part of the novel mirrors the events that took place during the Rochela Massacre in Ferreira's home department of Santander, where "El juez Beltrán iba con otros 14 compañeros camino a investigar la desaparición de 19 comerciantes en el Magdalena Medio en 1987. Fueron engañados y, 12 de ellos, asesinados" (Bonilla Mora). Although this could be viewed as a more explicit historical reference, Ferreira, however, also alters the history by changing the paramilitary group that perpetrated the crime from *Autodefensas de Puerto Boyacá* to *Muerte a Secuestradores*, which automatically dissociates the narrative from any notion of an accurate or true representation of history. The moments from history that feature in the novel therefore become distorted, "por efectos narrativos o por el distanciamiento literario que toda ficcion implica" (Ferreira, "Entrevista"). However, the allusion to the Rochela Massacre and the use of *Muerte a Secuestradores* in the chapter, for instance, are explicit enough for them to function as a link to a history, therefore

contextualising the novel and situating it in the specific historical time frame of 1980s Colombia.

By referring to actual historical actors and events, the novel can function as a means of generating and contributing to collective memory, especially concerning the history of Daniel Ferreira's home department of Santander. However, the allusion to Colombia's past, more than an attempt to reproduce any episode accurately from a historical point of view by avoiding "el sesgo documentario y el descriptivismo narrativo del relato histórico" (Nuzzo), is a strategy, according to the author, to also legitimise the narrative by lending it verisimilitude:

>]…] Yo creo que mi interés es […] difuminar una frontera que está entre lo que parecería un realismo, un realismo documentado con hechos, que tienen anclaje en la realidad, y un relato literato […] Es decir que el lector no puede decidir […] si es la ficción la que está envolviendo el hecho real o es el hecho real que está encubierto de muchas ficciones. Esto por un propósito narrativo que crea una verosimilitud sobre el relato. (Ferreira, "Cinexcusa 2017" 00:52:15- 00:53:03)

As well as providing the narrative with added verisimilitude, another result of the amalgamation of fact and fiction, which Ferreira refers to in the above passage, appears to be the creation of a separate fictional reality, one which allows the reader to view and examine Colombia's history from a new and different perspective. This fusion of actual historical events within the fiction could also be read as a further illustration of the palimpsest at work in the novel where "one layer of traces can be seen through, and is transformed by, another" (Silverman 3). A new reality is created by merging the disparate realities of the fictional and factual, "where distinct moments in time and space are recomposed to create a different spatio-temporal configuration" (3). In the palimpsest of the novel, traces of multiple actual violent events gradually become visible under the most recent inscription of the fiction. Therefore, this palimpsestic layering of the fictional and the historical allows for a new understanding of the past with "the possibility of viewing 'different' histories in terms of interconnecting sites in which the trace of one is always in the other" (7).

Haunting the Generations: Arquímedes and the Bolshevik Revolution

I will now turn my attention to "El último bolchevique" and argue that, like Delfina in the previous chapter, spectres of past violence come back to haunt later generations where, like a palimpsest, traces of the past are visible in the present with two apparently separate spatio-temporalities merging and dissolving into each other. "El último bolchevique" examines the moments leading up to the death of the town's schoolteacher Arquímedes, who, inebriated in his classroom, is recounting the story of the last Bolshevik to rows of empty seats of imaginary students. The chapter then moves back some years earlier to visit Arquímedes' memories of returning to the town to investigate the life of his grandfather Ulises Álvarez, who was killed by police during a small-scale Bolshevik uprising in 1929: "Su abuelo fue bolchevique. Su abuelo pertenecía al Comité Central Conspirativo, recogido en el ridículo acrónimo CCC. Su abuelo iba a ser de los que alzaría en armas para el 28 de julio, convencido hasta la médula de que la hegemonía conservadora iba a tener un revés vergonzante a partir de esa fecha" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 70). Like other chapters, "El último bolchevique" contains several references to real episodes from Colombia's history. Arquímedes' grandfather's Bolshevik group comprised of "artesanos y guerrilleros liberales y obreros sindicalistas y campesinos socialistas colombianos" (68) and the failed socialist uprising they take part in, where Arquímedes' grandfather is shot and killed, is based on a similar events that took place in different parts of Colombia, including in the author's hometown of San Vicente de Chucurí, demonstrating again the *Pentalogía*'s interest in unearthing and narrativising forgotten episodes from Santander's history:

> Para fines de la década de los veinte, el naciente Partido Socialista Revolucionario —antecesor del Partido Comunista— había venido preparando una insurrección de carácter nacional y para esto creó el Comité Central Conspirativo. La intención era hacer coincidir el levantamiento popular con uno similar que se fraguaba en Venezuela contra el dictador Juan Vicente Gómez. Sin embargo, por problemas de coordinación y de develación de los preparativos éste decidió suspenderse a última hora, aun cuando dicha orden no alcanzó a llegar a todos los sitios del país en los cuales se adelantaban preparativos insurreccionales. (Vargas Velásquez 34)

As well as the Bolshevik revolution in San Vicente de Chucurí, socialist uprisings were also being organised for the same day in other regions of the country. One such uprising took place in the small town of Líbano in the department of Tolima. This planned revolution is referred to by academics as the first attempt at a Bolshevik revolution in Colombia (Pachón Soto). The Líbano uprising, like the fictionalised version in *Viaje*, was poorly coordinated and, ultimately, was destined to failure: "El fracaso de la misma se debe también a cierta ingenuidad y problemas de comunicación y organización. Fue el fracaso de un pueblo aislado que creyó, que, unido a un conjunto de levantamientos nacionales, realizaría en Colombia la Revolución Rusa" (Pachón Soto).

Returning to the novel, the omniscient narrator in "El último Bolchevique" focuses on the beginning of Arquímedes' time in the town, as he was just starting to investigate his grandfather's past. At an elderly woman's house, Arquímedes locates the basement where his grandfather used to print pro-communist pamphlets, and, in the same house, he also comes across a photograph which shows all the members of his grandfather's revolutionary group, *Estado Mayor Bolchevique*. At a later stage, he interviews a woman who looked after his grandmother in the years leading up to her death. From her, he discovers that his grandfather was gay, and to confirm her testimony, he obtains eroticised drawings, made by his grandfather, of the same male model, which had been locked away in a chest under his grandmother's bed until the day of her death. Finally, he discovers that on 28th July 1929, during the small-scale Bolshevik uprising, the police shot his grandfather dead in street, and no one except his grandmother went out to recover the body: "[…] la imagen de aquella mujer que recoge el cadáver de la calle, después del alzamiento, agrega un dato nuevo a su investigación" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 67).

As well as the objects he acquired from various people in the town, Arquímedes was already in possession of a notebook, adorned with a communist hammer and sickle, replete

with newspaper clippings and diary entries from the period, which had belonged to his grandfather and was passed down to Arquímedes by his father. The notebook is Arquímedes' point of entry into his grandfather's story and is the object that compels him to travel to the town and piece together his haunting family history. Although Arquímedes had been kept in the dark for most of his life about his grandfather's past, through written documents, such as the notebook, Arquímedes' father provides his son with the key to a buried family secret:

> Una noche abrió el cartapacio de la hoz y martillo grabado en las tapas y allí encontró el nombre de su abuelo y el de ese pueblo que no conocía y los bocetos roídos por el tiempo y un puñado de esquelas de diario. ¿Quién era éste hombre que llevó un diario donde narraba los planes de una rebelión? ¿Dónde estaba ese pueblo que se repetía cuadro tras cuadro, paisaje tras paisaje, dibujo tras dibujo, obrero tras obrero? Por qué su padre le había dejado todo aquel cartapacio? ¿Qué quiso decirle con los recortes de prensa? […]. (72-73)

The haunting presence of Ulises Álvarez looms large over his grandson and is, in some ways, reminiscent of Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, which "describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before […]" (4). Hirsch, in her book *The Generation of Postmemory,* goes on to state that, "to grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life displaced, even evacuated by our ancestors" (4). In the chapter, Arquímedes is weighed down by these inherited memories, which he cannot draw a line under and, to a certain extent, even appropriates as his own. Arquímedes dedicates his life to reclaiming his grandfather's story and worries that the memory of his grandfather and the Bolshevik revolution will be lost to time, which is evidenced particularly in the way Arquímedes, inebriated after drinking a bottle of brandy, repeatedly utters the phrases "¿Quién se acuerda de los Bolcheviques?" and "Quién se va a acordar" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 68) to an empty classroom of school pupils.

Concerning Hirsch's postmemory, Arquimedes' journey back to the village to delve into his grandfather's past recalls, specifically, her description of the 'narrative of return,'

which she discusses in relation to "children of survivors [of the Holocaust] [returning] to find their parents' former homes, to 'walk where they once walked'" (55). Additionally, Hirsch states that although "we do not have literal memories of others' experiences," postmemory does resemble memory, "in its affective force and its psychic effect" (31). As with Delfina and the river from the previous chapter, Arquímedes experiences an almost unconscious, gravitational pull towards his grandfather's past, leaving everything behind to settle in the town and delve into Ulises' life:

> Está sentado en el sardinel de la escuela. La misma escuela que hace cien años servía de campamento a los obreros de la Petroleum Company. Fue ese edificio lo primero que vio el día en que llegó al pueblo para ser maestro. El pueblo en el que vivió su abuelo pintor. Lo dejó todo en la ciudad y llegó a ese aldeorrio para preguntar a los más ancianos por antiguos nombres de calles ya olvidados. (Ferreira, *Viaje* 65)

Although Hirsch's work focuses, in the main, on the trauma passed down to the second generation, Philippe Codde believes that postmemory can similarly be used to describe the transferal of trauma to the third generation, as is the case with Arquímedes, as it "achieves additional pertinence as the generational distance grows and the personal relationship to the events […] become increasingly diaphanous" (2). According to Codde, "whereas members of the second [generation] are no longer witnesses to events but witnesses to other witnesses, those of the third and later generations can only witness documents because the survivors are swiftly disappearing" (2). In "El último bolchevique," Arquimedes' only access to his grandfather's past is through various documents such as the newspapers clippings, diary entries, old photographs, and charcoal drawings, and because of the distance to the events and the lack of direct testimony, the spectre of his grandfather appears to hold even more sway: "Le gusta repetir la historia de los Bolcheviques porque la sabe de memoria, porque la reconstruyó escena por escena en cada uno de aquellos recortes que su abuelo imprimía […] Luego esos recortes fueron a parar a manos de su padre que los conservó por años, como si en ellos estuviera oculta la historia familiar" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 70).

In looking into the final years of his grandfather's life, Arquimedes begins to realise that Ulises's spectre has been shadowing his present, merging disparate spaces and temporalities and closing the gap between the generations. From the vantage point of the present, through his investigations, he comes to understand that his life has followed a similar course to his grandfather's. Firstly, Arquímedes discovers that the man in his grandfather's paintings, which his grandmother had been so determined to keep hidden, was, in fact, a fellow member of the Bolshevik group and Ulises's homosexual lover:

> Su abuelo se había apasionado por uno de aquellos muchachos analfabetos, famélicos, explotados por la compañía, afiebrados de paludismo, y se había hecho su amante, y luego había hecho de él un modelo para sus cuadros. Por eso el cuerpo de aquel muchacho se reproducía boceto tras boceto, haciéndose cada vez más explícito. (74)

He then finds one of the charcoal drawings entitled *Obrero mirando pasar el siglo*, showing his grandfather's lover's emaciated face, with the inscription: "El 20 de julio lo vi morir de fiebres palúdicas" (77). The discovery that Ulises lost his gay lover to malaria astonishes Arquímedes as he, like his grandfather sixty years earlier, suffered the pain of losing his homosexual lover, too: "No ha dejado de beber desde que finalizaron las clases. Dos a tres botellas diarias. A decir verdad, no ha dejado de beber un solo día desde que vio morir en los estertores de la enfermedad al hombre que quiso" (72). After finding out about the death of his grandfather's lover, Arquímedes begins then to understand the way his grandfather's spectre, unbeknown to him until this point, has shadowed his present where "what one might have thought of as distinct moments in time and space are recomposed to create a different spatio-temporal configuration" (Silverman 3). Furthermore, Arquímedes realises that he too relived the abandonment of his grandfather's corpse, left in the street and retrieved by his grandmother on the day of the failed uprising, in the way he was shunned by friends and family when no one attended the funeral of his dead lover: "Al sepelio no asistió nadie. Por eso supo que estaba solo. Por eso comprendió que transgredir los valores más falsos de la moral era quedarse solo en el mundo, convertido en un apestado, en un pobre marica" (75). In branding himself "pobre

marica," Arquímedes' and his grandfather's pasts converge again as they are both ostracised by society because of their sexuality: "Mi abuelo no fue bolchevique, sino marica. ¿Entienden lo que es eso? ¿Un marica?" (75).

Finally, Arquímedes discovers that his own life has mirrored Ulises' in more ways than one. Through reading newspaper clippings of the final days before his grandfather's Bolshevik uprising, Arquímedes learns that the insurrection had been called off nationally four days earlier and that his grandfather had ignored the cancellation and gone through with the local operation regardless:

> Álvarez caería muerto con el cerebro taladrado por un tiro el día 28, y el resto de alzados en armas huirían al monte, despavoridos y cobardes como un millón de perros falderos ante la mofa de una hiena. Los dirigentes nacionales fueron encarcelados dos semanas antes, y el levantamiento se canceló el día 24, a última hora. Un reporte del Comité Central Conspirativo donde el mando central desmontaba y posponía la operación, a última hora, llegó a manos de su abuelo, pero misteriosamente fue desoído por él. (77)

After this discovery, it becomes clear to Arquímedes that his grandfather's refusal to call off the uprising at the local level was an act of self-sabotage, explained only by the devastation Ulises felt after seeing his lover die of malaria. Arquímedes realises that during the Bolshevik uprising, Ulises ultimately knew he was facing a death sentence but went ahead with it nonetheless. Arquímedes then finally comprehends that his attempts to contract AIDS after experiencing the death of his lover to the disease had been his way of reliving his grandfather's doomed Bolshevik revolution back in 1929:

> Día tras día, mientras extraviaba el sentido de las cosas, mientras perdía el gusto por la curiosidad, sodomizándose con cuerpos de hombres escondidos tras los atuendos de una mujer. Sin usar condones. Persiguiendo de cerca una enfermedad invisible, sin acabar nunca de procurársela […] Ahora, finalmente, después de tantos años, lo comprendía: similar fue el rito autodestructivo que hubo en el hecho de que su abuelo no cancelara el levantamiento armado para el 28 de julio del año veintinueve y prefiriera hacerse matar después de ver morir de fiebres palúdicas a quien amaba. (79)

At the end of the chapter, when Arquímedes finally becomes fully cognizant of the extent to which the events of his grandfather's past have been shadowing his own, the spectre of past violence manifests its full haunting potential through the merging of disparate spatio-

temporalities in a further example of the palimpsest, where traces of the violence of the 1920s Bolshevik insurrections "which are not immediately visible but [are] progressively brought into view" (Silverman 3), become discernible in the 1980s paramilitary massacre of the opening chapter. At the end of "El último bolchevique," moments before Arquímedes' death, he is sitting in the same location from where his grandfather set out on the day of the failed Bolshevik revolution in 1929: "Allí está el profesor Arquímedes, en la última borrachera de su vida, sentado sobre su corvas, frente a la bodega de donde salieron los únicos bolcheviques que asistieron a la toma del año veintinueve" (79). Before he is killed in cold blood by the paramilitary, Arquímedes is imagining the final moments of his grandfather's socialist revolution as Ulises and other members of the Bolshevik group make their way to the centre of the village, "armado[s] con escopetas y dos tubos de dinamita" (80), to commence the attack on the police headquarters. As Arquímedes, still drunk, continues reliving what he imagines to be his grandfather's final moments, he witnesses Delfina being shot in river ford and watches as the paramilitary then approaches. With the man in a balaclava now facing him, he is asked for his name but because of his inebriation he is unable to respond: "Quiero contestar que el maestro de Historia y Aritmética de aquella escuela en ruinas, que el nieto del último bolchevique, que el maestro maricón de ese pueblo asnal, que nadie recordada hoy aquel cuerpo descerebrado que mordisqueaban los perros y abrazaba a una mujer al día siguiente en medio de la calle" (82). Just before Arquímedes is shot, he recollects the exact moment of Ulises' death back in 1929. This image then merges with the narration, in the present of the massacre, of Arquímedes' point-blank shooting at the hands of the paramilitary, with the two moments dissolving, in a cinematic effect, into one another and "[bringing] about the experience of a […] profound 'anachronicity,' putting time itself 'out of joint'" (O'Bryen 23):

> El estruendo lo toma por sorpresa: ve el reflejo que viene del fusil de uno de aquellos encapuchados, y en el brillo del fusil, el brillo del sol, y en el brillo del sol atardecido, la bomba del dinamita que vuela hacia el cuartel de los policías en el lejano año 29; y […] el rostro de un revolucionario bolchevique que espera la muerte en medio de la

> calle, estático, sin temerle a su final. Luego todo se tiñe de negro. Y el profesor Arquímedes ya no puede ver más. (Ferreira, *Viaje* 83)

In her analysis of *Viaje*, Bernal Benevides provides an interesting reading of this chapter of the novel, arguing that through the layering of disparate spaces and temporalities, in this case the Bolshevik uprising of the 1920s and the paramilitary violence of the 1980s, the novel questions the reductionist view that the phenomenon of paramilitarism arose as a form of counterinsurgency and as a direct reaction to the existence and actions of the guerrilla. Instead, she posits that the origins of paramilitarism go back further, arguing that traces of the paramilitarism can be found in seemingly unrelated historical events, such as the failed Bolshevik uprisings of 1920s, particularly where there are long-standing disputes over land rights and the means of production (116). She argues that whereas the violence of the 1920s was metered out by state forces for the monopoly of land, the paramilitary violence of the 1980s, which also stems from territorial disputes, is enacted by private state armies. Furthermore, she believes that the novel emphasises the continuation of multiple forms of violence through different periods of Colombian history, which Bernal Benavides believes to be a bleak commentary on the possibility of putting an end to the paramilitary violence in Colombia after the demobilisation of AUC in 2006. Instead, paramilitarism could even be considered as a constitutive part of the nation-state: "[la novela] cuestiona la idea de un posible fin de la violencia paramilitar con su desmovilización o con la clausura de su enemigo, la guerrilla. *Viaje* deja pensar cómo el paramilitarismo es constitutivo del estado-nación, de su modelo económico y de su progreso en cuanto nación" (116). After examining how past violence haunts the generations in Arquímedes' chapter, the following section will explore how, through a church mural, historical violence conditions and influences the future in *Viaje*.

Palimpsestic Murals: the Foretelling of Another Massacre

In the penultimate chapter, "Una hoguera para que arda Goya," the novel revisits the moments before the town priest, Bernardo, and his sacristan, Enoch, exit through the atrium of

the church to be executed outside against the wooden doors. With the paramilitaries calling for Bernardo outside the church, he is making a final prayer before opening the doors and meeting what becomes his inevitable fate. After the initial scene of the massacre, the narration, like other chapters, delves into the past, retracing Bernardo's steps preceding the initial massacre. In this chapter, through the recollections of the sacristan Enoch, we see Bernardo's interaction and involvement with the guerrilla group based in the mountains surrounding the town. Although no specific names of the guerrilla group are given, they are presumably based on the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) given the colours of the neckerchiefs of the soldiers: "[…] que se cubrían medio rostro con pañoletas rojinegras" (Ferreira, *Viaje* 120).

The inevitability of Bernardo's and Enoch's murders outside the church is sensed by Bernardo long before the massacre to the point that that he is almost awaiting the moment of his death with open arms: "[…] ponía la cara de aquel que no teme a la muerte y le trata como a una inocua amiga con la que se tiene una cita muy postergada y ya inevitable" (122). Bernardo's unescapable death is connected to his role as a mediator in the conflict, especially for his interactions with factions of the guerrilla, which bring him unwanted attention. However, although he sympathises with the guerrilla, he also has the boldness to confront them regarding the injustice of some of their actions: "Por un momento el ebanista tiene la certeza de estar contemplando al mismo hombre imperturbable que se atrevía a salir años atrás en busca de los guerrilleros para encararles por la muerte injustificada de algún campesino en la región" (119). Despite his misgivings about the guerrilla's conduct, Bernardo supports them and maintains a relationship of collaboration and reciprocity. In one of Enoch's recollections, Bernardo enlists the services of the town doctor and, accompanied by Enoch, takes the physician to a remote location in the mountains to help save the life of a severely wounded *guerrillero*. On the journey back, the doctor, unable to save the *guerrillero*, hands Bernardo a gift given to him by the guerrilla group: two Pietro Beretta guns and a note which states, "'para

que defienda su vida, porque peligra'" (120). These guns are the weapons that Enoch uses to shoot a paramilitary in his unsuccessful attempt to rescue Bernardo moments before they are both captured and executed in the massacre outside the church in the opening chapter of the novel.

Enoch's memories also revisit the period of the massacre of Aguacaliente River, which the boy narrates in the earlier chapter "El hotel." Enoch's memories show how Bernardo was actively involved in the *campesino* march and held funerals behind closed doors for dead *guerrilleros* and innocent *campesinos* brought back to the village from the site of the massacre. Bernardo's left-leaning sympathies and involvement in the *campesino* protests and marches eventually make him a target of the paramilitary group *Muerte a Secuestradores*: "Pocos días después, aparecieron los primeros libelos en los muros exteriors de le iglesia, pintados con aerosol, donde se acusaba al cura de auxiliador de milicianos y lo amenazaban de muerte" (122). The central focus of "Una hoguera para que arda Goya," however, is a fresco that Bernardo commissions Enoch to paint behind the altar of the church, "un fresco sangriento que debía servir de alegoría a las matanzas de los últimos años" (118). The mural would be painted in the church to commemorate and denounce previous massacres that had occurred over the years, and it would be "el inventario dibujado de los crímenes que se cometían a diario en la región […]" (127). However, the fresco, which is intended to denounce and memorialise the violence of previous years, ends up foretelling the massacre that takes place at the start of the novel as it depicts the exact scene of the main square, moments before Bernardo and Enoch are shot. When the mural is unveiled for the first time, Bernardo sees his and Enoch's final moments before their execution:

> […] la imagen de un hombre barbado y con sontana a la usanza antigua que tenía un parecido explícito con el sacerdote. Cuatro encapuchados le apuntaban de muy cerca, como si pretendieren fusilarlo, y el hombre, con las manos atadas a la espalda, ofrecía esa mirada desafiante y dura, una mirada que denotaba más desdén que temor ante la muerte. (127)

Before the massacre occurs, Bernardo, troubled by the fresco's spectral presence, spends nights alone in the church observing the mural, "asombrado con la inexplicable ocurrencia de hallarse a sí mismo dibujado, de pronto, ante el espectáculo de su proprio fin" (128). Enoch notices that Bernardo even starts to resemble the priest depicted in the mural, "envejecido hasta alcanzar una similitud sorprendente con su dibujo del mural: los ojos con un tinte vidrioso y amarillo, la piel cetrina de los enfermos del hígado, la barba que parecía más densa con la oscuridad envolvente y las arrugas de la frente calva como navajazos que delataban haber esperado aquella cita que al fin llegaba" (128). Finally, the chapter returns to opening massacre, and before Bernardo opens the large wooden church doors, with the paramilitary shouting "¡Que salga el cura comunista!" (115) outside, he whispers to himself in Latin "Alea iacta est" (118), which translates as 'the die is cast', as he senses that the mural's haunting presence and his past actions of mediating in the conflict have already presaged his death and the massacre, which takes place in the first chapter of the novel. In the mural, there is a dizzying merging of temporalities, where the solidity of not only the present but also the future is brought into question by events that have taken place in the past. Bernardo's involvement with *campesino* groups and his links to the guerrilla ultimately end up with his and Enoch's death in the town's main square. Therefore, Bernardo's attempt to memorialise past massacres, through a denunciatory mural, create a palimpsest where the layering of past episodes of violence, on this occasion, provide insight into events of the future, particularly the opening massacre in "La hora de las sombras largas."

Throughout this chapter, I have shown, through close textual analysis of *Viaje*, how the victims of the paramilitary violence are haunted by spectres of past violence and how this haunting culminates in the characters losing their lives in the opening massacre. As seen with the chapters about Delfina, Arquímedes and Bernardo, past episodes of violence still hold sway over the present, with violence continuing down the generations, taking on new forms and

leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. I have also demonstrated that the spectral haunting manifests through the forming of multiple palimpsests, where there is a merging and drawing together of disparate spaces and temporalities of violence, which elucidate the connections between the violence of apparently distinct historical periods. *Viaje,* ultimately, emphasises the cyclical nature of Colombian violence, which, as I will demonstrate in the rest of this thesis, is a key concern of the *Pentalogía* more broadly. Furthermore, *Viaje* would also appear to be questioning a short-sightedness that views some episodes of Colombian violence in isolation, without linking them to previous historical periods and without fully appreciating the interconnectedness of distinct forms, spaces and temporalities of violence in the construction of collective memory. Finally, the novel could also be read as a bleak commentary on how, unless the connections between disparate violence can be fully understood, even with the demobilisation of AUC in 2006 and the signing of the peace treaty with the FARC 2016, historical violence is likely to continue haunting the nation, which, as with the mural in the church in Bernardo's chapter, could send Colombia further down, using Ferreira's words, the *agujero negro*. After examining cyclical violence and haunting in *Viaje*, in the following chapter, I will explore the violence of rural land disputes of the late 1960s and early 1970s in *Rebelión*, analysing how the novel, through dialogism, heteroglossia and polyphony, foregrounds peripheral voices and counters official hegemonic narratives.

CHAPTER THREE

A Polyphony of Violence: The (Re)Construction of a Land Occupation in *Rebelión de los oficios inútiles*

Rebelión, published in 2014, is Daniel Ferreira's third novel. Awarded the *Premio Clarín de Novela* in Argentina that same year, the novel moves away from the paramilitarism of the 1980s, narrated in Ferreira's *Viaje*, to the *campesino* land disputes of the 1960s/1970s and the final years of the National Front. In what follows, I will analyse how *Rebelión* fictionally (re)constructs, through the coming together of a chorus of dispersed and fragmented voices, the story of a land occupation by *campesino*/worker's union *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* that takes place in the late 1960s and early 1970s in rural Colombia. I examine how, through a polyphonic piecing together of events, *Rebelión* embarks on a more nuanced, multi-layered and inclusive (re)construction of Colombia's historical memory and emphasises the importance of giving voice to silenced and peripheral groups or individuals to achieve more complex versions of the past. I will show how the novel, instead of attempting to establish one true version of the past, constructs collective memory by allowing multiple voices to partake in its (re)construction and, in doing so, acts as a form of counter-memory to official history and the hegemonic discourse. I will look specifically at how the story is narrated by disparate voices and told through multiple perspectives, arguing that the novel undertakes an act of unearthing fragmented, and often contradictory, voices and places them in dialogue with one another, with the sum of these voices providing a more complete and multifaceted understanding of the events, which I understand as a commentary by Ferreira on the way historical memory of the Colombian conflict might be more effectively constructed.

The polyphony in *Rebelión*, additionally, brings into question the veracity of the hegemonic discourse, which is built upon a monologic and unilateral telling of the past. In the novel, the peripheral voices, although fragmented and dispersed, attempt to counteract the hegemonic voice, which tries to silence them. Ferreira subjects the monological, unilateral

retelling of the fictional events in the novel to a process of fracture by exposing it to several counter-voices that question the notion of official history. Drawing on the work of Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and his work on polyphony, heteroglossia, and dialogism, I will argue that *Rebelión* puts forward a polyphonic and dialogic version of history where to reconstruct and give new meaning to the past, all voices need to be heard. In this chapter, I have opted for a Bakhtinian reading over a post-colonial reading of the novel as the latter would typically foreground the voice of the postcolonial subject through the suppression of the hegemonic discourse. In contrast, the former will allow me to consider all voices alongside one another, both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, as part of my analysis. Furthermore, a Bakhtinian reading, which is underpinned by a democratic and Marxist worldview, is particularly apt for a novel that narrates a workers' and *campesinos*' struggle against injustice.

In *Rebelión*, Ferreira turns his attention to the late 1960s and early 1970s period, during a time in Colombian history known as the National Front. The National Front (1958-1974) was a period of government where power was shared, rotating every four years, between the two major political forces, the Liberal and Conservative parties, to put an end to the horrific violence of *La Violencia*, which had raged for over ten years at that point, and to solve the centuries-long bipartisan conflict between the two parties (Bushnell). However, the National Front was particularly divisive as it kept the traditional Colombian parties firmly in office and excluded more marginal voices from holding power, which gave rise to many left-wing guerrilla groups during this period, namely the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) (Bushnell; Arias Trujillo):

> La singular solución a la violencia, el Frente Nacional, condujo a una nueva e imprevista subestructura de violencia bajo la forma de insurgencias guerrilleras de izquierda a lo largo del país. Los colombianos que no querían tener que ver con los programas de los partidos tradicionales liberal y conservador quedaron consternados ante la estrechez del acuerdo bipartidista entre élites. ¿Cómo habrían de participar en política los no alineados o desilusionados después del establecimiento del Frente Nacional en 1958? (LaRosa and Mejía 115-116)

Rebelión is set at the end of 1969 and the beginning of 1970, during the final four-year period of the National Front and takes place around the time of the election of Misael Pastrana, who came to power amid accusations of electoral fraud after beating the *Alianza Nacional Popular* (ANAPO) candidate Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (Bushnell). *Rebelión* focuses on the social conflicts of this period in a small Colombian village, narrating, through a chorus of voices, the occupation of a plot of land by two thousand poor *campesinos and* the aftermath and consequences of that event. Although *Rebelión* is almost certainly based upon historical events in Ferreira's hometown of San Vicente de Chucurí, it is difficult to situate the events in the novel geographically. As with *Viaje*, analysed in the previous chapter, this omission of specific details referring to location, except for the allusion to Cordillera de los Cobardes, would seem to suggest that the story narrated in the novel, although taking inspiration from local Santanderean history, was representative of the type of social conflicts and tensions that unfolded across Colombia during the years depicted. Therefore, the story's unidentified location acts as a microcosm for the tumultuous climate of rural Colombia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In a 2016 interview, Ferreira explains his attempt to capture the mood of this period in Colombia, without wanting to write a historical novel:

> El episodio en sí era muy local pero al empezar a imaginarme la época tuve que ir a ver cómo había ocurrido y en qué contexto, y me di cuenta que esto había pasado en todo el país: en Cauca, en San Onofre –Sucre-, en Bogotá, en Santander, no sólo en San Vicente, también en Bucaramanga […] Me interesó ese episodio local porque lo conocía de primera mano y porque al ver el contexto me di cuenta que tenía que ubicarlo en un movimiento bien registrado que fue el robo de las elecciones de Misael Pastrana Borrero donde nacen las guerrillas de los 70 y donde se transforma todo el proceso de izquierda de este país, y donde el movimiento social es perseguido como si fuera un movimiento armado y es aplastado, y ahí están las consecuencias de todo lo que pasó. Me atraía el momento político, pero la novela no es histórica y espero que tampoco panfletaria. ("El escritor santandereano")

Fictionalising the Archive: From "Nacimiento" to *Rebelión*

The gestation period for *Rebelión* was lengthy, with the seeds of the novel being planted some decades before its publication in 2014. *Rebelión* can be traced back to stories that Ferreira

heard while growing up in San Vicente de Chucurí about a journalist named Jaime Ramírez and his revolutionary newspaper *El Trópico* and a fabled community leader named Ana Larrota (Ferreira, "El escritor santandereano"). The folklore surrounding Ramírez and Larrota motivated Ferreira to conduct archival research into this period at the Universidad Industrial de Santander in Bucaramanga, on three separate occasions, in 2004, 2008 and 2010. In his archival work, Ferreira documented and photographed editions of Jaime Ramírez's *El Trópico*, the late 1960s and early 1970s revolutionary newspaper from San Vicente de Chucurí that he had heard mentioned in conversations with people in his town. In his research into the newspaper, Ferreira delved into the life of its founder, Jaime Ramírez, and his attempts to speak truth to power from his newspaper. Additionally, in the archives of *El Trópico*, Ferreira began to unearth more about the story of the community leader, syndicalist and local *campesina* Ana Larrota, who took part in a land occupation in 1969, and whose cause Ramírez defended through his articles in the newspaper.

Based on Ferreira's archival research at Universidad Industrial de Santander, in 2010, he published a journalistic report, divided into ten instalments, in *El Magazin* of Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*. In fact, the report's title, "Nacimiento y caída de la prensa roja," closely resembles one of the chapter titles in *Rebelión*. In "Nacimiento," Ferreira, who is writing under his online pseudonym Stanislaus Bhor, chronicles the period from 1969-74 when Jaime Ramírez´s newspaper *El Trópico* was in circulation in San Vicente de Chucurí and the surrounding area. Although Ferreira makes no reference in *Rebelión*, or in any promotional interviews for the novel, to the existence of "Nacimiento," it is without doubt an important starting point from which to approach *Rebelión*, as Giulia Nuzzo points out in her analysis of the novel:

> En este sentido, aunque el autor en sus declaraciones no haya aparecido propenso a sugerir la existencia de aquella complementaria escritura, Rebelión descansa sobre un verídico esqueleto documental, compartiendo, en una espesa trama de confluencias

> intertextuales, líneas centrales de su material novelística con el ejercicio periodístico de Nacimiento. (149)

Therefore, after reading "Nacimiento," it becomes clear that *Rebelión* is based, to a certain extent, on real-life events involving community leader Ana Larrota and journalist Jaime Ramírez that took place in San Vicente de Chucurí beginning in the late 1960s. However, the novel does very little to call attention to this fact. Instead, it simply pays homage to the two figures in the end matter of the novel, which reads, "en memoria de Jaime Ramírez y de Ana Larrota" (297). In this regard, Giulia Nuzzo also points out that:

> […] la novela de Ferreira, con su estilo metafórico, por su explícita decisión de despojar los eventos narrados de adjetivos políticos, así como de claras coordenadas de la época, resiste a intentos de clasificación […]. Se trata, desde luego, de una novela que, desde el paratexto de la edición de Alfaguara y durante todo el curso de la narración, no hace nada para presentarse como algo distinto de una novela, escondiendo cuidadosamente todos los elementos verídicos y los personajes de la historia real bajo nombre ficticios: Ramírez disfrazado en Borja, El Trópico sustituido por La Gallina Política, Camilo Torres aludido o simbolizado por el anónimo cura Bernardo. (154)

Ferreira's attempt to mask the actual events present in the novel, which are alluded to in "Nacimiento," would suggest an effort to avoid the story being constrained by issues of truth and referentiality that would be expected, for instance, in a historical novel. It is certainly clear from Ferreira himself that he was not attempting to write a novel that could be held up as an accurate account of the events that took place in San Vicente de Chucurí during the years in question. Instead, *Rebelión* uses real-life occurrences as a lens through which to explore social issues related to this period in Colombia by presenting a fresh perspective and giving voice to peripheral positions often excluded from the conversation, which, in turn, contributes to the construction of Colombia's historical memory. Through fiction, Ferreira is attempting to create a new reality by offering, as the author himself has stated, "una nueva resignificación de la vida cotidiana" (Ferreira, "Las escrituras"). Ferreira gave some insight into this approach to writing *Rebelión* in a 2016 interview with *El Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*, when he argued

that literature is at its most effective when it strays from historical facts and avoids accurately reproducing real-life events:

> La literatura se mueve por otro tipo de noción de verdad. No es necesario verificar ni validar hechos para que puedan ser narrados. Y aun si esos hechos tienen asidero en la realidad, la literatura le va mejor cuando elude la precisión de los hechos, de los datos, porque la literatura crea una nueva realidad. Lo que propone es una nueva visión de aspectos que pueden haber sido inspirados en episodios de la realidad. (Ferreira, "Primer" 00:00:52 – 00:01:35)

The Character Triad: A Journalist, Community Leader and Landowner

Having briefly expounded my argument for this chapter and the origins of *Rebelión*, I will now turn my attention to the plot and structure of the novel. *Rebelión* is set in an unnamed, rural Colombian town between late 1969 and 1970, and narrates the event, alluded to in "Nacimiento": the occupation of a local landowner's plot of land by a *campesino* and workers' union. The seizure of the land is at the centre of *Rebelión,* and the narrative is structured around three main perspectives, a character triad of journalist Joaquín Borja, community leader Ana Larrota and landowner Simón Alemán.

The first perspective around which the events of the land occupation are narrated is that of the journalist Joaquín Borja, a thinly veiled Jaime Ramírez. In editions of his newspaper *La Gallina Política,* a fictionalised version of *El Trópico,* Borja reports on the occupation of Simón Alemán's land by the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* and its leader, Ana Larrota. Through his investigative journalism in *La Gallina Política,* Borja proves that the rightful owners of the land are, in fact, the occupiers and not the landowner, legitimising Larrota's and the *Sindicato*'s struggle. Borja's journalism in support of the occupation and in defence of the *Sindicato*'s rights is not appreciated by the local military authorities and many of the pro-National Front townspeople, who view Larrota and the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* as a subversive group with ties to the guerrilla. The local paramilitary group *La Sociedad de Hierro* becomes determined, therefore, to ostracise Borja and to silence *La Gallina Política*'s reporting: at one point it even buys up all the copies of the newspaper to stop what they consider to be defamatory news from

being read by citizens. One particular newspaper report, which includes an interview Borja carries out with Alemán, enrages many in the town as it suggests that Alemán's land was inherited illegally, confiscated from humble *campesinos* at the end of the War of a Thousand Days in 1902 and given as the spoils of war to the Conservative victors. As a result of his controversial reporting in the newspaper, Borja sees his sister Luisa killed when a bomb, planted by the army outside his home and headquarters, explodes and ends *La Gallina Política*'s attempts to defend Ana Larrota and her cause. Distraught from losing his sister and seeing his dream of a free, activist press obliterated, Borja, along with newspaper photographer, friend and trusted ally Geovanni Orozco and local priest Bernardo, based on real-life *cura guerrillero* Camilo Torres, joins an unnamed guerrilla group to continue his fight through armed struggle instead. The plot surrounding Joaquín Borja ends at this point in *Rebelión* but is continued in Ferreira's earlier journalistic report "Nacimiento," with a fictionalised account of the final moments of Jaime Ramírez, who is Borja in *Rebelión*, as he is killed during an attack on the guerrilla camp, in what Nuzzo describes as "un preludio, […] al trabajo inventivo que se ejercerá en la novela *Rebelión de los oficios inútiles" (150).*

The second perspective concerns the character Ana Larrota, who is a central protagonist in the novel and, as leader of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*, plays a vital role in the land occupation. In the novel, she leads a group of "dos mil malhechores" (Ferreira, *Rebelión* 23) to take over a plot of land owned by local landowner Simon Alemán. In a frustrated attempt by the army to evict the occupiers, Captain Penagos is shot and killed by Meneses, a member of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*. Ana Larrota attempts to have the eviction postponed but arrives too late to the campsite, only to find Captain Penagos lying in a pool of blood on the floor. Larrota is then detained and sent to jail. While in prison, inmate Martina Hinojosa, who is corrupted by the state, stabs and kills Ana Larrota in her cell at night, leaving the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* without a leader. As well as narrating the story of Larrota's involvement in the

land occupation, her incarceration and her death at the hands of a corrupted inmate, the novel also delves into Larrota's childhood, where she visits her Aunt Julia in a leper colony. There, she witnesses discrimination and inequality as a child, which plays an integral part in her determination to fight against injustice for the rest of her life. In the only chapter where Larrota narrates in first person, "El árbol que cuida tus huesos," she reinters her dead husband's bones, in a burial lament, and tells the story of his final years and the death of their son, who is killed in a shootout between rival armed groups.

The other chapters in *Rebelión* revolve around the character Simon Alemán. This drunken, bankrupt landowner planned to build a private residential complex for the middle classes on La Vendée, a piece of land inherited from his wealthy, land-owning father. Ever since an ill-fated journey in his early twenties to Cuba, where he discovers a residential area of art deco houses and "calles sombreadas por higueras y almendros y palmeras tropicales" (288), Simón Alemán has his heart set on building an oasis for the middle-classes on a barren hill in a poor, rural town of Colombia. However, Alemán's ambitions of a middle-class paradise are frustrated as he goes bankrupt, with the land being confiscated by the bank and then occupied by Ana Larrota and the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*. In a drunken stupor, Alemán is convinced by the paramilitary group *La Sociedad de Hierro* to partake in a violent eviction of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*. In return for Alemán's compliance and participation in the eviction, *La Sociedad de Hierro* has negotiated with the bank to forego the repossession of Alemán's property. During the forced eviction of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* from the land, Alemán and other members of *La Sociedad de Hierro* set fire to the camp, killing scores of people, and Alemán is attacked and seriously injured by members of the *Sindicato.* The novel concludes with Alemán, broken and deranged, lying in a hospital bed convalescing from his injuries.

Finally, before beginning my analysis of the multiplicity of voices in the novel, it is important to briefly analyse the novel's title: *Rebelión de los oficios inútiles*. On the one hand,

the *oficios inútiles* allude to the professions and trades considered to be of little economic value or social importance. Therefore, when Ana Larrota shouts out over a megaphone during a protest in front of the mayor's office, "Esta es una rebelión de los oficios inútiles" (135), it is a scathing commentary on how many of the professions that make up the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* (builders, domestic servants, electricians, healers, horse tamers, shoemakers, shopkeepers, and tanners) are deemed to be useless and of little economic value to the ruling class. On the other hand, as well as the *oficios inútiles* alluding to the various trades of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*, the title could also point more broadly to the futility or uselessness of the life projects of the three main characters described above, in what González Echeverry describes as, "un tríptico en el que la inutilidad es su eje central" (133). At the end of the novel, Borja's sister is killed when a bomb is set off outside his home and newspaper headquarters. He is forced to give up his fight to speak truth to power through his newspaper and joins an unspecified guerrilla group. Borja's renunciation of the written word and his subsequent taking up of arms at the end of the novel demonstrates the futility of his original endeavour to speak truth through his reporting, which appears also to be a cynical commentary on the inability of journalism (another *oficio inútil* to add to the list of professions mentioned above) to bring about real change in the society. Larrota herself seems to predict Borja's inevitable failure earlier in the novel when she is asked in a court martial about his involvement in the land occupation. She replies that no one influenced her decision to go ahead with the occupation because, according to her, a journalist, "puede detectar las contradicciones sociales del momento, pero difícilmente su herramienta de trabajo, el análisis y la investigación, le permiten hacer algo para cambiarlas" (178). Like Borja, Larrota's fight against injustice and her attempts to give a voice to the dispossessed also prove useless as she is eliminated while in prison, and the *Sindicato* is violently evicted from the occupied land at the end of *Rebelión*. Finally, landowner Alemán's absurd obsession with building an affluent middle-class neighbourhood

on a barren hilltop proves futile. His dream vanishes when he goes bankrupt, and the land is first seized by the *Sindicato* and then repossessed by the bank. It is clear, therefore, at the end of the novel, that in addition to referring to the actual trades represented by the trade union, it is also a broader allusion to all three main characters' actions, which are all shown ultimately to be futile and *inútiles*.

A Rebellion of Multiple Voices: Polyphony, Heteroglossia and Dialogism

Before beginning a close reading of passages from *Rebelión*, I would like to outline Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's work on polyphony, heteroglossia and dialogism, which will underpin my analysis of the patchwork of voices, narrators, genres and registers in the novel. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin introduces the concept of polyphony, which he applied specifically to the work of Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoevsky. Bakhtin believed that Dostoevsky effectively created what he called the polyphonic novel (7). Polyphony, a term borrowed from music, refers to a multiplicity of independent and interconnected voices, each having equal weight in telling the story. As Sue Vice explains, "the polyphonic novel is a democratic one, in which equality of utterance is central" (112). In *Problems*, Bakhtin emphasises that the voices present in novels are all autonomous and do not simply stem from or represent the author's ideological worldview. Each voice stands for itself and is not subordinated to the authorial voice, as described by Bakhtin:

> *A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels*. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather *a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (6)

For Bakhtin, a polyphonic novel is by nature dialogic. The independent, and often conflicting, voices are in constant dialogue with one another: "The polyphonic novel is dialogic through and through. Dialogic relationships exist among all elements of novelistic structure; that is, they are juxtaposed contrapuntally" (40). Therefore, polyphony "creates the conditions

for dialogism" (Vice 114) and is the starting point for the dialogic relationship between the characters. The different perspectives of the characters engage with one another and even contrast with the authorial voice: the polyphonic character is "perceived as the author of a fully weighted ideological conception of his own, and not as the object of Dostoevsky's finalizing artistic vision" (Bakhtin 5). The dialogic relationships that exist in the polyphonic novel contrast with what Bakhtin defines as the monologic. Monologism describes a novel where the characters are "[…] a simple object of the author's consciousness" (7). In a monological world, the voices in the novel are subsumed under one dominant consciousness that treats them as objects of that particular perspective: "At the level of the novel, 'monological' is the term Bakhtin coins to characterize novels in which all elements of the narrative—from first- and third-person narration to the indirect speech of characters—are a determination of the single consciousness of the author" (Renfrew 76). However, "the direct power to mean […] belongs to several voices in a polyphonic work" (Morson and Emerson 238-239). A polyphonic novel does not necessarily mean the eradication of the author's own ideology from the novel, but rather that it may locate this ideological stance in a dialogue along with the other voices, with the author "[participating] in that dialogue, [where he becomes] one of the interlocutors in the 'great dialogue' that he himself has created" (239). Morson and Emerson, summarising Bakhtin, go on to add that "by surrendering his monologic powers, Dostoevsky created a way to embody a dialogic conception of truth" (239). Therefore, dialogism, through polyphony, allows for a multiplicity of voices and perspectives to speak for themselves, free of authorial control and creating a richer and more nuanced version of truth.

Along with polyphony and dialogism, heteroglossia is an illustrative concept for examining the inclusion of multiple genres and registers in *Rebelión*. Heteroglossia refers to the different manifestations of language within the novel and is "Bakhtin's way of describing

the internal condition of any language, its variation and stratification" (Renfrew 93). According to Bakhtin, heteroglossia refers to:

> Social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious language, languages of the authorities, of various circles and passing fashions, languages that serve the specific socio-political purpose of the day, even of the hour, […] this internal stratification [is] present in every moment of its historical existence. (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic* 263)

According to Renfrew, the novel is a particularly apt setting for heteroglossia as it "[…] absorbs and dialogically inter-animates the various strata of heteroglot language." (102) In *Rebelión*, heteroglossia and polyphony become dialogised, with multiple voices and different registers and styles interacting, where "dialogism is the organizing principle of both polyphony and heteroglossia" (Vice 50). According to Bakhtin, one means through which heteroglossia can enter the novel is the diversity of the characters' and the narrator's speech, from high to lower registers. A further way that heteroglot discourse can be dialogised in the novel is with the inclusion "of a whole incorporated genre" (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic* 324) which "can range from the literary (poems or songs within a novel) to the non-literary (menus, telegrams, sermons, advertisements)" (Vice 21). Beginning in the first chapter "Hombres que salen a dar un paseo en un día de sol," and present throughout all of *Rebelión*, are a variety of different registers, styles and tones, such as letters, manifestos, and forensic and judicial reports, which would pertain to what Bakhtin describes as "incorporated genres." In the following close readings of passages from the novel, I will deepen my analysis of Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia.

Setting the Record Straight: Countering the Hegemonic Discourse

This chapter will now turn to the question of the multiplicity of voices, narrators, registers and genres within the novel. I contend that Ferreira uses a chorus of voices to (re)construct the events in *Rebelión*, with each voice giving its individual and unique perspective and contributing to a more subtle (re)construction of the events that counter and

question the version of official history. For the purpose of the analysis, I have broadly grouped the different voices, registers and genres into two identifiable discourses: the hegemonic and the counter hegemonic. Although I have identified these two distinct discourses for my analysis, it is important to point out here that neither the hegemonic nor the counter-hegemonic discourse is unitary or monologic; instead, it is fragmented and, oftentimes, dispersed throughout the text.

The hegemonic discourse in the novel brings together all the voices of officiality, the authorities or anyone that defends the stance of those in positions of power. This discourse is heard chiefly by characters linked to the military or the state but is also communicated through the right-wing paramilitary group *La Sociedad de Hierro* and groups of ordinary citizens. Additionally, this hegemonic discourse is transmitted through the various official documents that feature in the novel, such as the summary of the court martial that condemns Ana Larrota to prison for taking part in the seizure of Simón Alemán's land in the second chapter "Sublevados" or in *La Sociedad de Hierro's* manifesto against the *Sindicato* and the occupation of Alemán's land. The position defended by the hegemonic discourse is that the occupation of Simón Alemán's land by Ana Larrota and her *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* is illegal, and that her social movement has direct ties to dangerous armed guerrilla groups. The hegemonic discourse rigidly maintains the official narrative that the *Sindicato de Oficos Varios* is a violent revolutionary movement of work-shy members, and anyone who supports its cause must be silenced and eliminated. It does not allow opposing factions to offer up their own versions, sees any challenge to its dominance as subversive and seditious and views any attempt to question the validity of the official narrative as a threat.

Countering the hegemonic discourse are the dispersed and fragmented voices of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* and Ana Larrota. These are peripheral and silenced voices, which when heard together, challenge the official narrative of the authorities and put forward a more

multi-layered version of events, which defends the legitimacy of the land occupation and the movement's fight for justice. An important ally, and a conduit through which the counter-hegemonic discourse is channelled, is Joaquín Borja and his newspaper *La Gallina Política*. Through "documentos, escrituras notariales, viejos recortes, lujo de detalles y a ocho columnas" (Ferreira, *Rebelión* 131) *La Gallina Política* fights the corner of Ana Larrota and the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*, lending legitimacy to their struggle. This countering of the hegemonic discourse becomes a menace to the authorities, who attempt to silence what they see as destabilising voices.

The voice of bankrupt landowner Simón Alemán is somewhat of an outlier in the novel and becomes caught between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses. For instance, at one point in the novel, under the effect of alcohol, Alemán concedes an interview to Borja and *La Gallina Política*, in which he provides the journalist with a folder of newspaper clippings from the turn of the century that prove the usurpation of the disputed territory by previous generations of his family at the conclusion of the War of a Thousand Days. This interview with Borja strengthens the position of the counter-hegemonic discourse and legitimises the *Sindicato*'s claim to the land. On the other hand, in the final chapter of the novel, "Primitivos otra vez," Alemán is coerced by paramilitary group *La Sociedad de Hierro*, representative of the hegemonic discourse, to take part in a mission to oust the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* from his property through violent means in return for the rescindment of the bank's repossession of the land. However, for most of the novel, Simón Alemán is in a drunken stupor, indifferent to both the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses, narrated omnisciently as he reminisces about his travels through Europe, the United States and Cuba as a young man, where he first conceived the idea of building a residential complex for the middle-classes on his family's land and where he gets the first indication that his life project will end in failure.

Delving into the multiple voices in the novel reveals a network of individual voices that are varied and multifaceted and lend themselves for an extensive analysis, especially regarding how the voices interact and are placed in dialogue with one another. In addition to the textual polyphony constructed from multiple narrators and voices, the novel also incorporates an array of diverse and dissimilar registers and textual genres. These genres, in stark contrast to the literary language in much of the novel, closely resemble the lexicon, style and tone of various distinguishable genres such as judicial documents, forensic reports and journalistic pieces. In order to exemplify better how the novel creates textual polyphony that questions and disrupts official history, I have included the following table that shows the multiplicity of narrators, voices, genres and registers used:

Narrators	**Voices**	**Genres/Registers**
1. Joaquín Borja: first-person narration 2. Ana Larrota: first-person and omniscient narration 3. Simón Alemán: omnisicent narration	**<u>Hegemonic Discourse</u>** Capitan Penagos Armando Rugeles Pueblo/Shop owners Sociedad de Hierro Alcalde Porfirio Becerra **<u>Counter-Hegemonic Discourse</u>** Sindicato de los Oficios Varios (huelguistas) Ana Larrota Joaquín Borja Geovanni Orozco Cura Bernardo	1. Journalistic interview (197-203) 2. Judicial summary of Ana Larrota's court martial (23) 3. Passages from forensic reports (185-187) 4. Nursery rhymes/chants (73-74) 5. La Gallina Política's testimonial newspaper report ("Dossier de los torturados") (11-22) 6. Ana Larrota's Interior monologue/burial lament (91-97) 7. Joaquín Borja's tape recordings (ch.3, 8, 10, 12, 15)

		8. Verbatim transcript of Ana Larrota's court martial (ch.9) 9. Land deed recited by Simón Alemán's father (99-100) 10. Workers' letter announcing strike (106) 11. Sociedad de Hierro's formal manifesto against land occupation (174-175) 12. Borja's diatribe/lampoon (259-261)

In foregrounding the multiple voices, narrators, genres and registers in *Rebelión*, Ferreira quietens his own authorial voice to allow the various participants in the events of the novel to give their own version and to allow the reader to actively reconstruct the events. In the following section, through close textual analysis, I will now begin my discussion of dialogism, heteroglossia and polyphony in *Rebelión* by focusing my attention on how the chapters telling Ana Larrota's story are constructed through a multiplicity of voices, narrators, registers and genres, which come together to provide alternative ways of viewing history and reimagining the past.

Ana Larrota and a Chorus of *Campesino* Voices

Larrota's story of social struggle in *Rebelión* functions as a corrective to reductionist official history that delegitimizes *campesino* social movements, where the voices of poor rural workers are relegated or excluded from historical memory. Ferreira reinstates Larrota's and these *campesino* voices, giving them prominence in the narration, and lending legitimacy to the struggle of these social movements, which were historically crushed by those in power. In

an interview with Daniel Ferreira about *Rebelión*, the author describes how the destruction of the social protests of the period could be seen as an archetype, which he attempted to capture in the novel:

> Desde el nacimiento del movimiento obrero la protesta social ha sido aplastada por el poder, siempre se ha negado. La aplastó Miguel Abadía, la aplastaron en la masacre de las bananeras, la liquidó Alberto Lleras cuando le quitó la personería jurídica a los sindicatos obreros. Todos los conatos de acción social que se han hecho a través de la protesta y de la huelga han sido aplastados. De ahí viene la idea de que el aplastamiento del movimiento obrero es un arquetipo de esta sociedad, porque ha sido imposible defender las necesidades sociales más básicas a través de la protesta. ("El escritor")

In the chapters that revolve around Larrota and the occupation of Alemán's land, Larrota's voice, specifically, is fragmented through a combination of first-person and omniscient narration, several temporal jumps and a variety of different registers, from the subjectivity of an interior monologue to the procedural tone of a military court martial. The chorus of voices in the chapters that omnisciently narrate Larrota and the land occupation problematises the version of the hegemonic discourse by exposing it to other contrasting perspectives and making it just one voice among many. The first introduction to Ana Larrota comes, in fact, through the hegemonic voice, in one of the many documents incorporated into the novel. On the first page of the second chapter "Sublevados," Ana Larrota's name is mentioned in a judicial summary of a court martial where she is sentenced to prison during *Estado de Sitio* for having led members of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* to occupy Simon Alemán's land. The judicial summary is marked off from the rest of the text by italics and is written in the cold, impersonal language of a legal document:

> *Por consideraciones que definen a la procesada como un peligro para la estabilidad social, tipificado como delito en la actual situación de guerra análoga que vive la República, por haber liderado la invasión de tierras baldías en cabeza de dos mil malhechores y haber participado de cuerpo presente en el posterior enfrentamiento con las fuerzas del orden, Ana Dolores Larrota, de setenta y tres años, vecina de esta municipalidad, con el documento número un millón trece mil cuatrocientos, queda condenada a pena carcelaria durante el Estado de Sitio*. (23)

This judicial summary reveals the hegemonic voice's position on Ana Larrota and her social movement, contemptuously describing the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* as "*dos mil malhechores*." It is revealing to note the position in the novel in which this document is located, placed on the first page of the first chapter in which Larrota is narrated by an omniscient narrator. The novel seems to be laying out, from the outset, the discourse of hegemony almost as an invitation to the other peripheral voices in the novel to commence their rebuttal, by providing alternative versions of events throughout the rest of *Rebelión*. In fact, directly following the court martial, soldiers march Ana Larrota away from the court, surrounded on all sides by her supporters, who launch into a rallying cry in her defence through a chorus of their voices:

> --¡Compañera Anita Larrota!
> Desde las gargantas tensas, nace la replica:
> --¡Presente!
> Y la voz inicial replica:
> --¿Hasta cuándo?
> Y la multitud, timorata al comienzo, pero espoleada ahora por los soldados que apuntan con sus fusiles:
> --¡Hasta la muerte! (25)

In the rest of the chapter "Sublevados," an omniscient narrator tells the story of the day of the invasion of Alemán's land by Larrota and her two thousand strong *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*: "Los hombres iban armados con garrotes y varillas. No gritaban. Iban en silencio, subiendo el cerro, un ejército de termitas desarrapadas, susurrante, cuatrocientas familias, dos mil invasores, según el expediente […]" (25). One of the *campesinos* worried about the police and the army evicting them by force conveys his fears to Larrota, who replies: "Que disparen, Lorenzo. A nosotros ya no pueden matarnos, porque para el gobierno no existimos: ya estamos muertos" (26). As with priest Bernardo in *Viaje*, who receives a premonition from a fresco painted on the church wall of an imminent massacre, Ana Larrota also has a portentous vision of the violent eviction of the occupiers: "Es como si de repente estuviese poseída por una visión fugaz de caos. Una ilusión tremenda y repentina donde todo el campamento, todos los

cambuches, todas las covachas, todas las tiendas de plástico son consumidos por las llamas, en un incendio atroz" (28). As with Bernardo's "espectáculo de su proprio fin" (128) in *Viaje*, Larrota's presentiment also comes to pass as Simón Alemán collaborates with paramilitary group *La Sociedad de Hierro* to burn down the camp of the occupiers and oust the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* from the land in the final chapter of the novel. This integration of predictions and presentiments, which also occurs in *La balada* and *El año*, is part of a broader landscape of violence that Ferreira depicts throughout the *Pentalogía* in which violent actions and events are destined to repeat themselves to form a circle of violence that is all-encompassing and from which there is no escape.

In the chapter "Molotov: Comité de explosivos de fabricación casera," the voices of the other leaders of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* become more prominent in the text and begin to present their own version of the events, directly contradicting the hegemonic position. The chapter begins by jumping forward in time from the day of the land occupation to April 1970, with Larrota now serving the sentence that was handed out by the court martial and officialised in the judicial summary contained in "Sublevados." By this time, Larrota has already served four months in prison and is made aware by an inmate of her cell block of a plan to assassinate her. The chapter then abruptly switches to a different time and location, narrating the stand-off between the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* and the army at the site of the occupied land some four to five months earlier. The army, under the orders of military mayor Porfirio Becerra, is preparing to forcefully evict the *Sindicato* from the land. However, before the eviction occurs, Captain Penagos is forced into a dialogue with *Sindicato* leader Antonio Blas. In the conversation, Penagos explains to Blas that the army's eviction will go ahead as planned, and Blas reiterates that the *Sindicato* members will not leave the land as they consider it their legitimate home. Ferreira places these two contrasting positions in direct dialogue with one

another, with the counter-hegemonic discourse questioning and undermining the position of the hegemonic discourse:

> --La orden que me dieron dice que a las catorce horas ustedes no pueden estar más aquí.
>
> --Lo siento, pero eso no va a pasar, capitán. La orden que tenemos nosotros es la de quedarnos y echar a piedras a todo aquel que intente expulsarnos.
>
> -- Yo comprendo su situación, pero comprenda usted también la mía: ordenes son ordenes.
>
> --Hambre también es hambre, y frío, frío […]
>
> --Ustedes no quieren cooperar. El alcalde les advirtió que debían abandonar el barbecho hace ocho días y aquí siguen.
>
> --Esto no es un barbecho, capitán: mire bien a su alrededor. ¿Qué ve? ¿Escombros, cauchos, polvo y mierda? Yo le voy a decir lo que nosotros vemos.
>
> --Cuando yo miro estos escombros veo mi casa y la de todos esos que ahora lo miran a usted. Aunque no lo crea, este es nuestro hogar. ¿Es feo? ¿Es mugroso? ¿Hay barro y basura y plástico por todos lados? Tal vez, pero es nuestra casa […]
>
> --¿Usted tiene casa, capitán?
>
> --Debe ser de ladrillo y debe tener muebles y mesa, capitán, y esposa, ¿o no es así?
>
> --[…] ¿A usted le gustaría que un día, capitán, por cualquier motivo, llegaran a sacarlo de su casa a usted, a su mujer, a su hijo y al perro sólo porque a un alcalde se le ocurrió el desalojo? ¿Qué pensaría de esa arbitrariedad? […]
>
> --No es lo mismo. (70-72)

Penagos sticks to his script of "orders are orders" in the dialogue and is unwilling to concede ground to the Blas and the *Sindicato*. However, despite Penagos's adamance on following orders from the military mayor, and his apparent rejection of Blas's protestations, the counter-hegemonic voice manages to impose itself on the hegemonic voice, leaving Penagos "confundido por un momento ante el dilema" (72). Blas attempts to draw Penagos out of his rigid, procedural tone, through a humanising narrative, to more familiar ground and force him to listen to the contradiction in the military mayor's insistence on evicting the occupiers from Alemán's land. In doing so, the voice of Blas manages to destabilise the voice of hegemony by bringing it into a polyphonic dialogue and exposing it to an alternative position, which demonstrates how, "the equality of voices in the polyphonic novel is realised dialogically, as being on the same plane means they can hear and respond to each other" (Vice 56).

In the chapter "Dialéctica de las pistolas," we once again hear Ana Larrota's voice in a verbatim transcript of the court martial where, at the end, Larrota is sentenced to jail. In this transcript, Larrota's voice comes up against the hegemonic discourse and suggests an alternative telling of events. In the chapter, the military prosecutor questions Larrota about her involvement in the occupation of Alemán's land and the *Sindicato*'s motivations for the earlier protests outside the mayor's office. Through Larrota's responses to the prosecutor, the reader can glean information about her childhood and the roots of her social activism. In her answers, Larrota discusses the reasons for the occupation of the land and the motivations behind it, referring to historical land disputes that have existed for centuries in Colombia:

> Esta justificación también amerita una explicación histórica: la toma de ese terreno se hizo para modificar la posesión material de la tierra sobre un territorio en disputa. Antes de ser titulada esa montaña a un terrateniente de apellido Alemán, perteneció a los pioneros que abrieron estas breñas. Y antes, había sido de los nativos, que la defendieron por siglos del invasor, hasta ser exterminados. Nuestros antepasados fueron expulsados, por las armas, de esos terrenos hace décadas. La otra explicación es de sentido común: la tierra no es del dueño sino del que la necesita. (167)

During the questioning, there is a clear attempt by the military judge and prosecutor to silence Larrota by restricting her to short answers to their questions. When Larrota's answers become protracted and noncompliant, the prosecutor makes various objections, and the judge asks Larrota to answer the questions more concisely:

> --Limítase a responder de forma clara y concisa al fiscal del Consejo de Guerra, señora." "--Objeción. Desde hace dos días la sindicada sólo responde con retórica y elude el asunto esencial, señor." "--Aceptada. Limítese a responder de manera concreta y sucinta a las preguntas del mayor Tácito, fiscal del Consejo de Guerra, señora Larrota." "--Objeción. La señora otra vez ha convertido su respuesta en un discurso." "--Sírvase responder a las preguntas con exactitud. (155-172)

However, the attempts by the prosecutor and judge to silence Larrota are unsuccessful as her voice begins to permeate the text, winning out against the cold, military register of the judge and prosecutor. Larrota resists the voice of hegemony by standing her ground against the court's targeted line of questioning and presenting an alternative version of events through classic Marxist rhetoric: "Vivimos momentos en que a la clase trabajadora la atropellan, la

estafan y nos mienten. El paro, las tomas, las protestas y pedreas que el fiscal llama 'asonadas' son formas de lucha cívica que usa el pueblo para expresar las demandas y presionar soluciones" (171). When the prosecutor refers to the occupation as "la insurrección," Larrota corrects him and defends the dignity of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*:

> El fiscal ha insistido en estos tres días en usar sucesivos nombres para referirse a este movimiento social: asonada, insurrección, rebelión. Llámenla como les parezca. Somos gente que vende el sudor de su cuerpo, gente que se gana el pan con las manos y la fuerza física en oficios que la mayoría no quiere tener. Esta es una rebelión de los oficios inútiles […]. (159)

When questioned about her friends and allies, Larrota mentions her deceased friend, Senaida, who had to work six jobs to survive. One of the Senaida's jobs was to wash people's clothes for money in the river. Larrota describes how she lost her best friend when one day the river swelled and swept Senaida away. By telling the story of Senaida's life, Larrota directly challenges the voice of hegemony by exposing the precariousness of rural agricultural workers who have struggled within feudal systems of land ownership: "¿Alguno de los miembros de este Consejo de Guerra sabe lo que es orear ropa al sol para poder comer?, supongo que no" (160). At one point in the court-martial, Larrota is asked if she knows the identity of the person who shot and killed Penagos during the army's unsuccessful eviction of the occupiers, to which she replies that she does not. However, she responds that she is aware of the names of the members of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* who were detained and tortured by the army: "[…] si es que acaso al señor juez le interesan los crímenes y persecuciones a los miembros de nuestro sindicato" (178). Towards the end of the court-martial, before Larrota is handed out her prison sentence, she defends the occupation of Alemán's land and, in a further act of defiance against the hegemonic voice, she declares: "Me pueden matar o hacer matar, pero moriré diciendo que la invasion fue justa" (177). During the court-martial, Larrota's voice complicates and questions the official version of events and its attempt to silence her by

emphasising the legitimate claims of the protestors and defending their dignity and humanity using classic Marxist rhetoric.

This passionate defence of the workers outlined in her interventions in the courtroom has echoes later in the novel when, travelling back to her childhood, Larrota defends another oppressed category of people. In "El descubrimiento de la fealdad," we hear the voice of Larrota from her childhood when, along with her mother and younger brother, she visits a leper colony where her Aunt Julia lives and works. Larrota is shown to be precociously perceptive to the injustices the lepers face when she inquires as to why the colony is fenced off from the outside: "¿Y por qué hay policías y perros bravos y cercas de alambres y casa de cambio y un pueblo para enfermos y otros para sanos? El cuestionario es de la niña, y sorprende a todos por la minuciosidad de su observación" (230). As with other chapters in *Rebelión*, there is a switch of time and location, as the chapter returns to the prison where Larrota is in her cell reminiscing about her childhood among the lepers. This focus on the prison continues in the following chapter "Muerte en la mamorra", which moves between the moment Captain Penagos is shot and killed during the army's failed eviction of the *Sindicato* and Ana Larrota's murder by corrupted inmate Martina Hinojosa in the prison. At the end of the chapter, after Hinojosa has mortally wounded Larrota, Larrota's final thoughts turn to the lepers from her childhood. She recalls them teaching her the popular children's nursery rhyme, *Los maderos de San Juan:*

> ¿Y qué te enseñaron?, dice su tía.
> Me enseñaron a cantar.
> ¿Y qué canción?
> Aserrín, aserrán, los maderos de San Juan…
> ¿Piden pan?, pregunta su tía.
> ¡No les dan!, responde la niña. (254)

The nursery rhyme Larrota hears just before her death in the prison mirrors a parodied version of the song sung earlier in the novel by *Sindicato* members as a protest chant against the army in the chapter "Molotov: comité de explosivos de fabricación casera," just before the failed violent eviction is about to begin:

¡Aserrín! ¡Aserrán!
Los obreros están mal
Piden pan, no les dan,
Piden sueldo, les dan plomo
Piden vino, sí les dan
Para hacerlos acallar (74)

Here, Bakhtin's concept of double-voiced discourse manifests itself in these passages. At the moment of her death, Ana Larrota hears the nursery rhymes of her childhood, representing the injustices of the lepers, but she also hears the chants of the *Sindicato* members fighting their own struggle. In the nursery rhyme, Larrota hears how "dialogue has penetrated inside every word, provoking in it a battle and the interruption of one voice by another" (Bakhtin 75). The injustices of the lepers and the *Sindicato* blend and become double-voiced as Larrota breathes her last breath. The following section will move away from Ana Larrota's voice within the collective of the *Sindicato* to focus on her individual voice in an intimate and performative first-person burial lament.

Reinstating Silenced Voices through the Repertoire: Ana Larrota's Burial Lament

In the chapter "El árbol que cuida tus huesos," Larrota's voice continues to question and complicate hegemonic narratives that exclude the memories of more peripheral voices. Through a burial lament around the bones of her husband, Larrota reclaims and reinstates memories of her and her family's suffering and resists official narratives that relegate or exclude such voices from history. In this chapter, the novel switches from omniscient to first-person narration, with Larrota delving into her personal tragedies "desde lo hondo de su subjetividad en el lírico flujo de conciencia" (Nuzzo 159). The chapter is a funeral lament narrated around the bones of Larrota's dead husband, Manuel Pico Larsen. In the chapter, Manuel Pico's remains will be exhumed and thrown into a local ossuary. Before this happens, Ana Larrota visits the cemetery where her husband has been buried for five years to gather up fragments of his remains in a bag and takes them to a new resting place where they will be

reinterred under a tree: “Reúno todos los huesos en una bolsa y camino con los restos de mi esposo a través del cementerio. Sólo yo sé ahora bajo la sombra de qué árbol reposará para siempre. Sólo yo puedo imaginar su vida y su cuerpo a partir de estos pocos despojos” (Ferreira, *Rebelión* 97). The chapter consists of brief sentences in which Ana Larrota names specific bones from her husband´s body: “Esta es la falange de mi esposo. Este es el omoplato de mi esposo” (91), “Este es el único diente que le quedó entero” (92), “Esta es la cárcel de costillas que encerraban el corazón de mi esposo” (94), “Este es el despojo del hombre que le engendró vida a mi vientre. Este es su abono mineral, su resultado” (95). This naming of each of her husband´s bones acts as a prelude to various recollections of painful and traumatic memories from a period preceding the death of their son in a shootout and Manuel Pico’s suicide at the river’s edge at the end of the chapter.

The bones of her dead husband, in this way, function as vehicles of memory. Through exhumation and relocation of the bones, Ana Larrota inscribes memories of her life with her husband onto each bone, reclaiming erased or lost memories. As well as a means of memorialising her husband, Ana Larrota’s lament around the bones becomes a vehicle for resistance and counter-memory, giving voice to unheard victims, like her, written out of the history of the Colombian conflict. As well as unearthing and laying to rest her husband again, Ana Larrota’s act is an allegory, symbolising the disinterring of narratives of racialised others usually silenced from history by official archives and records, giving voice to the many accounts of the conflict not kept in records. In digging up bones and binding memories to her husband’s physical remains, Ana Larrota is engaging, additionally, in an act of mourning, which can also be viewed as a metaphor for the process of the reconstruction of Colombia’s historical memory: remembering and memorialising the dead of the conflict through a process of exhumation and inhumation.

Larrota's memorialising of her husband through this burial lament can also be understood as a form of performance due to its iterative, ritualistic, and, to some extent, theatrical nature. Given the title of the chapter "El árbol que cuida tus huesos," it is also evident from the second-person singular possessive pronoun '*tus'* that this lament is performed for Larrota's dead husband and is being recited in his memory. Considering the lament's distinctive performativity, it is worth revisiting Diana Taylor's work on the repertoire to deepen the analysis. In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor suggests two key means of storing and transmitting memory. According to Taylor, the first is through the archive, which refers mainly to written documents. Generally, these documents, such as texts, letters, or maps, are seen as permanent and enduring. Taylor shifts her focus away from the archive to what she calls the repertoire: memory generated through performative or embodied means. The repertoire refers to "multiple forms of embodied acts [that] […] reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories and values from one group/generation to the next" (Taylor 21). Taylor asserts that since the Conquest, the archive has been prioritised over performative and embodied forms of generating memory where "the tendency has been to banish the repertoire to the past" (21). Therefore, official memory in Latin America has been and continues to be predominantly generated and stored through the archive, with the repertoire often overlooked in its ability to generate, record and transmit memory. There is explicit evidence in *Rebelión* of how hegemonic discourse stores official memory in the archive, such as the court transcripts of Ana Larrota's trial or in *La Sociedad de Hierro*'s manifesto against the *Sindicato*. In her book, Taylor asks a fundamental question, however, about the supremacy of the archive in the creation of memory: "Whose memories/traumas disappear if we privilege the archive over the repertoire of embodied experience/knowledge?" (202). Historically, the archive has focused on specific groups in Colombia and excluded others from official records. Grassroots leaders such as Larrota, who come from poor, *campesino* backgrounds, and her

husband and son, Afro-Colombians, are voices historically overlooked by historical record of the Colombian conflict. As the material contained within the archive is often compiled and recorded by the powerful, who favour the interests of dominant groups, the memories of racialised others like Larrota's husband are usually forgotten or purposely written out of official history.

According to Taylor, the archive "serves the interests of the powerful, [and] cannot encompass or 'understand' pleas from the poor. She goes on to say that "institutionalized circuits of memory and transmission keep the dominant sector walled off from the rural mestizo and indigenous populations" (204). These institutionalised circuits of memory are evident in *Rebelión*, for instance, when the prosecutor in the court martial attempts to silence Ana Larrota's voice and, with it, her accounts of the past: "--Objeción. La señora otra vez ha convertido su respuesta en discurso […] –Sírvase responder a las preguntas con exactitud" (Ferreira, *Rebelión* 172). With the archive often beyond the recourse of certain segments of society, embodied memories transmitted and recorded through the repertoire become a means of counteracting the silencing of peripheral voices. Performance is a way to reinstate their memories and experiences and to fill the void left by these gaps in official records of history. "El arbol que cuida tus huesos" can be seen, therefore, as a form of the repertoire, in which Ana Larrota performs a gendered lament in honour of the racialised other, which acts as a corrective to the archive that has excluded female and Afro-Colombian voices from history. Through a profoundly personalised first-person performance, Larrota's voice is given prominence in the narration, and, with prose reminiscent of stream-of-consciousness, the narration focuses on her subjectivity and places her experience at the centre of the novel. The emphasis on Larrota's voice in the narration is demonstrated by the foregrounding of verbs in the first-person (*estoy*, *estoy*, *veo*), where the insertion of a female voice stands out in a narrative that is predominantly controlled by men (including the author himself):

> Lo estoy exhumando hoy. Lo estoy recordando hoy. Lo veo hace cinco años a la orilla del camino donde ocurrió toda su historia, sus batallas domésticas, sus hazañas inútiles, sus tragedias inéditas, su vida humana, viendo pasar los automóviles, los viajeros de a pie, los fugitivos de la guerra, los ejércitos, los hombres y mujeres de esta gran comarca que se desmorona desde que él mismo era un niño descendiente de esclavo. (93)

Larrota begins the lament by introducing her Afro-Colombian husband, Manuel Pico, a fisherman who would often take his son with him fishing in the river. Larrota's memories are disjointed and unstable, moving back and forth in time, with the bones from Manuel Pico´s remains working to break up and fragment the various memories:

> Este es el húmero de mi esposo, este es su fémur y su tibia. Lo veo lanzar los peces al fondo del platón. Le veo destapar la botella, beber del gollete y mirarme a la cara sin hablar. Maravilloso. Mudo. Esta es su mandíbula burlona. Las vértebras que se hacen polvo entre mis dedos. Lo estoy viendo a la orilla del camino avanzando con su hijo, que también es mi hijo. (91)

In her memories, Larrota describes her husband´s close bond with nature and his understanding of the river:

> Esta es su clavícula, los huesecillos que constituyeron la estructura ósea de un cuerpo macizo de pescador consagrado. Los hombres tranquilos son los hombres de conocimiento, o sea los hombres que saben explicar cada sonido, cada señal, cada mensaje que les da la naturaleza. Los que pueden oír el rugido del bagre rastrillando el lecho del río en las madrugadas más negras. Este es el fémur del hombre de quien aprendí que si sabes oír los sonidos del río ya no debes temer. (91-92)

Larrota then laments the loss of her husband by emphasising the absence of his African skin and blood, which are missing from his remains, and by revealing the pain they suffered because of the death of the son they had together: "Estos son los huesos que fueron cubiertos con piel Africana que ya no brillará en mis noches, con la carne oleosa de sudor y los nudos de músculo que no podré abrazar en la soledad de mi cama, con la sangre negra, espesa, que irrigó la carne de un hijo que se marchó del mundo demasiado pronto" (92-93).

Their son is killed by gunfire, and Manuel Pico falls into depression, which exacerbates his drinking. He refuses to speak about his son anymore and, overwhelmed with pain, he takes a vow of silence, refusing to remember him:

> Estas son las vértebras de mi esposo, sus costillas pulverizadas, el esqueleto del que se pudrieron ya las carnes y las emociones. Nuestro hijo había muerto hacía pocos meses. Era un ser que sólo había visto seis años de lluvias feroces y veranos resecos. A él debió dolerle verlo morir, porque después de su muerte no volvió a hablar con nadie. No fue a la misa del entierro, y nadie pudo entenderlo. Pero lo amaba. Y por eso no quiso hablar más. (94)

Given her husband´s inability to talk about their son's death because, according to Manuel Pico, "…hablar es recordar y explicar, y yo no quiero recordar, ni explicar" (96), Ana Larrota's lament helps to fill in the gaps of her husband´s silence, memorialising both her son and her husband. In this way, Larrota is remembering for someone who, devastated by the pain, became unable to remember himself.

As in *Viaje,* and Ferreira's most recent novel *Recuerdos*, towards the end of Larrota's lament, Ferreira uses the image of the river as a site and vehicle of memory. The death of their son is coupled with images of the destruction of the river and the corpses of animals and people, victims of the conflict, which are carried by the current:

> No solo se había muerto el niño. El río también había muerto. No había subienda, por la represa construida cinco kilómetros más arriba. Lo que bajaba era un agua muerta, que empujaba cadáveres de osos hormigueros, boas, ocelotes, perezosos, y los cadáveres de hombres sin nombre, víctimas de una guerra sucia que nunca acababa de declararse. Mi hijo había muerto atravesado por una bala que no se supo de qué bando venía. Y fue mi esposo quien lo vio caer en medio de la balacera nocturna: se arrastró hasta él y luego pasó la noche abrazando su cuerpo hasta que desaparecieron del aire las últimas ráfagas. Al amanecer, sólo un hombre por la carretera de tierra llevando en los brazos el cuerpo sin vida de un niño. (96)

Larrota's final memories of her husband are during his last months. He does not speak and spends his time alone drinking brandy. Finally, he decides to take his own life. Miguel walks to the river and shoots himself by the water's edge, where he spent so much time with his son. His corpse, like so many victims of the conflict, mixes with the currents of the river and is lost to oblivion:

> Lentamente caminó sobre las malezas hacia la luz que caía sobre el río. Después hizo lo que había dejado de hacer meses antes: fue a la orilla y se lavó la cara con una manotada de agua. Allí esperó una señal. Y descendió por la orilla. Luego, debajo de una ceiba de ramas eternas, sonó el único disparo que se perdió en ecos por entre los árboles. Este es su cráneo astillado por el plomo. (97)

The final paragraph of Larrota's lament sees her walking across the cemetery with the bones in a bag, having used them as vehicle to restore and give a coherent order to fading and fragmented memories: "Sólo yo puedo imaginar su vida y su cuerpo a partir de estos despojos" (97). In this final line of her lament, it is striking how Larrota's voice once again returns to the first-person (*puedo*), with particular emphasis on the personal pronoun *yo*, which accentuates the fact that she is the privileged voice of authority of her own narrative and, therefore, is the only one able to tell her husband's story. Moving away from this moving depiction of gendered resistance embodied by Ana Larrota in this burial lament, the following section will explore polyphony, heteroglossia and dialogism in revolutionary journalist Joaquín Borja's voice, which like Ana Larrota's, attempts to disrupt and question official history and the hegemonic discourse.

Joaquín Borja: Is the Pen Mightier than the Sword?

Although Ana Larrota narrates in first person in her burial lament, the principal first-person narrator of *Rebelión* is journalist Joaquín Borja, whose testimony follows and documents the events surrounding Larrota and the land occupation. Borja narrates in five chapters that resemble interior monologues,[18] and these chapters are in the form of a voice recording that Borja makes before joining the guerrilla: "Aquí empieza esta historia dictada a un magnetófono, así comienza el alegato, y mi despedida y el final de la felicidad, así comienza" (46). Embedded in the narration of these monologues, Borja's voice converges with a chorus of other voices, fragments of reports from *La Gallina Política* and an amalgamation of different registers to mount a challenge to the official narrative, by giving voice to the *Sindicato* through his investigative journalism and publicly acknowledging, in the pages of *La Gallina Política*, its claim to the occupied land. In addition to documenting Larrota's struggle,

[18] "Nacimiento y caída de la prensa libre" "Del anonimato al desprestigio" "Víspera de una revolución abortiva" "Elogio de la impopularidad" and "Elementos anarquizantes"

Borja's testimony also deals with his anguish and disillusionment at the end of his newspaper and the destruction of his belief in the transformative power of words after his sister Luisa's murder, as she is killed by a bomb planted outside Borja's house and newspaper headquarters.

The first introduction to Borja's voice in the novel comes, however, not through his voice recording but through the written word, in the form of one of the reports published in the *La Gallina Política*. In this first chapter of the novel, "Hombres que salen a dar un paseo en un día de sol," we begin to hear the chorus of voices and a variety of registers coming into dialogue to contest and question the homogenising version of events of the hegemonic discourse. The chapter is made up of a long list of short testimonies of torture suffered by members of the *Sindicato de los Oficios Varios* at the hands of the military in the patio of the mayor's office. The chapter is written in the register and style of a report, "en el lenguaje burocrático, desprolijo y meramente denotativo […] de un expediente policial" (Nuzzo 155). For instance, throughout the chapter the use of passive tense mirrors the register and style of an official document: "es requerido para una requisa por un grupo de militares, […] se le informa que está detenido, […] Zacarías Arrieta es obligado a bajar del bus, […] es traslado a la cárcel donde se encuentra con Donaldo de Jesús Estrada y Salomón Nova y Rafael Rangel" (Ferreira, *Rebelión* 11-21). Additionally, the descriptions of torture are supported by a number of eye-witness accounts: "según testimonio de testigos oculares del hecho, […] aunque los testigos afirman que la última vez que fue visto se hallaba en la cancha de fútbol […] visto allí por varios testigos" (12-22). On occasions, these eye-witness testimonies are included in the report as direct quotations, uttered by the detainees during their time in *los patios*: "sáquenme de aquí porque me piensan matar", […] no pueden decirse nada delante de los centinelas "que no nos quitaban los ojos de encima"" (11-21). In addition to the voices of the detainees, the report contains direct quotations of the words uttered by their tormentors: "oiga la orden de hacerle 'cantar' así tengan que 'quemarle las huevas'" "¿Quién es el cabecilla del Sindicato de Oficios Varios que

pertenece al movimiento guerrillero?" "El mayor dice a alguien con su voz de dama casi gritando que ahora 'sí va a saber lo que es volar'" (14-18). The whole chapter is written without the use of a period, with each account of torture separated only by a comma, creating a dissociative effect on the reader. Additionally, the constant repetition of the phrase "esta historia comienza con" throughout the chapter, and roughly twenty times throughout the rest of the novel, adds to the hypnotic prose. It is important to point out that this initial chapter, as is revealed at a later stage of the novel, is the first of many documents that appear in *Rebelión*. This first chapter is, in fact, the "dossier de los torturados" (208) published in Borja's newspaper *La Gallina Polítca*, which exhaustively documents the tortures inflicted on members of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* by the army, under the command of military mayor Porfirio Becerra. Borja and his photographer Geovanni Orozco touch upon the impact of this first dossier at a later stage in the novel when *La Gallina Política* has just published its second controversial dossier, which shows the land disputed by the *Sindicato* was illegally acquired by wealthy *hacendados* at the end of the War of a Thousand Days. The initial 'dossier de los torturados' enrages certain parts of the society, which is the reason the paramilitary group *La Sociedad de Hierro* attempts to censor Borja's voice by buying up all the copies of the second dossier entitled, "¿La tierra es de quien la cultiva o de quien se la apropió?" (205):

> Debe ser que no les gustó el *dossier* de los torturados de la quincena pasada, no dije, claro que no les gustó, ¿cómo les iba a gustar, si allí estaban relacionados los desaparecidos de los últimos meses, los capturados y pulverizados en los calabozos del gobierno?, todos aquellos que callaban lo que sabían y delataban lo que pedía el interrogador que apenas buscaba una delación firmada, sin importar que fuese verdad o mentira lo que allí se dijera, porque para condenar sindicados en una corte marcial bajo Estado de Sitio se necesitaba simplemente una delación y no una prueba. (208)

"Hombres que salen" details, in concise accounts, how rural workers and *campesinos* are detained and bundled into an olive-green Dodge truck to be later subjected to horrific physical and psychological tortures. All the people arrested, tortured and, in most cases, disappeared and murdered are members actively involved with Ana Larrota's *Sindicato de*

Oficios Varios: construction worker, Serafín Meneses Tovar; electrician and miller, Zacarías Arrieta; chiropractor, Maximino Velásquez; cacao cultivator, Benigno Durán; engineer and leader of the Sindicato de Oficios Varios, Antonio Blas; tanner, Donaldo de Jesús Estrada; explosives expert, Salomón Nova; house servant, Herminda Rangel; and horse tamer, Orlando Granados. These names make up a long list of the many whose torture procedures are reported in graphic descriptions in Borja's report:

> "[…] Cada repuesta negativa del tornero agrega un golpe con una tabla, al comienzo por el pecho, luego por la planta de los pies, […] a punta de baldados de agua fría lo mantienen despierto las siguientes setenta y dos horas, […] lo cuelgan, atadas las muñecas a un lazo, mientras el mayor lo obliga a sentarse sobre su propio peso, dándole patadas en la espinillas, para ponerle luego choques eléctricos en los dedos de los pies y en los pezones de las tetillas, […] lo llevan hasta la orilla de un río profundo, le amarren los pies con un lazo y lo empujan al agua para enseguida traerlo hasta la orilla donde lo interrogan hasta el colapso, […] meter su cabeza en una bolsa plástica hasta que está a punto de asfixiarse para luego recomenzar. (13-17)

As with much of *Rebelión*, Ferreira´s archival work informs large parts of the novel, which includes *La Gallina Política*'s 'Dossier de los torturados,' contained in this first chapter of the novel. In this case, the descriptions of torture detailed in "Hombres que salen" resemble a report published by Jaime Ramírez in *El Trópico* and later reported on by Ferreira in his 2010 report "Nacimiento." In "Nacimiento," Ferreira refers to a report first published in 1972 by *Vanguardia Liberal* and *El Espectador* and then republished by *El Trópico*: "El último intento de hacer un trabajo periodístico y testimonial se encuentra en un dossier que recoge las denuncias hechas por presos políticos en cárceles del Estado a una comisión del senado" (Ferreira, "Nacimiento"). Some of the descriptions of torture published in *El Trópico* are recognisable in the first chapter of *Rebelión* to anyone who has read Ferreira's 2010 report:

> Me ataron de pies y manos y una toalla en la boca y me largaban al río, […] me levantaron con las manos amarradas atrás hasta ponerme colgado, solo tocaba el piso con la punta de los dedos de los pies, […] Durante mis interrogatorios me tocó lavar la mierda de un anciano llamado Roque Pinto, al cual, según palabras de los torturadores, en medio de risas, manifestaron que lo habían hecho cagar, […] colgado de una viga me dieron culatazos por las espaldas y por la cara, me dieron uno que me voló un diente. ("Nacimiento")

Interestingly, the reports originally published by *El Trópico* are first-person accounts of torture collected from testimonies of detainees from all over Colombia during the early 1970s. When these testimonies are transposed in the novel, however, they are limited to a specific fictional group, *Sindicato de los Oficios Varios*, and become the result of the fictional world of the *Sindicato*'s protests outside the mayor's office: "[…] la revuelta de mes de abril del año 1970 y la asonada de noviembre del 69" (Ferreira, *Rebelión* 19). The inclusion of the archival material in the novel blurs the lines between history and fiction, with the voices of real-life torture victims from Colombian jails in 1972 being channelled through the fictional voices of members of *Sindicato de los Oficios Varios*. As stated by the author, this merging of history and fiction seems to have been one of Ferreira's aims when setting out to write *Rebelión*: "Al final, lo que intenté con todo ello fue un relato donde el pasado y la ficción fuesen inextricables, donde personajes de la microhistoria local pasaran por la alquimia de convertirse en personaje literarios, donde el archivo fuese parte de la narración y fuese consubstancial al relato" (Ferreira, "El arte"). This mapping of the national situation, through the accounts of torture victims, onto the local story in *Rebelión* is illuminative as it is the reverse of the process described earlier in this chapter, where Daniel Ferreira describes how the local land occupation narrated in the novel stands in for the national, with it acting as a microcosm for the land disputes that took place in the whole country during that period. This mirroring and inversion of the local and the national here work to further enhance the melding together of history, fiction and counter-memory, with the documented accounts of torture victims discovered during Ferreira's archival work, questioning and disrupting official history by creating another layer of textual polyphony where the national, local, fictional and real-life accounts of torture come into contact: "Dialogue has penetrated inside every word, provoking in it a battle and the interruption of one voice by another. This is microdialogue" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 75). Giulia Nuzzo, in her article, highlights the transfigurative process many of the

factual elements of *Rebelión* have gone through, from real-life oral testimonies to a polyphony of fictional voices, where a clear line can be drawn back to their documentary origins:

> […] la voz del perseguido político que padeció durante días la experiencia del calabozo, resonó en un aula de un tribunal, se depositó en las actas de los jueces forenses, estalló en el reportaje de El Trópico de Jaime Ramírez, ha vuelto a la luz en Nacimiento, y arriba a los dominios de la novela transfigurada dentro de un coro sufrido de voces como una especie de simulacro de la memoria definitivamente escindido de la figura de la víctima real. (156)

Ferreira also contributes to the textual polyphony in the chapter by altering the focalisation at various points of the *dossier*, swapping the more official register of a journalistic report (passive voice and eye-witness testimonies) for the subjective perspectives of the victims or family members of the victims, in what Nuzzo describes as 'una repentina dislocación […], que 'traiciona' la postura estrictamente referencial del flujo diegético […] (158). Focalisation, a term first coined by Gérard Genette and Mieke Bal, makes a distinction between who speaks (point-of-view) and who sees (focalisation). According to Bal, at the time of coining the term, this distinction had been missing from narrative theory for some time: "They do not make the distinction between, on the one hand, the vision through which the elements are presented and, on the other, the identity of the voice that is verbalising that vision. […] Nevertheless, it is possible, both in fiction and in reality, for one person to express the vision of another" (143). In "Hombres que salen," we are reading the "dossier de los torturados," published in *La Gallina Política*, written by Borja, whose voice is describing from his perspective the testimonies of the various torture victims. However, on three occasions during the chapter, the reader is presented with an interruption in the form of a switch of focalisation where the person speaking (Borja) remains the same, but the vision from which the events are viewed shifts to that of the torture victims. This is first observed when the dossier documents the detention and disappearance of construction worker Serafín Meneses Tovar, whose corpse is thrown into a deep pit in the ground. Borja's report documents the search and rescue operation organised by family members, enlisting the help of other construction workers, who descend into the crater

to search for the body. At this point in the report, the focalisation suddenly shifts to the subjective vision of the rescuers, whose search for the corpse is cut short for fear of being attacked by menacing, unidentifiable birds: "unas extrañas aves alígeras que parecen ciegas y emiten graznidos que hielan los huesos y a las cuales llaman desde entonces con el nombre 'guaras', o 'comemuertos'" (Ferreira, *Rebelión* 11). This shift in focalisation occurs a second time when describing the torture of Miguel Macías, who is blindfolded and made to board a helicopter. As the helicopter lifts off the ground and begins to gain altitude, a rope is tied around Miguel Macías's ankles, and he is repeatedly thrown out in mid-flight and then hauled back into the helicopter just before he collides with the ground. At the moment he is thrown out of the helicopter, the focalisation shifts to reveal Macías's inner thoughts while falling through the air. This shift in the focaliser also brings with it an alteration in the register as the text moves from the drier, more objective style of a report to a subjective, literary tone: "entonces un golpe lo empuja al vacío, el cuerpo cae, él trata de recordar un rezo para que lo favorezca un santo, pero no acuerda el nombre del santo en la caída, y sin embargo el santo lo favorece porque el cuerpo no revienta contra el piso sino que queda tirante el aire" (17). This switch in focalisation repeats for a third and final time towards the end of the "dossier" when electrician Argemiro Araújo, after being subjected to the same torture procedure as the other detainees, "maneado[s], vendado[s], colgado[s], luego choques eléctricos en diferentes partes del cuerpo, golpes de karate en el estómago"(20), is thrown into the jail cell where he meets Donaldo de Jesús, Solomón Nova and Rafael Rangel. Unable to speak to each other because of the presence of the guard, the tortured men look at Argemiro Araújo and instantly suspect that he has been subjected to the same torture procedures that they experienced earlier, with focalisation switching to the inner reflections of the three men already in the jail cell as they observe the newcomer: "pero al mirar al electricista recién llegado advierten como si fuera en un espejo la propia imagen de sus rostros deformados por "el procedimiento" (21). Finally, it should be

noted that this constant switching between point-of-view and focalisation enhances the textual disorientation, which in turn works to mirror the effects and impact of the torture carried out on the men's bodies. This section of the novel is, therefore, an example of the innovative way in which the novel textually maps out the experience and sensation of undergoing horrific torture.

As previously mentioned, "Hombres que salen," and all the chapters Borja narrates, contain the phrase, or variations on it, "esta historia comienza con." This leitmotif is repeated multiple times throughout the narration and begins each of Borja's chapters. The continual use of this phrase would seem to suggest the impossibility of pinpointing the exact starting point of the conflict described in the novel, as for each significant event Borja experiences or reports, it is as if the story were beginning again. Colombia's historical and structural violence mirrors the novel's theme of constant recommencing. The incessant nature of Colombian violence and the apparent continuity of multiple conflicts throughout the country's history demonstrate this idea of endless beginnings. Recurring violence has always been a feature of Colombian history with structural violences such as those narrated in the novel (against lepers, women, and racialised others) constantly repeating alongside the larger socio-political conflicts, such as the Independence Wars, The War of a Thousand Days, *La Violencia*, battles for territory between the guerrilla and paramilitaries, and the Escobar drug violence of the 1980s and 1990s. This constant rebeginning, this chaotic temporality, has made it problematic to identify the precise origins and distinguish the specificity of each individual conflict, with historical and structural violence blending. The omission of the period at the end of each of Borja's chapters exemplifies, literally, the absence of temporal markers. As well as Borja's inability to locate the beginning or end of his struggle, the exclusion of the period, the collapsing of one story into another, also refuses closure, suggesting another opening to a violent beginning, so much a part of Colombian history.

If readers are introduced to the voice of Joaquín Borja through his written word in the "dossier de los torturados," the following chapters, narrated in first-person, become his renunciation of the written word, in the form of fragments of a final voice recording. Borja's role within the novel, as previously alluded to, is to act as a first-hand witness to the events surrounding the land occupation and the injustices suffered by the Ana Larrota and the *Sindicato de los Oficios Varios*. In the five chapters in the form of a voice recording, which becomes his valediction, Borja documents, through several reports and dossiers, the beginning of the *Sindicato*'s demonstrations in front of municipal offices through to their decision to occupy Simón Alemán land. Borja bears witness to the suffering and injustices experienced by Ana Larrota and the *Sindicato*, but in documenting their struggles, he also brings personal tragedy upon himself, along with the crushing of his idealism and belief in a free press. His voice recording, therefore, as well as bearing witness to the suffering of other participants in the fictional events, functions as a personal attestation of his pain after seeing the death of his sister Luisa. In the chapter "Nacimiento y caída de la prensa libre," a title which alludes to the failure of his journalism, Borja recounts attempts by the authorities to intimidate, threaten and silence him throughout his reporting on the land occupation until they are successful when the army kills his sister Luisa and forces Borja to take up arms with a guerrilla group and renounce his fight for justice through the written word:

> […] solo a mí, maldita sea, me habían amenazado una y otra vez de muerte, me habían puesto matones en las calles, sabuesos perseguidores en las noches, esbirros del régimen que se movían como espectros en la oscuridad del Estado de Sitio, sabían lo que comía, lo que bebía, las calles por donde me desplazaba, siempre al acecho, siempre detrás, siempre investigando a mis fuentes, siempre distribuyendo cebos para secuestrarme, siempre a punto de darme caza para acallarme, hasta que lo consiguieron, hasta que se les ocurrió la idea genial de ponerme esa bomba junto a la ventana del periódico que era mi casa. (33)

Borja's first-hand testimony is best interpreted by locating it within the broader context of the history of Latin American *Testimonio*. *Testimonios* are first-person narratives in which a member of a subaltern group tells their story of oppression to an educated person who records

the narrator's experience. *Testimonios* differ from autobiography as the story the narrator describes is one of collective oppression "that must be representative of a social class or group" (Beverley 27). The narrator's voice in a *testimonio* "evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives and experiences. Thus, one common formal variation on the classic first-person singular testimonio is the polyphonic testimonio made up of accounts by different participants in the same events" (28). In *Rebelión*, the protagonists Ana Larrota and, especially, journalist Joaquín Borja bear witness to the events surrounding the land occupation and the injustices that they and the members of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* have to endure. There is a polyphony of subaltern voices that provide a counter-history, where protagonists give their versions to correct the official narrative which comes from the authorities, which would fit with how Beverley describes *testimonio*: "the situation of narration in testimonio has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, and so on, implicated in the act of narration itself" (26). Additionally, Gates-Madsen posits that for a narrative to be considered a *testimonio*, its purpose of speaking up against a traumatic event and "[seeking] to break a repressive silence" should be the primary consideration and that "any fictional tale that engages the legacies of real victims of trauma should be considered part of a testimonial project" (89).

As previously alluded to, another common feature of *testimonio* is the voice of an oppressed individual who speaks on behalf of a larger community that has suffered collective oppression. Ana Larrota comes from a marginalised campesino group, and her struggle in the novel is representative of the larger group of oppressed and excluded voices of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*. As Beverley states, "testimonio gives voice in literature to a previously 'voiceless,' anonymous, collective popular-democratic subject, the *pueblo* or 'people' (31). In this sense, Larrota's fight is an individual struggle, but it is also a defence of workers and *campesino* movements and their right to have their voices heard at a period in Colombian

history when they were vilified and excluded from history. As Beverley states, "Testimonio represents an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle" (35). Furthermore, as well as representing the *campesinos*, Larrota's testimony also inserts a feminised discourse into the story, which functions as an alternative mode of narration that foregrounds the female voice.

Generically, the novel might be closest to the genre that Beverley defines as "testimonial novel", "where an 'author' in the conventional sense has either invented a testimonio-like story or, as in the case of Capote's *In Cold Blood* or El Sadaawi's *Woman at Point Zero* […], extensively reworked, with explicitly literary goals […], a testimonial account that is no longer present except in its simulacrum" (38). This idea of a simulated testimonial might best describe the experience of reading *Rebelión*, especially when considering the first-person narrators of Borja and Larrota. In particular, Borja's voice recording appears to mimic a real recorded testimonial transcription: a message initially recorded on a voice recorder and then transcribed by a third party, which would be Ferreira in the case of *Rebelión*. What is most important in the testimonies of Borja and Larrota is for their voices to be reinstated in collective memory by speaking back to official history that has forgotten and omitted their voices from the historical narrative. In "Testimonio and Postmodernism" Yúdice touches on the power of testimonies to put forward an alternative history: "Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history" (44).

In the voice recording, Borja explains the history of his reporting on Ana Larrota and the *Sindicato de los Oficios Varios*, describing how the first report, "llevaría a nuestro periódico del anonimato al desprestigio" (Ferreira, *Rebelión* 135). In the chapter of the same name, "Del anonimato al desprestigio," Borja begins by documenting, with reference to reports published

in *La Gallina Política*, the early stages of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios*'s struggle, detailing the initial protests outside the mayor's office because of the unpaid wages of the workers and the coming together of various workers' unions to form the *Sindicato*: "[…] decidieron unificarse como Sindicato de Oficios Varios y nombrar una junta de representantes a cuya cabeza estaba Ana Dolores Larrota, quien trabajaba en la venta de leguminosas en la plaza de mercado" (132). Borja explains how all this took place during the declaration of *Estado de Sitio* by the national government, "ante la situación de conmoción y violencia que se había desatado en el país entre los gremios asociados de campesinos y obreros" (133) and the appointment of military mayors to restore order in various towns. Channelled through the first-person narration of Borja, the voice of the new army mayor Porfirio Becerra becomes audible, in which he can be heard, at a protest, referring to the Ana Larrota and the *Sindicato*'s members disparagingly as "muertosdehambre" "esa turbamulta" and "zarrapastrosos" (134), reaffirming the position of the hegemonic voice that delegitimises the social movement and portrays its members as idle and work-shy: "[…] y por qué no trabajan, preguntó el coronel, y entonces le respondieron, porque no quieren trabajar". However, Ana Larrota overhears the military mayor and defiantly contests the hegemonic position, stating that "ganas de trabajar sí hay, lo que no hay es empleo, alcalde […]" (134). Two hours later, under orders from Porfirio Becerra, soldiers attempt to evict the protesters camped out in front of the mayor's office. Still, the *huelgistas* and Ana Larrota stand their ground, as she proclaims over a megaphone, "Esta es una rebelión de los oficios inútiles, señor coronel" (135), which becomes the headline used by Borja in one of *La Gallina Política*'s first reports explaining the origin of Ana Larrota's social movement:

> […] un editorial donde constara la historia de esa protesta social por los salarios atrasados, la huelga tras el despido masivo y las medidas del Estado de Sitio del gobierno nacional que provocaron la salida del alcalde civil y la entrada de un alcalde militar cuya primera medida había sido maltratar a la manifestación legítima que llevaba dos meses frente a la alcaldía municipal exigiendo sus salarios, […] sin ser oída. (135)

Much of Borja's reporting on the events of the *Sindicato*'s protests and the occupation of Simon Alemán's land provoke the ire of large segments of the society, especially landowners, local business owners, doctors, and lawyers, "los hombres más prestantes de[l] municipio" (162) and "los ciudadanos de bien" (193). In the chapter "Víspera de una revolución abortiva," Borja documents the murder of Ana Larrota in the prison through access to various forensic, judicial and eye-witness reports, extracts of which are inserted into the first-person narration of his voice recording: "[…] según el informe forense, da como hora de muerte las dos de la mañana, […] propiciándole dos heridas letales, una en el tracto digestivo, otra en el diafragma y una en el cuello que comprometió la carótida […]" (186). News of Larrota's murder soon spreads, and violent protests erupt in the town. Borja and Orozco arrive at the scene of the riots and witness the shop owners destroying their own properties and smashing the windows of the mayor's office and then blaming it on the supporters of Ana Larrota and the *Sindicato*. In these scenes, the hegemonic voice is now transmitted not through the authorities but through the middle-class shop and business owners as they accuse the members of the *Sindicato* of causing the chaos and disorder: "[…] estaban como locos, señor coronel, decía otro de los comerciantes, eran más de quinientos facineros armados hasta los dientes […] esos subversivos y revoltosos son los culpables de todo […]" (194). Borja and Orozco are then confronted by a gang of angry citizens, who accuse Borja of inciting the protesters through his articles in the newspaper: "¿ahora por qué no dice delante del coronel las bellezas que escribe de esos sinvergüenzas en su periódico?" (194). One particular report that enrages many of the townspeople is based on an interview that Borja carries out with Simon Alemán in the short chapter "Antes de ser engendrados los montes," where he provides Borja with evidence in the form of old newspaper clippings that his family's land had been stolen from the original inhabitants by the Conservative victors of the War of a Thousand Days. On the day of the publication of this edition of the newspaper, Borja enters Armando Rugeles's shop to buy a

camera for Geovanni Orozco's son's birthday, but he is ignored by shop assistants and then insulted by the owner Rugeles. In this scene, as with Blas and Penagos's interaction before the planned eviction by the army, the voices of the hegemonic discourse and the counter-hegemonic discourse once again come into direct contact as Rugeles accuses Borja of being a supporter of the *Sindicato*: "las pruebas son estas, Joaquín Borja, la prueba es este periódico en que usted hace proselitismo subversivo y apologia del delito […] usted es un guerrillero disfrazado de civil" (213). Rugeles then demands that Borja write a public apology to Simón Alemán in the newspaper for his calumnious reporting on the Alemán family and tells him that he is not welcome in his shop. Before leaving, Borja contests Rugeles's claim by defending his profession, telling him that all his reporting is objective and based on reliable sources: "[…] soy periodista, mi oficio es escribir todo lo que vea y como lo vea, todo lo que investigue como lo indiquen las fuentes, y usted no va a cambiar el pasado simplemente porque no le gusta o porque no le conviene, y mucho menos va a convencerme de dejar mi oficio […]" (215).

Towards the conclusion of Borja's voice recording, especially in the chapter "Elementos anarquizantes," there is a notable shift in Borja's voice, where the objectivity of the journalistic register gives way to a stream of invective. After seeing his sister killed by the army as a reprisal for his controversial dossiers, Borja understands that his mission to inform and educate the citizens about the *Sindicato*'s fight for justice has failed, "tras los percances y tropiezos que acarreaban el difundir información veraz a un pueblo envilecido y manipulado por los Aparatos Ideológios del Estado […]" (31-32). Borja's voice then launches into an angry tirade on the Colombian nation, with his register and tone resembling those of a lampoon. This switch to the style of a diatribe is another example in the text of how heteroglossia has become novelised through incorporated genres, which are embedded into Borja's first-person narration:

> […] un país rodeado de muerte que se regodea con imágenes de millares de seres caídos […] un país que masacra de uno en uno para que no se note el genocidio, un pueblo que es un monigote que permanece impávido ante la injusticia […] un país de sicofantes, de impostores, de traidores, con ciudadanos acéfalos que actúan como subnormales […]

> ese pueblo merece que lo sometan, que lo manipulen, que lo estafen, eso pensaba entre las ruinas del periódico, sumido en el dolor y la rabia y el escepticismo más absolutos. (261)

After Borja's two-page diatribe abates, he then describes attending Luisa's funeral, accompanied by all the women of the *Sindicato*, where he is approached by a member of the guerrilla, who hands him a note inviting him to their camp in the forest where he will be given evidence of a plan to burn down the *Sindicato*'s campsite. The subsequent destruction of the campsite is then narrated in the final chapter of the novel "Primitivos otra vez," as Simón Alemán joins paramilitary group *La Sociedad de Hierro* to violently evict the occupiers in "[un] incendio voraz en medio de la barahúnda" (294). Borja's voice recording concludes with Borja, Orozco and priest Bernardo, seemingly the same character who appears in *Viaje*, driving through the forest to meet up with the *guerrilleros*, who are awaiting their imminent arrival. The story is continued in "Nacimiento," Ferreira's 2010 journalistic report, as an omniscient narrator recounts Jaime Ramírez's final days in the camp as he is killed in an ambush by the army: "Al mismo tiempo, el tipo calibre 16 le revienta la cabeza. Es el fin. Por fin. Así comienza (2). The narration of Ramírez's final moments in "Nacimiento" concludes with the same leitmotif present throughout all of *Rebelión*: "Así comienza." The use of this phrase once again underscores the cyclical nature of the historic and structural violences in the novel and is eloquently captured by Daniel Ferreira himself in an interview in the newspaper *El Tiempo* where he states the following: "Hay países como Colombia donde el tiempo parece ir más lento y la violencia es una serpiente que traza espirales y regresa" ("El renacimiento"). As well as describing the cyclical nature of historic and structural violence, Ferreira's conceptualisation of violence laid out in this interview seems to mirror the circular motion of *Rebelión*'s narrative: spirals traced by a snake, doubling over and back, with the constant motion in the text between voices, registers, genres; between the past and the present, the historical and the fictional, and the local and the national, all working together to provide a more complete and

nuanced version of events in which all voices are given equal weight to contribute to and (re)construct collective memory. *Rebelión*, in this way, works to counter monologic and hegemonic accounts of history that have erased more peripheral voices such as Ana Larrota's and Jaime Ramírez's from the records. After analysing the violence of the late National Front period of Colombian history in *Rebelión*, the next chapter will go back to the turn of the 20th century to examine the violence of the War of a Thousand Days in Ferreira's fourth novel *El año*, looking in particular at how the novel employs a Bildungsroman structure to narrate the gendered violences of civil war.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Gendered Violence of War: Narrating *La Guerra de los Mil Días* through the Dual Bildungsroman in *El año del sol negro*

The following chapter moves back in time from the land disputes of the late 1960s and the tumultuous final years of the National Front to lay bare the complexities of gendered violence and nation-building processes at the turn of the twentieth century during the War of a Thousand Days in Daniel Ferreira's fourth novel, *El año*. Published in 2018, the novel is set in the months preceding and during the Battle of Palonegro, which historically took place between 11th-26th May 1900, at the beginning of the War of a Thousand Days. In an interview from 2019, Ferreira states that the origins of his interest in the conflict, particularly the period around the Battle of Palonegro, came from a photograph that his grandfather showed him as a child. This iconic image, titled *Loma de muertos, Palonegro*, taken in 1901 by Amalia Ramírez Ordoñez, shows a 10-foot pyramid structure constructed from the skulls of the victims of the Battle of Palonegro, one of the bloodiest battles of the war. This ossuary, which was located at the site where Bucaramanga's airport Aeropuerto Internacional Palonegro now stands, remained until 1910 when, according to Beatriz González, it was dismantled, with the bones laid to rest in Bucaramanga's main cemetery, "despúes de un emotivo desfile en el que llevaron en ataúdes los restos desde el campo de batalla hasta la ciudad" (21). Ferreira states that before beginning work on the *Pentalogía*, he had always intended to set one of the five novels around the Battle of Palonegro. Because of this interest, he spent twenty years researching in the archives and visiting the locations of battles with the intention of one day writing a novel about the period as a way of explaining his grandfather's photograph (Ferreira "Pentalogía"). Despite the historical setting being central to the novel, according to Ferreira, he wanted to avoid a simple retelling of the historical circumstances surrounding the War of a Thousand Days and the Battle of Palonegro, rejecting the narrow focus of the historical novel genre and, instead, writing a story where the history is the backdrop to the exploration of the subjective experiences

of the violence of civil war for ordinary individuals. In an interview with Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga, Ferreira states that his goal was not to write a novel that would act as an historical record of the War of a Thousand Days: "Yo con la novela no pretendía hacer una certificación histórica y ni explicar cuáles fueron las razones que desataron la Guerra de los Mil Días. Eso sería una derrota de la literatura… tener que andar explicando el pasado" ("Encuentro" 00:17:51-00:18:30). Ferreira's focus on the human dramas of the conflict seems wholly consistent with how the novel, especially the first two parts, "La historia del fusiliero" and "La historia de Julia Valserra,"[19] under analysis in this chapter, foreground the gendered and subjective experiences of war of subaltern individuals and, for the most part, relegate the historical context and explanation of the war to the background.

In the following analysis, I will argue that Ferreira draws from the male and female coming-of-age novel, in what I term a "dual Bildungsroman," where the author juxtaposes the experiences of two lovers separated by civil war, who evolve and grow throughout their respective journeys. In the case of the first part of the novel, "Fusilero," I argue that the structure resembles a more traditional Bildungsroman, written from a male perspective and focused on a male protagonist (Buckley; Doub; Moretti). Ferreira uses the trope of the travelling soldier, where the protagonist, José Celestino Sul, embarks on a journey through the war-torn landscape of the north-eastern regions of Colombia to join up with a division of the Liberal army. Throughout his travels on foot, he witnesses the ravages of war and its effects on the people and the landscape. The second part of the novel, "Valserra," I argue, resembles a feminised Bildungsroman (Abel; Hirsch; Joannou; Langland; Rosowski), which is written from the point of view of the female protagonist. The protagonist, confined to her home and unable to travel outside her city, goes on a 'voyage in' where she details, in a series of diary

[19] Hereafter I refer to "La historia del fusilero" as "Fusilero" and "La historia de Julia Valserra" as "Valserra."

entries, her subjective experiences of living through a civil war, alongside personal reflections on the patriarchal violence that she and other women left behind in the city are subjected to.

In the chapter, I argue that Ferreira's use of the Bildungsroman structure is twofold. Firstly, this dual Bildungsroman operates as a vehicle to illustrate how the civil war impacts men and women differently, with each character being exposed to a complex web of gendered violence. Mobilising the Bildungsroman to juxtapose the male and female experiences of civil war, the novel creates an interesting symmetry which elucidates the multifaceted layers of violence, beyond the merely subjective, enacted during civil war. I contend that by employing the Bildungsroman structure, which foregrounds the gendered experiences of war of subaltern protagonists, the novel illustrates not only the direct and subjective violence of the battlefield but also explores systemic and structural violence, such as patriarchy and coloniality, which are the backdrop to the more immediate violence of the battlefield. Finally, I will argue that Ferreira challenges the conventional Bildungsroman structure in interesting ways, particularly in the case of the male Bildungsroman, through the death of the protagonist José Celestino, who, despite going through a transformation and successful integration into the Liberal army, is killed at the end of the novel in a bleak commentary on how the youth are sacrificed in the process of nation building. In the case of the female Bildungsroman, the novel subverts the traditional bildungsroman format by having Julia Valserra reject the oppressive systems of patriarchy and shun integration into the existing social structure, distancing the novel from more typical models whereby the *Bildungheld*[20] would typically integrate back into the existing society. Finally, I contend that this inversion of the classic Bildungsroman, particularly in the case of José Celestino's death at the end of the novel, is a commentary on the failed attempt to unify the Colombian nation through civil war.

[20] The name given to designate the hero or protagonist of a Bildungsroman.

I will now provide a brief overview of the plot and structure of *El año* to contextualise the analysis of the novel's gendered and subjective layers of civil war violence. *El año* is divided into three separate parts of roughly equal length: "Fusilero," "Valserra" and "El eclipse," and these three parts of the novel have distinct styles and tones and could even be read as separate novels. The first part of the novel, "Fusilero," narrates the journey of José Celestino Sul, a poor, illiterate stable hand and coachman working for a wealthy, Conservative landowner, Josep Lausen, in late 1899. It recounts the transformational effect of the civil war on this travelling soldier, who leaves behind his life of poverty and servitude to travel through the Santanderean countryside to join up with Rosario Díaz's division of the Liberal army, where he enlists and is selected to carry out a secret mission to deliver a message to another division of the army. On his travels, José Celestino, who is a fatherless soldier in search of his own identity, is exposed to death, destruction and loss and encounters many voiceless victims of the war while being exposed himself to multifaceted expressions of violence. In the second part of the novel, "Valserra," the novel switches to the perspective of Julia Valserra, José Celestino's pregnant lover, who is left behind in the city. Through a series of diary entries, Julia chronicles her experience of living through the civil war as a woman confined to the home under the rule of her Conservative father. In her diary, which begins in the early stages of the war and ends in the aftermath of the Battle of Palonegro, she documents her suffering and the anguish of many of the women, children and mentally ill left behind in the city, who are exposed not so much to the direct violence of war, unlike the men on the battlefield, but to overarching systems of violent patriarchy that restrict and oppress them in their daily lives. The final part of the novel "El eclipse," split into five sections,[21] gives shape to the first two parts by delving into various historical episodes, which shed light on the events leading up to and during the Battle of Palonegro. The short section "Los olvidados," for instance, describes,

[21] "Los olvidados," "Los sobrestantes," "El guerrero y el caudillo," "Las armas" and "Epílogo"

through the focalisation of both Conservative and Liberal soldiers, the bloody scenes from the battlefield in the hills surrounding Palonegro with chilling descriptions of corpses littering the frontline: "La lluvia inunda las bocas abiertas de los que murieron mirando el cielo, acaricia los hombros de los que quedaron bocabajo, lava los coágulos que saturan la tierra […] (Ferreira, *El año* 435) In the next chapter, "El guerrero y el caudillo," the novel fictionalises the three principal Liberal generals (Rafael Uribe Uribe, Benjamín Herrera, Gabriel Vargas Santos) in the War of a Thousand Days, showing how the tension that existed between them contributed to the Liberal defeat at Palonegro, which was, ultimately, the beginning of the end for the Liberal army in the war. In another shorter chapter from "El eclipse," entitled "Las armas," the novel narrates the journey of Liberal captain, Julio Jones, who, two months before the start of the Battle of Palonegro, travels to England to purchase weapons to bolster the Liberal army's military campaign. After gambling in London casinos to increase his funds, Jones obtains the armaments and travels across the Atlantic and down the Magdalena River to deliver the weapons to the Liberal army. The mission ultimately fails, however, as most of the crew, including Jones, succumb to yellow fever. The surviving crew members, unable to deliver the weapons, decide to sink the boat to avoid the armaments falling into Conservative hands. In the final chapter of "El eclipse," entitled "Epílogo," the novel returns once again to José Celestino, with the narrator tracing his final moments on the battlefield at Palonegro as he has a fleeting vision of his lover Julia Valserra before being killed by victorious Conservative soldiers: "el corte helado del metal le traspasa la garganta. […] La mujer ya no está. Lejos del cuerpo, la batalla continua" (603). Given the centrality of the Battle of Palonegro in *El año*, to contextualise my later analysis of the novel, it is important to briefly describe the period in Colombian history leading up to the War of a Thousand Days and the Battle of Palonegro.

From Independence from Spain in 1810 up to 1902, the year of the end of the War of a Thousand Days, Colombia experienced nine civil wars, mainly fought between, but not

exclusively, Liberals and Conservatives. The issues that most fiercely divided these political opponents were related to the system of governance and the role of religion in the state and society. The Conservatives generally favoured centralised government, whereas the Liberals strongly advocated a federalised structure, giving more power to the individual states. A further dividing line between the two sides was the issue of the Church, with the Conservatives supporting the strong influence of the Catholic Church in all areas of the state and society (Uribe). However, the Liberals were, in the main, anticlerical and in favour of the separation of church and state (Bushell). These contentious issues-- federalism and anticlericalism-- were at the heart of many of the bloody civil wars that ravaged the country during the nineteenth century. For this analysis, however, given that the novel is set in the years 1899-1900, it would be useful to limit discussion of the historical context to the period preceding and following what is known as 'La Regeneración.'

The 1858 constitution approved by congress under the presidency of Mariano Ospina Rodriguez brought with it a period of Liberal dominance in Colombian politics, which was further strengthened five years later with the 1863 Rionegro Constitution, which decentralised government, creating nine sovereign states; limited the power of the executive, restricting presidential terms to two years; and secularised the state (Bushnell). For many years after the approval of the 1863 Constitution, Liberal policies dominated Colombian politics. However, in 1880, the winds began to change, and Rafael Nuñez was elected President of the United States of Colombia (Bushnell). Although a Liberal, Nuñez's outlook was that of a Conservative, and he looked to reverse many of the outcomes of the liberal 1863 Constitution. His re-election in 1884 worried many radical Liberals, who disapproved of his centralist policies, which they feared would ride roughshod over the liberal 1863 Constitution. As a result, the Liberals decided to take up arms in the short-lived 1884-85 Civil War (Ceballos Gómez). However, Nuñez, an independent Liberal, with the support of the Conservatives,

managed to overcome the Liberal insurgency. At the end of hostilities, he seized the opportunity to put together a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution to replace the federalist 1863 Rionegro Constitution. A new conservative constitution, approved in 1886, once again embraced Catholicism, returning authority to the Church; gave more power to the executive, extending the presidential term from two to six years; and centralised government, with 'states' being renamed 'departments' (Melo 167-168). This new constitution tightened the Conservatives' grip on power and led to the Liberals being excluded from national politics. The Liberal Party's marginalisation, after the approval of the 1886 Constitution, along with a fall in international coffee prices, as argued by Bergquist, became the spark that ignited the War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902), the longest and bloodiest of all Colombia's civil wars.

The bulk of the fighting, in the early stages of the war, took place in north-eastern Santander, with the Liberals suffering an early defeat in the Battle of Bucaramanga, which appears to be the starting point for the first and second parts of the novel. At the beginning of "Fusilero," José Celestino Sul is identified as being in a city, "bajo alarma por la llegada inminente de los ejercitos" (Ferreira, *El año* 25), a reference to the arrival of the Liberal army, about to attempt a siege of Bucaramanga. In the second part of the novel, "Valserra," Julia's first diary entry is dated 15th November, which historically would have been two days after the failed Liberal attack on Bucaramanga (11th- 13th November 1899). Despite the Liberal army's early setback in Bucaramanga, they obtained a vital victory a month later in the Battle of Peralonso, where mythical Liberal general Rafael Uribe Uribe, who is fictionalised in the novel, gained heroic status for his actions on the battlefield. At Peralonso, Uribe Uribe and ten other soldiers made a last-ditch charge over La Laja Bridge, which resulted in a decisive victory for his forces over the Conservatives (Bushnell 150). However, notwithstanding this unexpected early triumph, the Liberals could not capitalise on their victory, waiting too long to march towards Bogotá. When the Liberals finally began moving south in May 1900, they

were met by the Conservative army at Palonegro, just outside Bucaramanga. In the space of two weeks, between 11th and 26th May 1900, Conservative and Liberal forces fought one of the fiercest battles of the war, of which David Bushnell describes the aftermath in *The Making of Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself*: "The stench from decomposing bodies of men and animals […] became almost unbearable. Doctors and nurses, especially on the revolutionary side, were unable to cope with the number of wounded, many of whom were left to die in excruciating pain" (225). It is estimated that more than 4000 soldiers died during the battle, with the majority on the Liberal side (225). Such was the aftermath of death and devastation that the battle spawned the phrase 'Qué chulada en Palonegro,' (translated loosely as 'Palonegro, what a vulture's feast'), which became part of collective imagination surrounding the battle (Uribe 235).

After the Liberal defeat at Palonegro, the formal phase of the War of a Thousand Days ended as the Liberals then switched to guerrilla tactics until 1902 when, after exhaustion on both sides, Liberals and Conservatives signed the peace treaties of Neerlandia and Wisconsin, bringing an end to the civil war (Melo 172). The number of deaths in the War of a Thousand Days is normally estimated at around 100,000, with many of these being young children between the ages of 10 and 17, who were, in many cases, forced to fight or accompany their fathers to battle. This figure, however, is disputed by some historians (Bushnell), who deem it to be too high, with some putting the number closer to 70,000 deaths (LaRosa and Mejía). Starting with the 1886 Constitution and the War of a Thousand Days began a period known as the *Hegemonía Conservadora*, which brought with it roughly four decades of uninterrupted Conservative rule. This exclusion of the Liberal party from national politics would contribute to the later manifestations of violence *La Violencia* and *El Conflicto Armado* and was a hallmark of Colombian politics: "[La guerra de los mil días] […] estableció el precedente de

un peligroso patrón en la política del siglo XX: la exclusión política como catalizador del conflicto armado" (LaRosa and Mejía).

In the next section, I will focus on the first part of the novel, "Fusilero," to examine how Ferreira, through the trope of the travelling soldier, employs the first of two Bildungsromane to illustrate the multifaceted layers of violence that the protagonist José Celestino faces during the civil war. Before examining the novel's first section, it is important to briefly delineate the history and the most salient features of the Bildungsroman as the primary lens through which I analyse the different representations of violence in the novel.

Trials, Travel and the Nation State: Tracing the Origins of the Bildungsroman

The Bildungsroman, often conceived as a novel of awakening or coming-of-age, takes its name from the individual German words for novel ('Roman') and formation or education ('Bildung'). The basic plot in a classic Bildungsroman is that a male protagonist, the *Bildungsheld*, goes through a process of learning, formation, or self-cultivation, where he experiences a transformation or awakening at the end of the novel. Despite some dispute about who first coined the term 'Bildungsroman,' many theorists of the genre such as Todd Kontje point to German historian and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, who employed the word to describe what he believed to be the first Bildungsroman, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre* published in 1795-96: "[The Bildungsroman deals with a young protagonist] [and] how he enters life in a blissful daze, searches for kindred spirits, encounters friendship and love, but then how he comes into conflict with the hard realities of the world and thus matures in the course of manifold life experiences, finds himself, and becomes certain of his task in the world" (qtd. in Kontje 29). These novels often narrate the journey of a protagonist who is at odds with the social norms of the times and must go through a period of growth and self-reflection before reintegrating into society as a changed and matured individual, which Moretti refers to as, "the conflict between the ideal of self-determination and

the equally imperious demands of socialization" (15). Typically, the protagonist embarks upon a literal and metaphorical journey where he transitions into adulthood and matures as an individual. Bakhtin, in his essay "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism," describes it as "the novel of human emergence" and unlike the genres that came before it where, "the hero is that immobile and fixed point around which all movement in the novel takes place," the Bildungsroman depicts a hero who is incomplete and "in the process of becoming," where "changes in the hero himself acquire plot significance, and thus the entire plot of the novel is reinterpreted and reconstructed" (21). During this process of becoming, and for any transformation to occur, the *Bildungsheld* must experience and overcome several physical, emotional and existential hardships and trials. In fact, along with the self-cultivation of the protagonist, Yolanda Doub believes that the ability of the protagonist to undergo and overcome trials is the hallmark of the Bildungsroman that solidifies its status as a recognisable genre (4).

Another common trait of the genre, which is of relevance for my later analysis of "Fusilero," is travel. In the Bildungsroman, as part of the protagonist's self-cultivation process, he typically embarks on a physical journey of some type. Doub highlights the motif of travel in the Bildungsroman and explains how this element has been an understudied feature of the genre (3). It makes sense that travel would feature so prominently in many Bildungsromane given how much the experiences that come from the road play a role in the formation of the self, with the self-cultivation and growth that the protagonists go through coming as a direct result of the journeys they embark upon. Ian Chambers in *Migrancy, Culture and Identity* establishes a clear link between travel and the formation of the self: "Our sense of being, of identity and language, is experienced and extrapolated from movement: the 'I' does not pre-exist this movement and then go out into the world, the 'I' is constantly being formed and reformed in such movement in the world" (qtd. in Doub 7). Given, as demonstrated by Ian

Chambers' observation, the connection between travel and the formation of the self, Doub believes that it would also be logical to conclude that travel also plays a vital role in the formation and growth of the *Bildungsheld* (7-8).

In addition to the travel motif, since its inception in Germany in the late 18th and 19th centuries, the Bildungsroman has also been tied up with discourses surrounding modernity and the nation-state. This process of modernisation and the unity of the nation-state was represented by the youthfulness of the protagonist, who symbolised the promising future of the nation:

> Europe plunges into modernity but without possessing a *culture* of modernity. If youth, therefore, achieves its symbolic centrality, and the 'great narrative' of the Bildungsroman comes into being, this is because Europe has to attach a meaning, not so much to youth, as to *modernity*. […] Youth is, so to speak, modernity's 'essence', the sign of a world that seeks its meaning in the *future* rather than in the past (Moretti 5).

Therefore, according to Franco Moretti, the young protagonists in early Bildungsromane embody modernity, which is linked to the emergence and construction of nation-states in late 18th and 19th century Europe. In the early German examples of the Bildungsroman, the protagonists go on journeys of self-discovery, where they learn to change and integrate into the new society of the nascent German state. Therefore, the *Bildungsheld*'s journey can be understood as an allegory for national progress, serving as inspiration to citizens of the new nation. The Bildungsroman came about in a time of great upheaval in Europe and as a response to a process of modernisation. Therefore, the genre has been bound up with political discourses of the nation since its inception.

Ferreira's Experimentation with the Bildungsroman in *El año*

As this chapter will show, the use of multiple tropes drawn from the conventional male and the less traditional feminised Bildungsromane in *El año*, such as José Celestino's self-growth, where the character overcomes trials and hardships; Julia's Valserra's self-discovery through a voyage in; the element of travel; and the novel's engagement with the broader discourses of modernity and the nation-state make the genre a novel means through which to

examine the gendered manifestations of violence and war in Colombia. However, it is also important to point out that *El año* departs from and reimagines certain generic conventions of the classic Bildungsroman in interesting ways. This can be evidenced firstly in the way the Bildungsroman structure, which historically promoted the unity and progress of the nation, is inverted instead to narrate the violence and chaos of civil war and, in this case, the disunity of the nation, which is achieved in the novel by alteration of the 'happy-ending' of the classic Bildungsroman. At the end of the novel, José Celestino is killed in the Battle of Palonegro, which cynically renders his journey of self-discovery and his growth throughout "Fusilero" worthless, in a commentary, as I argue, on the failed attempts to bring about the unity of the nation through civil war. Secondly, Ferreira challenges the conventions of the classic Bildungsroman, where the male *Bildungsheld* would typically narrate in first-person his journey of self-discovery and awakening, by, firstly, employing a second-person narration, which is uncommon in Bildungsromane, and by using a female voice to narrate the journey of male *Bildungsheld* José Celestino and, in this way, question the supremacy of the masculine voice in a traditionally male-dominated genre. Although not made explicit, it would appear that the narrator of the "Fusilero" is José Celestino Sul's pregnant lover, Julia Valserra, who is left behind in the city when he goes off to fight. This reading of the narrative voice is evidenced by a passage in the second part of the novel, "Valserra," composed of Julia Valserra's diary entries in the period leading up to the Battle of Palonegro. In this section, she describes how, one day, she intends to write a fictional account of her lover José Celestino's experiences of war. Therefore, the first part of the novel, "Fusilero," could be read as the story Julia Valserra planned to write about her lover, to which she alludes in a diary entry during this second part of the novel: "Quisiera imaginar lo que ha sido tu viaje hacia la nada. Quisiera escribir sobre esta guerra. Ponerte de héroe. Pero no puedo imaginar los motivos para hacer una guerra, y antes tengo que adivinar por qué se matan los hombres" (Ferreira, *El año* 302). Furthermore,

in a later entry, where Julia Valserra reflects on the best place to hide the diary from the prying eyes of her father and the customers in the imported goods shop where she works, she mentions, more explicitly this time, a novel she has begun to write about a man who goes off to war, which is most likely a reference to José Celestino: "La novela que empecé sobre el hombre que irá a la guerra debo ponerla en el armario donde guardo mi ropa y los recortes de tela de algodón para el periódico" (288). Daniel Ferreira himself, in an interview with Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga, all but confirmed Julia Valserra as the narrator of José Celestino's journey in "Fusilero": "Es un personaje cenital en esa novela. Aunque parezca en la segunda parte, yo creo que tiene el control de la novela […] Ella es la narradora del libro" ("Encuentro" 00:25:15-00:26:00). Having confirmed Julia Valserra's centrality to the text, I will now turn my attention to the analysis of the first part of the novel, "Fusilero," which I frame as the first of two Bildungsromane in *El año*.

The Beginning of José Celestino's *Bildung*: An Encounter with the *patrón*

Part of José Celestino's initial evolution as a character on his way to self-realisation and knowledge, before his journey into the bellicose landscape of civil war begins in earnest, comes from his self-liberation from the violence of hacienda coloniality. At the beginning of the novel, José Celestino is driving a Berline with his *patrón*'s horse, Dom Emilio, on the outskirts of an unnamed city, "una ciudad blanca, asediada por la erosión" (Ferreira, *El año* 13). Heading back to the hacienda, where he works as stable hand and coachman, he intends to tell his *patrón* Josep Lausen, described as "un hombre de cara dura, recio, […] de puño y blasfemia fácil" (18), that he is quitting and enlisting in Rosario Díaz's division of the Liberal army to fight in the War of a Thousand Days. Up to this point, José Celestino has spent most of his life working as a lowly peon on the hacienda, serving the Conservative landowner, "como un perro faldero" (18). Beginning as an eight-year-old boy, building adobe walls, "con las manos ampolladas […] hasta que encallecieron" (18), he then moved on to breaking young

horses at thirteen and, finally, at fifteen, became a personal coachman for Josep Lausen's daughter, Felicidad Lausen. Before going off to face the violence of war, José Celestino's early life is depicted as being dominated by an oppressive environment of coloniality and historic violence. In this regard, Rossana Reguillo describes historic violence as any violence that affects groups considered "'anómalos,'salvajes e inferiors," which has a long-standing historical justification. As well as a form of historic violence, the exploitative colonial structure of the hacienda where José Celestino has laboured can also be understood, once again using Reguillo's typology of violences, as a form of structural violence, "[vinculada] a las consecuencias y efectos de los sistemas (económicos, políticos, culturales)." These relics of colonial violence are evident in descriptions of José Celestino's daily life and activities on Josep Lausen's hacienda. In the chapter "Última berlina," the narrator describes the gruelling work that anonymous labourers like José Celestino, "termiteros de peones anónimos" (Ferreira, *El año* 13), would be subjected to, with the effects of their toil felt directly on the body: "[…] han ordenado [piedra] sobre [piedra] desollándose los dedos, reventándose las uñas con pesados machucones, baldados con hernias que inflamaron los testículos y escaldaron las verijas […]" (13). As well as the back-breaking work, the narrator also describes the social exclusion and marginalisation of poor labourers like José Celestino, which can be seen, particularly, in the description of them eating lunch behind the kitchen with the other peons and servants, out of sight of the *patrón*'s acquaintances and daughter: "[…] para que la hija y los socios del amo no se avergonzaran de oir los chasquidos, de verlos tragar y sorber y eructar" (14). In addition, the legacy of coloniality within the hacienda system manifests itself in the novel through the economic violence of the '*tienda de raya*,' a shop on the hacienda where labourers were forced to purchase their provisions: "La tienda de raya es el monopolio establecido por un hacendado en sus tierras para obligar sus trabajadores a comprarle los elementos necesarios, que aquél trae de un mercado principal y revende a precios de usura"

(Fals-Borda 78). Historically, labourers were forced to get into debt in the shop, which acted as a form of bondage that coerced many to remain on the hacienda for life with little means of escape. This economic violence can be seen in José Celestino's working relationship with his *patrón*, as the narrator describes how Josep Lausen would pay José Celestino in "monedas de lata que el [mismo] acuñaba," with these tokens only being valid in the hacienda shop, "un granero autorizado por él" (Ferreira, *El año* 20). After José Celestino has finally told Josep Lausen of his intention to leave his job, "al que llevaba años atado" (18), there is further use of economic violence in the way his boss tries to swindle him of the money he is rightly owed: "Descontemos lo que me debe: una carga de plátanos por los daños que hizo el caballo cuando se le perdió. Un adelanto en moneda de lata que gastó en bebida, según me contaron. Y al menos cinco jornales cuando estuvo enfermo, más el día de hoy, que no apareció" (19-20). At one point in their conversation, Josep Lausen, evidently reluctant to pay what is due to his worker, even offers him his ageing horse, Don Emilio, instead of money, as Josep Lausen remarks that he has no need for a horse in times of war, "[..] porque lo matan a uno hasta por robarle el caballo" (20). To continue the conversation further, José Celestino is then led into Josep Lausen's office, where they are served coffee by an unkempt and dishevelled maid, "que aguarda las órdenes del patrón" (19). In the office hang the photographs of Lausen's great-grandfather and grandfather, which serve as reminders to José Celestino of the colonial violence perpetrated by various generations of the same Criollo family, "que los miraba desde el cuadro en la pared" (21). While listening to Josep Lausen, José Celestino recalls a moment from earlier in the day when his friend Duque, in the local tavern, gave him advice about how he should best articulate his intention to quit to his boss: "El tiempo de la esclavitud ya pasó, mijo. Dígale eso al viejo sapo hijueputa ese, que le pague de una" (17). Emboldened by his friend's admonition, José Celestino is determined to give Josep Lausen a piece of his mind to avenge the years of his boss's violent abuse: "Por un momento imaginó que podía decirle la

verdad en la cara de su patrón, desquitarse de sus mataduras, de los años que le sirvió descalzo […]" (18). However, José Celestino never manages to verbalise his thoughts to his *patrón*. This inability to tell Josep Lausen what is on his mind, even after quitting, speaks of how the vestiges of coloniality work, through obedience and submission, to silence the voices of indigenous and mestizo peoples, stifling their freedom to express themselves and impeding their ability to use language in the presence of a criollo *patrón*: "¿Y por qué no lo digo?, era la pregunta que le hacía señales de humo desde su adentros, al comprender que su pensamiento organizaba todo lo que quería decir, pero que la boca callaba […] *Ya sabe, pero se hace el marica*" (18). Throughout their conversation, José Celestino is unable to overcome the oppressive social dynamics inherent in their relationship, ultimately falling silent under the legacy of colonial violence: "Ni forma de quitarse esa tara. Su voz estaba ausente" (21).

Because of the systemic violence of peonage and the dire social conditions and poverty under which José Celestino Sul was living, going to war and risking his life instead of continued labour under the yoke of *hacendado* Josep Lausen seemed like a better option. At a later point in "Fusilero," once José Celestino has joined up with the Liberal army, the narrator explores the reasons why so many young men decided to swap "la tranquilidad por la desesperación […]" (82) and become soldiers in a bloody civil war. The narrator, however, elucidates that this tranquillity never really existed in the first place because these men already lived under extreme poverty within colonial social structures of subordination and control, which ultimately drives them to war. Slavoj Žižek's triumvirate of violence is useful here to better understand the structural violence of coloniality in encouraging young men like José Celestino to seek an escape through participation in a war. In his book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Žižek groups violence into subjective and objective categories. According to Žižek, subjective violence, such as wars, crime, and civil unrest, is the most visible and immediate type of violence, "performed by a clearly identifiable agent" (7). Žižek argues that subjective violence

is “a perturbation of the ‘normal,’ peaceful state of things” (7). However, the other type of violence, which he calls objective violence - further divided into symbolic and systemic violence - is an inherent, often invisible, feature of the supposed “‘normal,’ peaceful state of things” that the more apparent subjective violence is believed to disturb: “Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent” (7).” The systemic violence of coloniality has become José Celestino’s daily life and is the backdrop to many poor labourers’ existence. The norm of systemic violence of coloniality is ultimately what leads José Celestino to volunteer for the Liberal army: “Pero comodidad no había. Nunca la hubo. Y en cambio la desesperación chorreaba en las aldeas y en los caminos. Se veía en las caras, en la forma de beber, en la voz histriónica […]. Todos los miserables días que había vivido era en su conjunto eso: desesperación” (Ferreira, *El año* 83). Once José Celestino has told Josep Lausen of his intention to join Rosario Díaz’s division and leave his job, the landowner leaves him under no illusions that they are now on opposing sides of the political divide in a civil war that is quickly gathering pace. Josep Lausen warns José Celestino that if he finds him on his property in the future attempting to expropriate his land with the Liberals, he will be forced to shoot him: “¿Sabe qué? Me importa un sieso. El tiempo de rogar se acabó, joven. ¿Usted sabe que si algún día lo veo armado en mi propiedad voy a tener que pegarle un tiro?” (21). In response to this threat, José Celestino thinks, “*O se lo voy a tener a que pegar yo,*” once again not daring to utter his true feelings to his former *patrón* (21). From this point on, it is clear that the civil war has divided society, pitting the Conservative landowner against the Liberal peon. José Celestino’s early development in his journey of self-knowledge and learning, therefore, comes from the character pushing back against the violence of colonial structures that have subjugated him for so long by quitting his job and setting out on his voyage into a bellicose landscape to continue his *Bildung*.

After resigning, the former stable hand meets his friend Duque in the local tavern, who wants to know if José Celestino has been able to procure a gun as "[…] Rosario Díaz no acepta voluntarios sin arma" (17). José Celestino manages to acquire a firearm from his lover Julia Valserra, whose father owns a shop selling imported goods, including weapons. With a Smith and Wesson revolver that Julia Valserra smuggles out of her father's shop, José Celestino leaves the unnamed fictional city, and he meets up with his friend Duque and two of Duque's young recruits next to a bridge on the outskirts of the city on a quest to join up with Rosario Díaz and fight with the Liberal army: "Eran cuatro voluntarios con el mismo propósito: Ir en busca del ejército de Rosario Díaz, un veteran alzado en esta nueva guerra, con setecientos hombres bajo su mando, que se movía entre el río Chichamocha, el río Negro y el páramo" (43). One of the recruits is Roque María López, a local butcher nicknamed "Cuchillos," and the other is a young boy named Alfredito Correa, "el muchacho que había seguido a Duque en los últimos días por la ciudad" (37). Duque, who leads the group, presents his recruits to one another and gives them each a nom de guerre. At this point in the narration, after deciding upon a nickname for each soldier, José Celestino and the other volunteers set off on foot in search of Rosario Díaz and his division of the Liberal army on gruellingly long days of travel. This is the point in the narrative where José Celestino's journey begins in earnest, and the experiences of his travels start to have a profound effect on his character, leading to his transformation at the end of "Fusilero." Having examined how José Celestino builds his character by overcoming the violence of coloniality, in the following section I will explore the ways in which the character's evolving relationship to the natural world becomes a fundamental part of his *Bildung* in "Fusilero."

Naturalistic Violence to Romantic Splendour: A Journey Through a Bellicose Santanderean Landscape

Before José Celestino can enlist in the Liberal army, as part of his journey of self-development, first he must undertake an arduous journey on foot along with his fellow

volunteers Duque, Cuchillos and Alfredito Correa. After having escaped the violence of coloniality, as part of his growth, he now faces the hostility of the natural world in a variety of treacherous and challenging landscapes, "[…] trampas de piedra, gargantas erosionadas en estoraques, vados custodiados por culebras venenosas, riscos sin fondo, puentes rotos […]" (40). On this journey, José Celestino endures punishing physical and mental trials, where he and his fellow volunteers are put to the test in harsh natural environments. The description of their journey through different landscapes in this part of José Celestino's journey recalls literary naturalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Cowley; Howard), which narrates characters who face intimidating natural environments governed by a survival of the fittest outlook and deterministic forces often beyond their control or comprehension. In this section of *El año*, Ferreira draws from the naturalistic novel - with José Celestino exposed to a cruel and unforgiving natural environment - and blends them with tropes of the Bildungsroman, where the *Bildungsheld* must overcome multiple trials on his journey towards growth and self-realisation.

The initial trials the group faces come from the violence of the natural world, which is evident firstly in the many allusions to the brutal weather conditions that José Celestino and the volunteers encounter. During the day, José Celestino and his companions face the oppressive heat of the sun, which is suffocating and likened to being trapped in a saucepan of boiling soup, "[…] donde la sopa se cuece a todo vapor" (63). During the night, they experience the freezing temperatures of the *páramo*, where they sleep in abandoned houses and try to start fires in damp stoves with the leaves of *frailejones*, the only plant they can find in the barren landscape. However, the heat the *frailejnes* generate is not sufficient to provide the travelling soldiers with any respite from the cold. At one point in their journey, José Celestino and the other volunteers encounter the ruins of an abandoned house where the roof has been removed, and all that remains standing are eight supporting pillars. It is under the remains of this house

that the volunteers take shelter and start a fire but are unable to get adequate rest because of the howling wind outside, "Por los ruidos del viento en las ramas, dormirán despiertos" (61). At other points in the journey, the narrator describes the effects of the freezing cold on the travelling volunteers' weary bodies: "Se introducía en el oído y dolía en la mandíbula y en las sienes; la nariz goteaba, las rodillas de volvían de hierro […]" (55). As well as the weather, Jose Celestino and the travelling volunteers also encounter other hardships of the road, such as hunger ("Al descollar el cuarto día empieza el hambre, pero aparte de un mango cargado con frutas verdes, rojas y doradas, no encuentran con qué mitigarla"), thirst ("La sed les había vuelto espumarajos la saliva") and fatigue from the long days of travel on foot under the elements ("Iban tan cansados que ya sólo se hablaban con miradas y gestos y no se reían del otro cuando tropezaba en el pedregal") (46-65).

Once they leave the city limits and enter the harsh natural environment, José Celestino and the volunteers are thrust into a Darwinian struggle for survival, "[…] donde la vida se alimenta de lo que ha muerto: árboles sobre árboles, plantas parásitas, zopilotes que persiguen a la vaca más débil y esperan pacientes a que llegue la muerte; avispas y mariposas que lamen la orina del caminante insolado" (62). In these surroundings, José Celestino and his travelling companions become just as susceptible to the dangers of the natural world as the animals that inhabit the different landscapes they travel through. This violent natural environment is encapsulated early on in a scene where José Celestino observes a spider engaged in a fight-to-the-death battle with a praying mantis and then, the next day, watches as a snake devours a lizard in front of him. The cruelty and voracity of the animal world that José Celestino experiences work to foreshadow much of the rest of his journey, where Liberals and Conservatives persistently hunt and kill one another. Immediately after seeing the predatory instincts of the animals, in the aptly titled chapter "Cazar a un hombre," José Celestino and the volunteers stalk and kill a Conservative spy, pushing him to his death down a chasm. Looking

down on the body, "que dejó de moverse en el fondo del peñasco" (46), Duque finishes him off with the coup de grâce. The ubiquity of images of hunting, which appear throughout José Celestino's journey, and the novel more broadly, illustrates a Darwinian conception of the natural world where humans hunt, slaughter and eat animals; animals ensnare other animals; and animals even feast on human corpses, the remnants of civil war violence. Early on in their journey, José Celestino and the volunteers come across what appears to be an abandoned house where they capture a goat hiding in a cave. After tying up the goat, Cuchillos pulls out a special knife, which he calls the 'mataganado', and then shows José Celestino how best to slaughter and disembowel the goat. After the slaughter, they cook the goat over a fire in a pan, in which "aún temblaban los nervios de la carne viva" (50). At a later stage in "Fusilero," after José Celestino has been accepted into Larrota's division of the Liberal army and entrusted with a mission to deliver a secret message to Rosario Díaz, José Celestino observes the brutal slaughter of a bear and its cub by the Conservative army. As José Celestino is peacefully contemplating the bears playing together by the riverbank, the soldiers shoot the bears, skin them, impale them on stakes and continue their onward march, "con la carne mal matada que les servirá de almuerzo" (161). During their travels, humans also become food for the animals when José Celestino observes a wake of vultures ripping apart rotting human corpses: "Aves negras y pardas y calvas, distintas a los gallinazos de casco blindado […] bajaban a darse banquete con los ojos y las entrañas. Algunas saltaban jorobetas con tirajos de intestino entre sus picos curvos" (54-55).

In these hostile landscapes, a levelling with nature occurs in which humans are not afforded any preferential treatment. This can be observed, particularly, in "Epílogo," when José Celestino becomes engaged in a "[…] batalla por la sed" (595) with a vulture. In this scene, a wounded and thirsty José Celestino wanders among the corpses of the fallen Conservative and Liberal soldiers at the culmination of the Battle of Palonegro. In a desperate search for water,

he suddenly notices a group of vultures drinking from a puddle of rainwater and staggers over to where one vulture is drinking. Undeterred by José Celestino's presence, "pese a que su oponente es un humano" (595), the vulture stands its ground. However, in a final act of desperation, José Celestino grapples with the bird before violently decapitating it, "[…] en la misma operación que hacía su madre para matar pollos" (596). However, his efforts are in vain as the blood from the lifeless animal flows into the water, which "poco a poco se va tiñendo de fluido espeso, de sangre negra" (596). In this scene, to further emphasise the levelling of the human and the animal, the narration becomes focalised through the perspective of the vulture, with José Celestino referred to as 'el humano' by the narrator: "Sólo hasta estar seguro de que el humano no intentará nada a traición, el pájaro se inclina y bebe de nuevo del pozo cristalino" (595). As illustrated in this passage, humans are not given superior status in this naturalistic environment and must go up against nature in a direct fight for survival. Parallels can also be drawn here between the naturalistic struggle for survival demonstrated, particularly, in the battle between the spider and the praying mantis mentioned previously, and the violent colonial power relations of control and domination that José Celestino toiled under for so long before quitting his job on Josep Lausen's hacienda and setting out on foot to join the Liberal war effort. This is most evident in the descriptions of the praying mantis desperately trying to free itself from the spider's web: "Las fauces de la mantis se abrían como si quisiera gritar y […] la desesperación con que trataba de liberar sus patas dentadas" (42). The desperate struggle of the praying mantis here mirrors the entrapping forces of colonialism that ensnared José Celestino in a system from which he struggled to liberate himself. Even though, like the praying mantis in the spider's web, José Celestino manages to escape, he has ultimately exchanged the cruelty and harshness of the hacienda system for the violence of the natural world and the civil war.

After José Celestino's exposure to naturalistic violence in this part of his journey, his evolution as a character comes, at a certain point, through a change in his relationship with nature. In the sections "Emparamado" and "Olor a hojas perennes," there is a noticeable shift in the text, with the hostile naturalistic descriptions from the early part of the character's journey replaced by passages that more closely resemble representations of nature contained within literary romanticism: "Sigues el curso del agua hasta quedar pasmado ante una cascada rotunda como una mordida. Te gustan las cascadas. […] Una nutria ha saltado desde el fondo del pozo […] Es un animal de estremecimientos fugaces y mirada inquieta, una uva por nariz, y piel brillante como ungida en aceite" (152-153). At a certain point, the menacing environments of Darwinian battles for survival give way to descriptions of José Celestino marvelling at the beauty and splendour of the natural world. Alone in the wilderness, far from human settlements, José Celestino begins to envisage himself in harmony with his natural surroundings, admiring the animals that accompany him on his journey, at one point even imitating the call of a hawk that follows him in the sky: "A ratos te detienes también a mirarlos y respondes al canto de gavilán con una mala imitación" (152). At this moment, José Celestino momentarily forgets the hardships of the road and enters a state of contemplation, slowing down to observe and be observed by the animals, evidenced in the text by the repetition of the verbs 'detenerse,' 'mirar' 'observar' and 'percibir.' At a certain point, José Celestino's encounter with the condors, eagles and otters has such a profound effect on him that he contemplates abandoning human civilisation to live among nature: "¿Por qué no quedarse entre los pájaros y las nutrias y las cigarras?" (153). As part of the Bildungsroman structure of "Fusilero," José Celestino's self-growth is mirrored in the way his relationship with nature changes as he overcomes the violence and hostility of a naturalistic world to experience the landscapes with a sense of contemplation and wonder.

The Chronotope of the Road: Meeting the Participants and Victims of Civil War

After liberating himself from the hacienda system and overcoming the hostility of the natural world, I argue that a further stage in José Celestino's development as part of the Bildungsroman structure comes from his encounters with fellow soldiers and ordinary citizens, particularly women, the elderly, and children, who he meets along the road. On his journey through the war-torn landscape, José Celestino comes across a diverse set of individuals who, like him, have been marked in some way by the violence of the civil war. It is, therefore, through his relational links to others, who expose him to multiple forms of violence, that José Celestino evolves, and his self continues to emerge. Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope of the road from *Dialogic Imagination* is useful here to underscore how the experience of travel provides José Celestino with the opportunity to encounter a diversity of individuals as, according to Bakhtin, the road is the place where "the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people—representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages—intersect at one spatial and temporal point. People who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet; any contrast may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another" (243). In José Celestino's encounters on the road, Daniel Ferreira incorporates an array of disparate stories and voices to narrate individual experiences of a violent period of Colombia's history, with José Celestino functioning as a kind of receptacle, collecting stories of hardship and suffering from forgotten victims of the civil war:

> Mientras en sus anteriores novelas el autor había apostado acertadamente por la construcción de una memoria colectiva a partir de la conjunción de diferentes voces, *El año del sol negro* se arriesga a hacer el movimiento contrario: se centra en voces individuales que cuentan una historia propia, única, íntima; y en el proceso devela una historia que se construye no solo desde lo colectivo, sino también desde lo individual. (Bastidas Pérez 77)

In *Viaje* and *Rebelión*, Ferreira uses as a starting point the narration of a collective event: the paramilitary massacre in the former and the land occupation in the latter. In these novels,

Ferriera uses the incidents to tell the individual stories in a top-down method. However, *El año* uses a bottom-up vision of the war by allowing the individual voices to narrate their disparate and unique experiences, which José Celestino collects to give a more comprehensive picture of the collective experience of the civil war for ordinary citizens. In this way, his journey through a bellicose landscape, where he encounters an array of subjects affected by the civil war, allows him to bring together disparate and dispersed stories of war from voices that would typically remain silent and erased from historical memory of the conflict.

Some of the individuals who significantly impact José Celestino are his fellow soldiers and itinerant companions. Travelling by their side, he begins to learn the reasons why, like him, they have decided to risk their lives at such a young age in a bloody civil war. José Celestino discovers that most of the volunteers are not, "voluntarios decididos, convencidos de la misma causa del Partido Liberal […]" (Ferreira, *El año* 73). Instead, they are individuals alienated from the Liberal political cause and adrift from the national project for which they are willing to risk their lives. During an early part of the journey, the young boy Alfredito Correa asks Duque what they would do in the event of being unable to meet up with the marching Liberal army and, equipped only with sticks for weapons, having to form their own band. Duque demonstrates, in his response, a lack of ideological allegiance for either of the warring sides, stating that they could always join the Conservatives as they would be easier to locate along the trail: "—Mejor nos pasamos para el contrario que está en todas partes" (56). Throughout their journey on foot, José Celestino and his travelling companions also reveal their reasons for leaving their homes to fight, which are clearly devoid of ideological or political impetus. For instance, Alfredito Correa explains how he was coerced into fighting through the patriarchal violence of his elder brothers, who ridiculed him for his fear of dying in the war: "--Porque soy huérfano y todos mis hermanos que trabajaron en la Virgina se regalaron al general Uribe Uribe y dijeron que yo era un mariposa. --'mariposo' significa marica—dice Duque" (57-58).

Cuchillos, on the other hand, intends to join the Liberal army to hide from his brother-in-law, to whom he owes a considerable sum of money. After Cuchillos is shot dead in a Conservative ambush, Duque searches the corpse for any valuable belongings that can be taken with the remaining volunteers for the rest of the trip. In Cuchillos's pockets, Duque discovers a letter written by Cuchillo's wife, imploring him to run away to avoid a violent confrontation with his brother-in-law over the debt. Duque appears disheartened to discover that Cuchillo's true motivation for wanting to join the Liberal army has nothing to do with his support for the Liberal cause, "—Este gordo no venía a pelear, sino a esconderse. Parecía desilusionado" (68). José Celestino also learns that a further reason that many of the soldiers decide to go off to war is because of an irrational belief that an imminent solar eclipse, which unbeknown to the soldiers will not be visible from Colombia, will bring about the end of the world. Therefore, the men going off to fight feel they have nothing to fear from war as, even if they survive the violence of the battlefield, they are convinced that the eclipse will be their ultimate end. This solar eclipse, which historically took place on 28th May 1900, two days after the end of the Battle of Palonegro, inspires the title of the novel, *El año del sol negro*, and is alluded to by different characters throughout all three parts of the novel. For instance, when Cuchillos asks José Celestino why he decided to volunteer for the Liberal army, he considers repeating what he heard earlier in the local tavern, "[…] que igual todos iban a morir en el eclipse, como auguraban los españoles Penagos en la cantina de Inés" (57). In the second part of the novel, "Valserra," in one of Julia Valserra's diary entries, she reveals that the townspeople are more fearful of the eclipse than the civil war itself: "Este es el año del sol negro. Tenemos miedo a morir en el eclipse, pero no a la guerra" (272). A broader point here related to the characters' belief in the supernatural powers of the solar eclipse, however, is how it underscores a key theme of the novel: the foregrounding of alternative belief systems and ways of knowing the world as an original tool for narrating civil war violence. These alternative ways of perceiving

and narrating can be evidenced more broadly in the textual space that is given to subaltern protagonists such as José Celestino and Julia Valserra to tell their own story and also in the way José Celestino himself evolves as a *Bildungsheld*: his escape from coloniality, his experience of the natural world and his encounter with the forgotten victims of war, which, like the solar eclipse, provide alternative ways of understanding and narrating the subjective experiences of violence and civil war.

As well as learning the various reasons for joining the Liberal army, José Celestino is also impacted by the young age of the soldiers and how ill-prepared they are for war. When he is first introduced to Alfredito Correa, he sees him as "demasiado joven y lampiño," in whose face "solo había infancia" (36-37). Later in his journey, after joining the military and beginning the march through Santander, José Celestino meets eighteen-year-old recruit Infantino Toloza, who he decides to take under his wing. At a certain point in their travels through enemy territory, Toloza is killed in a Conservative ambush, and the death of this young soldier affects José Celestino so much that he asks Colonel Larrota if he can dig his grave. After burying Toloza and continuing the onward march with the army, José Celestino reflects on his premature death, imagining the family members he would have left behind: "Y pensaste en él, en su juventud, en aquellos que se quedaron esperando su regreso en algún lugar, una madre, o un hermano, o una mujer amada, mientras aferrabas el catalejo que él te había regalado para mirar su tumba cuando ya iban lejos, de vuelta a la vanguardia" (127).

Furthermore, another part of José Celestino's journey of self-development within the Bildungsroman structure is the way he relives past horrors and violence by learning that the civil war he is involved in is, in fact, part of a repeating cycle of historic violence. This is particularly evident in the descriptions of the antiquated, rusty weapons, dug up from previous wars, and used by many of the Liberal soldiers:

> […] todas en mal estado, amarradas con hilachas de fique, machetes curvos de doble filo, revólveres de cañón largo, negros, sin engastes, ordinarios, como disparados

> muchas veces en otras tantas guerras […] En uno de aquellos hombres que descabalgan, ve algo que le parece una antigualla: el mecanismo de un arcabuz con el que debieron pelear la primera de todas las guerras de independencia, ochenta años antes. (224)

As is evidenced in this passage, the weapons used to perform the violence of war can be traced back to previous civil wars and even as far back as the War of Independence. At a later stage in his journey, in his encounter with a Liberal war hero and his granddaughter, José Celestino learns the extent to which the historic violence of previous conflicts still holds sway over the present. On the march with the Liberal army, José Celestino and the other soldiers arrive in a deserted village abandoned a day earlier by most of its inhabitants. The only people left are an elderly veteran from the 1884-85 Civil War and his granddaughter. Upon arriving in the village, José Celestino notices the old man outside his home, welcoming the marching soldiers with chants of "Viva la Revolución." However, while rousing the troops, the war veteran becomes overly animated and suffers a heart attack. His granddaughter rushes out of the house to come to his aid, and José Celestino then carries him inside to be assisted by two military nurses. Unable to resuscitate the old man, he is declared dead, and his corpse is wrapped in a shroud by women from the army's field kitchen. Colonel Larrota then passes on a message from Gabriel Vargas Santos to the old man's granddaughter informing her that her grandfather will be buried with military honours: "—[…] le manda decir que un veterano de la Guerra del 85 como fue su abuelo será sepultado con honores en la plazuela de este caserío mañana, al salir el sol, si usted no muestra controversia" (138). The daughter initially agrees but later confesses to José Celestino that although her grandfather fought in the Civil War of 1884-85, he did so on the opposing side. Despite the granddaughter making this risky revelation to José Celestino, he does nothing to impede the woman's grandfather from being buried as a Liberal. In fact, José Celestino dismisses any objections that the granddaughter has, imploring her to let them bury him with the military honours he deserves: "--Un héroe es un héroe—dices, con desinterés--, sin importar el bando […] –Deje que lo entierren con honores, se ve que era un

pobre hombre" (139). This encounter with the war veteran reveals to José Celestino traces of past violence in the present and also teaches him the sheer absurdity of war, where a veteran who fought on the Conservative side in the previous civil war can be buried with military honours as a Liberal in a subsequent conflict. These interactions with the remnants of past violence all contribute to José Celestino's growth as a character by giving him a clearer understanding of how the past is at work in the present and teaching him his place within these larger cycles of historic violence.

As well as encountering the vestiges of past violence on his journey, José Celestino also evolves as a character through witnessing how the civil war has impacted civilians' families and homes and has penetrated even the language of ordinary people. The landscape through which José Celestino travels is littered with a multitude of abandoned houses, villages, and towns, with the civil war forcing residents to flee and leave behind their homes at a moment's notice: "El lugar había sido abandonado un día antes, pero aún las estufas de leña seguían encendidas […]" (133). On their journey to join Rosario Díaz's division, José Celestino and his travelling companions come across what appears to be an abandoned house in the countryside, which Duque believes to be still inhabited by a woman with a new-born baby. José Celestino enters the house, goes into one of the bedrooms, and finds a yellowing bride's dress in a dusty chest. After contemplating the dress, he reflects on how the civil war has torn apart a marital and family home: "Imaginaste un matrimonio en una vida pasada. Imaginaste una muerte imprevista y el llanto de una mujer junto a una tumba. Luego viste la cama de madera basta y la colcha de retales y creíste ver a una mujer timorata que ofrecía su cuerpo desnudo por primera vez a la mirada de un hombre" (50). In this passage, although the physical house remains standing, the death of the woman's husband, most likely a soldier in the civil war, has brought about the symbolic destruction of the home. In this scene, the symbolic violence of a marriage and family torn apart has been perpetrated on this home.

In another part of the journey, José Celestino is not only a witness to the symbolic and physical destruction wrought upon people's homes, but he sees how the violence of civil war has penetrated the vocabulary of ordinary civilians, even children. After finally meeting up with the Liberal army, they enter a Conservative village, which the troops proceed to burn down. Duque meets the children whose houses are being destroyed as they watch "las llamas desde el otro lado de la calle" (70). After one of the homeless children discovers that Duque is with the Liberals, the child tells him that when he is an adult, he is going to kill them, to which Duque responds "¿A quiénes?", and the child replies, "A ustedes […] A la chusma" (70). In this interaction with the children, the violence of the civil war has become so widespread that it has even permeated the language of a young child, who uses the word 'chusma' to allude to the Liberals as his perceived enemies. This infiltration of a lexicon of violence into the language of civilians could be understood as what Žižek refers to as symbolic violence, which is "violence embodied in language and its forms" (6). This language of war can be seen at various other points throughout the novel with soldiers and civilians referring to each other using pejorative names for Liberals and Conservatives such as 'los facinerosos,' 'la gente maldecida esa' or 'godos.' In these different scenes, José Celestino grows and evolves as a character by becoming more cognizant of the destructive effects of civil war on the population as he learns how the fighting erodes the family unit and its structures and even permeates the daily language of ordinary citizens. Through this diverse set of encounters with ordinary citizens, José Celestino better understands his place within this bellicose landscape and the overlapping structures that provide it with meaning, such as natural environments, family and the past.

In encounters with people on his journey, as well as seeing the way the violence of the civil war has impacted their lives, he also meets individuals who teach him important lessons or who present unique points of view or life philosophies, which contribute to his overall evolution as a character at the end of "Fusilero." In one such meeting, José Celestino is taken

in by a hermit living in the mountains. Physically exhausted from his secret mission, where he has travelled alone through the countryside for over a week to deliver a message to Rosario Díaz, the hermit provides shelter to José Celestino and nurses him back to health with infusions, soups and *arepas*. José Celestino is heartened by the old man's gentle spirit and kind nature, which immediately sets him apart from the violence of his journey. In the old hermit, José Celestino is inspired to see someone living among nature, seemingly unconcerned about the civil war around him and not identifying with either of the warring sides. Once José Celestino has convalesced and is ready to set off again to continue his secret mission, the old hermit fashions him a pair of sandals from tanned leather and wooden platforms. This unexpected act of kindness by an ordinary citizen leads to a revelatory conversation for José Celestino, where he is forced to consider his destiny in the war.

> --Ahora no sentiré las piedras.
> --Las piedras no, pero sí las balas.
> --¿Qué quiere decir?
> --Que el destino no se puede cambiar.
> --¿Usted cree en el destino?
> --En pequeños destinos que son decisiones. Pero los hombres que van a una guerra cuelgan todos del mismo hilo. El camino de siempre: gente que muere o que va a morir, y niegan que lo saben. (174)

This conversation with the hermit confirms to José Celestino the unescapable truth that his fate in this war has already been sealed and, like many other lowly soldiers, he is also heading towards an early death. This question of José Celestino's destiny is at the heart of "Fusilero", which, along with the descriptions of the hostility of the natural world, further links this part of the novel to generic tropes within literary naturalism. According to Eric Carl Link, who focuses specifically on American literary naturalism, although determinism is not present in all novels of this genre, "[it] is nevertheless a major theme in naturalistic fiction […]" (174). Determinism, as Richard Taylor defines it, is "the general philosophical thesis which states that for everything that ever happens, there are conditions such that, given them, nothing else could happen" (qtd. in Link 176). Link states that early writers of American literary naturalism such

as Frank Norris, Stephen Crane and Jack London did not use "their fiction to preach determinism, but to engage in a struggle with determinism" (174). Throughout José Celestino's travels, he constantly returns to questions surrounding his destiny, and he comes to believe he has been granted only limited agency to affect the course of his life. These perceived deterministic forces are encapsulated, specifically, in a childhood memory where José Celestino recalls himself at age seven watching a neighbour give birth in the street to a stillborn child "ahorcado con su proprio cordón umbilical," (81), without anyone coming to the mother or the baby's aid. After having witnessed a child "nacer y morir casi al mismo tiempo" (81), José Celestino concludes that no one is fully in control of destiny: "Nadie elige cómo, ni dónde, ni cuándo nacer. *La vida es un tren de paso y nadie sabe cuál es su destino*" (81). José Celestino's chance meeting with the hermit, who reveals hard truths about the destiny of young soldiers fighting in a war, helps him come to terms and be at peace with his imminent death, which the old hermit describes to him as "el único lugar donde dos enemigos se encuentran en paz" (175).

Toward the end of the journey, José Celestino's encounters with various individuals reach a defining moment when, in the chapter "Hasta el día en que vuelva de la guerra," he reminisces about the totality of the experiences he has garnered from the people he has encountered on his journey across the war-torn landscape. As well as highlighting how their stories have shaped his subjective experience of the conflict, José Celestino moves away from meditating on his destiny to examine how the war has shaped the destinies of all the people he has come across on his travels. For José Celestino, everyone's fate has been determined, in one way or another, by war, whether directly or indirectly, and no one he has encountered has been beyond its reach:

> Pensaste en Duque, y en el cuchillero enmascarado que murió en el camino, y en el músico jovencito convertido en corneta de órdenes de un coronel, y en el fusilero preguntón atravesado por una lanza, y en la mujer espía que perdió a su abuelo, y en el negro y el aindiado que se golpeaban al amanecer y en el ermitaño que te había curado

> y que fabricaba sandalias con sus manos y hablaba con su perro, y en el armadillo y la inutilidad de matar a un ser bello y en el soldado que mató al otro para poder desertar, y en todos los que habías conocido en esta guerra. ¿Habían nacido ahí, en esas condiciones, en ese tiempo, por accidente? ¿Lo habían elegido? ¿Habían sido elegidos por sus padres, por Dios? Viste un poco de luz en medio de la trampa, pero ya era tarde. La vida era un camino del que no se sabía cuál era su final. Se descubría paso a paso. Un solo paso equivocado modificaría todo el provenir y llevaría a la confirmación del destino. Pensaste que si hubieras descubierto todo aquello mucho antes, si hubieras sabido que no hay vidas mejores ni peores ni gente más importante que otra […] Ya no ibas a regresar, porque para ti no había camino de regreso. (219-220)

It is important to point out here that the emphasis in this part of the novel on a deterministic philosophy is, to some extent, in tension with the characteristics of the classic Bildungsroman, where the traditional *Bildungsheld* has agency to decide and forge his destiny through a journey of self-development and self-discovery. The deterministic belief system evidenced in the novel, where, for instance, José Celestino believes his fate is sealed or a solar eclipse can predict the onset of violence and war, appears to be at odds with the logical and brutal narrative of the destruction of war and how it contributes to forming and moulding the character of soldiers and civilians. I would argue, however, that by juxtaposing the seemingly contradictory traits of determinism and self-realisation, Ferreira further challenges the traditional Bildungsroman structure by providing a novel means of comprehending and narrating the violence of civil war.

José Celestino's Final Trial: Facing the Patriarchal Violence of Illegitimacy

Of the many trials José Celestino must face on his journey, perhaps the challenge that contributes most to his *Bildung* at the end of "Fusilero" is how he confronts and overcomes the patriarchal violence of illegitimacy. In the first chapter "La ciudad que olía a tejados calientes," we hear Jose Celestino's thoughts regarding the realisation that he is likely to die fighting in the war: "*Me voy. Cruzaré esa montaña y me uniré a la cuadrilla de Rosario Díaz. Moriré lejos de este sitio, sin que nadie sepa mi nombre*" (13). José Celestino's primary concern is not only that he will perish on the battlefield along with thousands of other anonymous soldiers. In José Celestino's case, "sin que nadie sepa mi nombre" has a literal meaning that goes deeper than the death of a lowly foot soldier because, in his eyes, he would be killed without ever

resolving questions surrounding his name. In this opening passage of the novel, José Celestino addresses, therefore, what will be the driving force behind his decision to risk his life in a civil war: the search for his father and a legitimate name.

Because José Celestino has been kept in the dark about his birth father's identity, he has been forced, during childhood, to adopt his stepfather's first name, which he always disliked using. At a certain point in the narration, the narrator, Julia Valserra, describes the first time she met José Celestino, sometime before war broke out, when he came into her father's shop to pick up an order made by his *patrón*, Josep Lausen. In this first meeting, there is an uncomfortable moment when Julia Valserra asks José Celestino his name, and he replies with his stepfather's name. This meeting between José Celestino and Julia Valserra leads the narrator to delve more into his past, shedding light on his conflicted relationship with his name:

> No te gustaba que te preguntaran el nombre. Para trabajar habías usado el nombre de aquel que te crió, aquel que había vivido con tu madre, pero que no te cedió su apellido, porque eras 'hijo de la panela'—como llamaban en esos años a los hijos 'ilegítimos', los habidos por fuera del matrimonio, por contraste con 'los hijos de la caña', que eran los hijos del matrimonio--. A ese padrastro, lo único que debías era gratitud por haberte enseñado a sobrevivir con poco, a buscar un camino enmontado y a trabajar desde niño. A tu madre, una niñez sin juegos donde la única felicidad consistía en subir a los árboles para escapar de sus golpes y ramalazos. Ella nunca te dijo el nombre de tu padre. Por eso abriste la boca y dijiste el nombre de tu padrastro. (107-108)

As well as forbidding José Celestino from using his last name, José Celestino's stepfather would violently denigrate him by referring to him with a series of pejorative nicknames because, as the previous passage alludes to, an illegitimate son, for his stepfather, was unworthy of being granted a real name: "[…] porque un hijastro no merecía más nombre que los cerdos, o los chulos o los perros" (38). Jose Celestino's constant preoccupation about his name begins to manifest early on in his journey when one of his travelling companions, Duque, comes up with various noms de guerre for the travelling companions. In the absence of a paternal surname, José Celestino appears to view a nom de guerre as temporary balm for his lack of legitimate name: "Ahora que Duque repartía apodos según las herramientas de cada hombre,

soñabas con la oportunidad de poder conquistar uno verdadero. Un nombre determinante, porque un nombre era un rostro" (39). José Celestino views the acquisition of a nom de guerre as a way of establishing his manhood because his stepfather would often reinforce the idea that, "[…] el nombre era el hombre, lo mismo que los pantalones largos y el sombrero" (38). José Celestino's search for a legitimate name, one of the main reasons he goes off to war, is at the centre of the "Fusilero," and can be linked to *Bildungsheld*'s journey towards attaining manhood in the classic Bildungsroman structure.

At the end of his gruelling journey on foot through the Colombian countryside, José Celestino finally meets the elusive Liberal commander Rosario Díaz, to whom he must hand over a message with top secret information about enemy troop movements given to him at an earlier stage by Colonel Larrota. However, once face to face with Rosario Díaz, José Celestino realises that he has lost the message entrusted to him by Colonel Larrota and, instead, decides to relay the information contained in the message from memory. However, Rosario Díaz, unconvinced and fearing possible espionage by the Conservative army, distrusts José Celestino and orders his soldiers to execute him by firing squad. Facing imminent death, the narration then returns to the early stages of the Liberal uprising in Santander to reveal José Celestino's primary motivation for joining the Liberal army: the opportunity to meet Liberal army commander Rosario Díaz, who José Celestino desperately wants to believe is his biological father. This belief is explained in the following chapter "Sólo su madre sabía lo que iba a buscar," which narrates how Rosario Díaz, in the early stages of the Liberal uprising in Santander, was inspecting recruits in the main square of the novel's unnamed fictional city, where, on the same day, José Celestino and his mother were working on their fruit stall. At that moment, José Celestino catches a glimpse of Rosario Díaz glancing across the square, through the crowds of soldiers, and meeting eyes with his mother, to whom he offers a smile and a tip of his hat. Rosario Díaz's gesture to his mother in the town square that day leads José Celestino

to suspect that the high-ranking military commander could be his legitimate father. Later that day, José Celestino questions his mother about Rosario Díaz, but she neither confirms nor denies that he is the father. Instead, she tells her son a vague story of an amorous encounter she had with a wealthy landowner, who later became a military commander in the 1885 Civil War but whose name she supposedly never thought to ask. The event in the town square that day, and the unwillingness on the part of José Celestino's mother to reveal the identity of his father, gives José Celestino a reason to go off to war: to determine whether the military commander who gestured to his mother through the crowd of soldiers in the town square that day was, in fact, his father: "[…] la madre fue incapaz de esclarecer la mentira de su origen dando el falso nombre de su falso padre y obligó así al hijo a abandonar la casa para ir a la guerra a averiguarlo por sus propios medios" (232). After this flashback, the narration then returns to the present where José Celestino is tied to an almond tree with his shoes removed as the Liberal army's firing squad lines up to execute him along with other prisoners. However, just before any shots are fired, José Celestino is miraculously saved by Rosario Díaz's niece Magdalena, in whose house he had been staying and where he had left the secret message. Magdalena appears with the message in her hands, "[apresurando] el paso para llegar antes de los disparos" (234) and manages to halt the execution. José Celestino is then untied, his shoes returned to him, and Rosario Díaz approaches. The Liberal commander asks for his name, a question that previously, given the patriarchal violence metered out to this illegitimate child, would have caused him so much anguish because he was forced to answer with his stepfather's name and surname. Rosario Díaz's question, however, becomes the climactic conclusion to José Celestino's journey towards self-realisation and is the point at which the character's transition to manhood is complete. In response to the question, José Celestino decides this time to answer not with his stepfather's name and surname but instead with his maternal grandfather's: José Celestino Sul, the name suggested to him by Julia Valserra before he set out for war: "¿Y por

qué no usa entonces el nombre de su abuelo materno? Dije. Píenselo. Es bonito. Yo lo llamaré desde ahora así" (247). The act of adopting his maternal grandfather's name and surname, as previously proposed by Julia, represents for José Celestino the abandonment of the search for his legitimate father, the rejection of the patrilineal violence of his past and an embrace of the matrilineal and, by following Julia's advice, the feminine:

> - ¿Cómo se llama usted, hijo?
> Dudaste. El nombre que usabas, siempre que alguien lo preguntaba, era el nombre de tu padrastro. Un padre sin hijo no tenía futuro, pero un hijo sin padre no tenía pasado. Ahora usarías el nombre de tu abuelo y el apellido de tu madre porque ya no te importaba el nombre de tu padre. Ahora eras tu propio padre.
> --José Celestino Sul.
> --Pues a quien tiene que agradecerle es a mi sobrina, Celestino: con el espionaje que nos han desplegado ya no sabemos quién es de los nuestros o quién es del contrario.
> Moviste la cabeza afirmativamente, y te pusiste el sombrero para salir. (235)

By using his new name in Rosario Díaz's presence and symbolically putting on his hat, Jose Celestino's literal and metaphorical journey ends as his *Bildung* is now complete. In the final scene of "Fusilero," José Celestino's transformation is further consolidated when Rosario Díaz awards him what he had sought from the beginning of his journey: an official nom de guerre. Not convinced with the moniker given to him by his friend Duque at the start of his trip, José Celestino is now delighted with his new nom de guerre, *Jaguar*. At the end of the first of two Bildungsromane in *El año,* José Celestino has rejected the colonial violence of the hacienda, overcome the various mental and physical trials in a war-torn landscape, and triumphed over the patriarchal violence of illegitimacy to become a fully-fledged member in Rosario Díaz's division of the Liberal army. In this next section of the chapter, I will focus my analysis on what I argue is the second Bildungsroman in *El año*. I posit that this feminised version of the Bildungsroman, which follows the experiences of José Celestino Sul's pregnant lover, Julia Valserra, is employed to bring into sharper focus the female experience of war with its multifaceted examples of gendered violence.

Writing Civil War, Patriarchy and Family Trauma: Julia Valserra's "Voyage In"

"Valserra," is narrated in first-person through a series of Julia Valserra's diary entries, which means that, along with her third-person narration of José Celestino's journey in the first Bildungsroman, "Fusilero," the female voice occupies a large amount of narrative space in the novel overall. The prominence given to the female voice in the novel counters and complicates many of the conventions of realist genres like those of the Bildungsroman or the war novel, which would traditionally have a male voice at the centre of the narrative. Therefore, this could be read as another way Ferreira reimagines the traditional Bildungsroman in *El año*. Furthermore, the space apportioned to Julia Valserra's voice in the novel aligns with Ferreira's strategy from other novels analysed so far in this thesis like *La Balada* and *Rebelión* of inserting multiple voices into the stories and putting the subaltern and peripheral voices at the heart of his narratives.

In "Valserra," Julia Valserra writes, in a series of diary entries, about her experience living through the period around the Battle of Palonegro, as she is left behind in the city as her lover, and the father of her unborn child, goes off to war. She writes in notebooks that her father, unaware she keeps a diary, has given her to make an inventory of the products in his shop of imported goods. The entries in "Valserra" are, in fact, taken from two separate diaries: In one, which is dated, she documents, especially in the first section "Desnudarse para ir a rezar," the oppressive atmosphere in the city during the civil war and its impact on the mental health of women and children left behind; in the other, which is an undated secret diary, she writes about more intimate and taboo subjects:

> Mi padre no sabe que llevo un diario. Debe pensar que lo que escribo son los dietarios de contabilidad del almacén Valserra-Ultramarinos. Y es el cuaderno de contabilidad el que dejo siempre a su vista con las cuentas de los gastos para simular. Pero llevo dos cuadernos. El verdadero cuaderno con el diario fechado lo guardo en mi habitación. El diario secreto, este, sin fechas, lo escondo bajo llave. (300)

Through her diary entries, Julia Valserra goes on an interior journey where she documents life as an unmarried and pregnant woman left behind in the city during the civil war. Although Julia Valserra is mainly confined to her house, she too, like her lover José Celestino, undertakes her own journey of development and learning. Whereas José Celestino Sul's evolution comes about because of a "voyage out" where he is exposed to a bellicose landscape and the direct violence of war, Julia Valserra's *Bildung* derives from a journey inward through her diary entries, where she explores patriarchal family violence and what it means to be a woman living through the War of a Thousand Days. Julia's inward exploration brings to mind Susan J. Rosowski's categorisation of the female Bildungsroman as 'the novel of awakening.' Rosowski explains that, in this specific genre, the female protagonist's development differs from the protagonist in a male Bildungsroman. In the male Bildungsroman, the protagonist develops through discovering the possibilities of the world, or, as she calls it, 'an art of living.' However, in the female Bildungsroman, the protagonist's transformation comes about from becoming aware of the limitations placed on her as a woman:

> The direction of awakening follows what is becoming a pattern in literature by and about women: movement is inward, toward greater self-knowledge that leads in turn to a revelation of the disparity between the self-knowledge and the nature of the world. The protagonist's growth results typically not with 'an art of living,' as for her male counterpart, but instead with a realisation that for a woman such an art of living is difficult or impossible: it is an awakening to limitations. (49)

Rosowski's depiction here of the female Bildungsroman as an awakening of the protagonist to what she describes as "the disparity between the self-knowledge and the nature of the world" maps onto Julia's journey of self-discovery, where, through the act of writing a diary, she gains a level of insight into her predicament as a woman and explores childhood traumas and her family's history of patriarchal violence, all while documenting the bellicose atmosphere hanging over the city, with its violent effects felt by the people who are left behind, particularly other women. Additionally, the act of writing her diary also becomes a form of rebellion, which, in turn, enables her to undergo a process of transformation, where she affirms

her independence and rejects her father's and, more broadly, society's patriarchal expectations. Catherine Delafield, in her book *Women's Diaries as Narrative in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, surveys the literature on female diaries and identifies a performative function where, through their writing, women could reveal their secret self and rebel against certain expectations of patriarchy (2). In her discussion of female diaries, Felicity Nussbaum supports this performative function of diaries by describing them as "sites of resistance" in a patriarchal system (qtd. in Delafield 16). For Julia Valserra, confined to her home in "una gran casa vacía […] en el centro de [una] ciudad aburrida" (Ferreira, *El año* 354), the diary becomes a place where she can be open about her family history, daily life and the violent patriarchy that she is subjected to. According to Simons, "in an age when silence was generally considered to be a female virtue, and modesty a characteristic young girls were encouraged to develop, it was to their journals that women turned, when other channels of communication were closed to them. For some, even the act of writing a diary was considered to be subversive […]" (3). In her diary entries, Julia Valserra demonstrates that she is aware of the rebellious nature of writing a diary, as she goes to great lengths to keep it hidden from prying eyes, especially her father's: "Dejarlo al alcance de otros es peor que caminar desnuda: es como sentarme a ver mi propia autopsia. Debo llevarlo conmigo a todas partes. Esconderlo de la mirada de los profanos. De mi padre. De los curiosos" (Ferreira, *El año* 288).

"Valserra" is divided into three separate sections: "Desnudarse para ir a rezar," "Mujeres en un baile sin hombres" and "La hierba de las ruinas." Each of these three sections begins, firstly, with Julia's undated intimate diary, which then leads into the more extensive dated diary entries. In Julia's dated diary, which runs from 20th November 1899 through to 14th June 1900, she documents the violent atmosphere and mood in the city throughout the months leading up to and during the Battle of Palonegro. In some entries, she describes the rising tensions between Liberals and Conservatives, which spill over into violence between citizens:

"Todos parecen animales enojados. Unos desconfían de otros por el color de la camisa o por un comentario insolente sobre la guerra" (260). In an entry from 2nd December, Julia details an argument that breaks out between two customers in her father's shop, with one accusing the other of purchasing supplies to take back to the Liberals fighting in the hills just outside the city: "Un hombre insinuó a otro que compraba enlatados: '¿Comprando en la ciudad para llevar al monte?'. El otro, que venía armado, sacó el revólver y le apuntó al pecho: '¿Cómo dijo, sangre azul?" (260). In another entry from 23rd January, Julia writes about the murder of Renato Mota, a mentally ill childhood friend, who shouts out in the street in favour of Conservative president Manuel Antonio Sanclemente. He is then hacked to death by a supporter of the Liberals, who had purchased the machete in Julia's father's shop: "Un bandolero, borracho, se ofendió al oírlo, creyó que era un conservador que lo injuriaba, desenfundó el machete y lo partió a mandobles […]" (268). Additionally, Julia, like José Celestino's encounter with the supposed Liberal war hero, also illustrates the absurdity of war through the behaviour of citizens. She recalls one of her neighbours flying the red flag of the Liberal army when the Liberal soldiers marched by her house, but, after they had passed, changing it for the blue Conservative flag in anticipation of the Conservative soldiers' imminent arrival in the city. Julia describes noticing her neighbour's embarrased reaction once she realises she is being watched: "Al verme en la puerta del almacén observando la operación, la señorita Quijano de arriba se avergonzó, bajó la mirada y me dijo: ¿Su papá solo tiene la bandera azul?" (273).

As well as describing the tense mood generated by the civil war, in many diary entries, Julia focuses on the predicament of many of the women left behind in the city while the men have gone off to fight. In an entry from 25th February, she describes there being no men in the town square on that day, seeing only women with weary expressions who knew that their husbands were likely never to return from the battlefield:

> La plaza desnuda. El sol que cae al mediodía y aplasta. Los toldos blancos que resplandecen de luz. Algo extraño: no hay hombres, sólo mujeres; mujeres solas: mujeres con niños bajo sus faldas. Hay algo en la cara de esas mujeres… se miran por un momento y siguen como si nada, como hormigas cuando las soplan desde arriba, pero por dentro saben, muy dentro sienten lo que sienten, y presienten…. (291)

In another entry, Julia writes about the growing number of suicides in the city, mainly of women. She describes one woman, Digna Roth, who slit her wrists 27 times and is discovered by her children in the morning. News of the suicide reverberates around the town, and Julia imagines the scene for herself in the diary, "[…] ese cuerpo desnudo, tasajeado a navajazos" (265). Reflecting on the death in a later diary entry, Julia concludes that suicide has become the last option for many of the desperate women and children, who find themselves in total abandonment: "Razones para matarse sobran. Razones para quedarse son más difíciles de alcanzar. Hoy se suicidó un muchacho de catorce años, hijo de Etelvina Chaparro, envenenado. Basta con dos suicidios en la misma familia para que los demás se animen a intentarlo" (301). In an entry from 14th February, Julia describes a woman, Amparo Buenaventura, who has a mental breakdown after her husband, accused of being a Conservative informer, is shot and killed. After retrieving her husband's corpse, where "la cabeza del muerto terminó de desprenderse por el camino" (274), Amparo Buenaventura's mental state gradually deteriorates. Given the trauma of burying her husband, Amparo Buenaventura then walks naked through the streets and enters the church where she shouts "¡Mírenme: soy mujer!" (275) in front of the altar. Julia shows how the despair of the women left behind in the city leads them to mental breakdowns, where they are forced to act out to call attention to their plight. Julia appears to sympathise with Ampuero Buenaventura's rebellious act, stating that, like the suicides, walking into a church naked has become a last resort for many of these hopeless and abandoned women, describing it as, "el único acto revolucionario de una mujer" (275). Julia's documenting of these different instances of women's interior suffering and emotional pain all combine in this section to form an important counter-narrative, or "herstory," where women's

experiences are given prominence in the narrative in a way that would normally be absent in most other histories or stories of war. The focus on the forgotten victims of war in "Valserra" therefore mirrors the way José Celestino becomes a receptacle for the stories of marginalised victims of war in "Fusilero." Furthermore, the descriptions of the deterioration of women's mental health also act as a critique of the patriarchal violence at large in the society as the breakdowns and suicides are depicted as the logical consequences of a patriarchal system that constantly polices women's lives and shapes their lived experience.

As well as documenting the patriarchal violence unleashed on the women during the civil war, Julia's diary also allows her to work through the oppressive patriarchal structures that exist within her own family. For this part of my analysis, I will be using the definition of patriarchy developed by Sylvia Walby, who describes it "as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (214). Furthermore, it is also useful to mention Walby's division of patriarchy into two different types: public and private patriarchy. Private patriarchy, according to Walby, excludes women from most areas of social life and limits them to the domestic sphere, "[where] a patriarch [appropriates] women's services individually and directly in the apparently private sphere of the home" (228). This type of patriarchy, often referred to by some theorists as ideological patriarchy (Hunnitcutt), often takes place within family structures and can centre on women's subservience to men, particularly a wife's obedience to a husband to live up to certain gender roles (Sugarman & Frankel). Public patriarchy, on the other hand, not only excludes women but also subordinates women in all other areas of life and "takes places more collectively than individually" (Walby 228). Although Julia's diary entries reflect the wider public patriarchal attitudes of the time, her writing deals, in the main, with the patriarchal violence that she undergoes at the hands of her parents within the private sphere of the home.

In many of her diary entries, she writes extensively about how her father's obsession with producing a male heir to take over the family business and, more importantly, to prolong his surname has brought untold misery and suffering upon the family. In an early entry from the undated secret diary, Julia writes that because her father was never able to have a son, she would be the end of his family line, "[…] yo era el fin de la estirpe para él, porque su apellido moriría conmigo" (Ferreira, *El año* 249). According to Celia Amorós, the obsession with the continuation of the male line, which she refers to as *Nombre del Padre*, is a salient feature of patriarchy: "Una de las obsesiones de la razón patriarcal es la legitimación genealógica de la primogenitura, de la ajudicación de la parte privilegiada de la herencia […] El patriarcado es profundamente cómplice de las divisiones en clases porque necesita clasificar, porque sin clasificación discriminatoria no hay herencia ni genealogía" (78). The focus, in this part of the novel, on the investment of society in male heirs and their entitlements and their rights to money and property, which is a trope to relevant to many cultures globally, means that "Valserra" could be read as a more universal story than "Fusilero," which is concerned more with Colombian history and the events of the War of a Thousand Days.

Throughout the diary entries, Julia recalls how her father's determination to produce a male heir drove her mother to madness, with Julia suffering the repercussions through the physical and emotional abuse she suffered as a child. Julia begins by recalling the early life of her mother, Concepción, and how she grew up in a context of family violence. When Julia's maternal grandmother died, Concepción effectively became her father's husband and her siblings' mother. At the same time, she is forced into an incestuous relationship with her uncle and falls pregnant. This results in her leaving for the city to have an abortion and start a new life away from her abusive family. Once she arrives, she works as a domestic servant in the Valserra household and begins a relationship with Antonio Valserra, which produces Julia. The news of Concepción's pregnancy angers Antonio Valserra's mother, who is horrified to find

out that her son, "habia preñado a la sirvienta de su propia casa" (Ferreira, *El año* 304) and dishonoured the family name. Under pressure from her new husband to conceive a boy, Concepción visits a local healer, Luz Mercedes, who provides her with "un remedio de fertilidad" (350). However, Concepción fails to produce the male heir for her husband, and she falls into despair and rejects her new-born daughter, who she refuses to breastfeed: "Su última oportunidad de tener un hijo varón, heredero de todo. Por eso no me amamantó. Por eso me rechazó desde la cuna" (314). Julia's mother's emotional state further deteriorates when, after Julia's birth, her husband goes searching for the male heir outside of the marriage and has a child with another woman, "mi padre se acercó la vendedora más joven de la plaza, hasta que aquella mujer quedó preñada" (314). However, this extramarital relationship also fails to produce Antonio Valserra's "sueño seminal" (249), as his mistress gives birth to another girl named Alma. As he was expecting a boy, Antonio does not recognise his new baby daughter and refuses to give her his surname. It should be noted here that Julia's father's patriarchal violence, operating at the family level, is another form of cyclical and historic violence, "que hunde sus raíces en una especie de justificación de larga data" (Reguillo), which could be understood as also reproducing many of the patriarchal structures embedded in ideas surrounding nationhood, such as "women […] as biological reproducers of 'the nation,'" (Yuval-Davis 37), who are submissive and restricted to motherhood, and men as strong and dominant figureheads of the nation who drive progress (Nagel 242). Julia's mother's name, Concepción, further points to her primary function within the family and also symbolises women's roles as mothers and reproducers in the construction of nation-states.

When Julia meets Alma years later as an adult, Alma tells her that her father rejected her because, "[…] esperaba que fuera un hijo varón y llevara su apellido, pero nací mujer," to which Julia replies, "Yo también debí ser varón" (Ferreira, *El año* 308). The sight of a young Alma in the town torments Concepción, who makes sure that Julia, who physically resembles

her half-sister, is never dressed wearing the same clothes: “el parecido incomodaba a mi madre: si Alma estaba vestida con falda blanca, me hacía cambiar la mía por otra de color celeste” (310). On one occasion, when Julia and Alma manage to sneak off to play together in the town square, their mothers quickly separate them, and Alma is forced to return a piece of cloth that Julia had given her as a gift. To worsen the situation, Julia is admonished instead of being comforted by Concepción: “¡Eso le pasa por jugar con bastardas!” (313). From this day on, Concepción takes her anger at her inability to provide her husband with a male heir out on her daughter, “No me perdonabas haber nacido mujer porque tu marido quería varón, un heredero” (341). Concepción’s misery at the situation, coupled with the repression of her traumatic memories of childhood, results in her mother subjecting Julia to various forms of physical and emotional abuse. In the throes of a nervous breakdown, Concepción even begins to confuse Julia with her own mother, and Julia tries to keep out of her mother’s way and hide from her during these delusional espisodes: “De noche te oía pedir perdón al otro lado de la pared y decir que no lo volverías a hacer, ante el fantasma de mi abuela; siempre que me confundías a mí con tu propria madre, se me erizaba la piel, volteaba a ver y no veía nada” (343). These scenes in the novel serve to highlight the way in which patriarchal belief systems that relegate women to reproducers, and in Julia’s mother's case, force her to produce a male heir, are in turn internalised and replicated by women (Becker). This can be observed in the way Concepción, unable to come to terms with her inability to produce a male heir for her husband, reproduces violent patterns of patriarchal behaviour by mistreating and punishing her daughter for her own perceived failings.

This internalisation and reproduction of patriarchal violence by women can be further evidenced in the way Concepción desperately attempts to mould Julia into what she considers a woman, encapsulated, at a certain point, in a question she asks her daughter: “¿Quiere ser una marimacha o quiere ser una princesa?” (341). This question also illustrates a violent dualistic

system of gender construction, often referred to using Freud's madonna-whore dichotomy, where female identity can only be understood using rigid, binary definitions of pure or promiscuous, or, in the case of Julia, a mannish girl or a princess. This binary patriarchal gender system can be evidenced in Concepción's attempts to make her daughter into a princess when she buys her a wedding dress and forces her try it on: "Me sentí extravagante, ridícula, como una futura esposa de ocho años de edad" (344). Then, to prepare her daughter for marriage, Concepción brings Julia to the church to take part in her first holy communion, where she is subjected to further violence through the molestations of a lecherous priest in the confessional. Additionally, her mother forces her to learn what she believes are essential female behaviours, chores and pastimes, such as playing the piano, sitting upright in a chair, cleaning the kitchen and putting away the silverware. Julia, however, resists Concepción's violent imposition of gender roles and sabotages her mother's efforts by breaking plates and singeing bedsheets with an iron, for which she receives, "palmadas […], pellizcos, torcidos, y pastorejos" (346). In a desperate attempt to fight Concepción, Julia even cuts all her hair off and convinces her mother that she is a boy trapped in a girl's body: "no me quiso hablar en meses, hasta que creció mi nuevo pelo" (344). Over time, Concepción's mental deterioration becomes more severe, and she resolves to poison her husband and daughter's soup, "Tengo una hija que debió haber sido varón y un marido que me engaña […] Voy a servirles el murrio" (348). However, Julia's tender voice, asking her mother, "¿Por qué huele [la sopa] tan rico, mamita?" (348), brings Concepción to her senses as she smashes the bowls on the floor and attacks her husband in front of her daughter: "Enseguida mi padre se puso en pie y ella le lanzó varios puños en el pecho. Mi padre la sujetó" (349). The final family trauma that Julia suffers happens, some years later, when she witnesses her mother succumb to leprosy and watches as her father sends her away to a lazaretto, which is the last Julia ever sees of her mother.

By using the diary to examine her family trauma, Julia works through her past and the cycles of patriarchal violence she has undergone. This lays the groundwork for a confrontation with her father about his past in the violent climax of "Valserra" where, in an unthinkable act, Julia shoots a seditious Conservative soldier. This shooting leads to a moment of revelation, where she can envisage a new life away from the patriarchal violence of her past. In the final section of "Valserra," entitled "La hierba de las ruinas," Julia's journey towards freedom, which she begins initially through her writing, becomes complete as she gains a level of independence and freedom outside the confines of her diary. In the final two months of her diary entries, which coincide with the days preceding and following the Battle of Palonegro, Julia describes how the Conservatives have taken control of the city. During these weeks, Conservative Lieutenant Mariano Madrid begins to visit the shop and befriends her father over various glasses of sherry. Julia's father, who supports the Conservative forces, welcomes him and makes an exception to his rule never to drink with customers in the shop, "[porque] hay que celebrar que volvió el gobierno legítimo, dice" (357). During May, Mariano Madrid continues to visit and, encouraged by her father, attempts to court Julia, who avoids his lustful glances and rejects his advances. Julia starts to suspect that her father is trying to match her up with the lieutenant, who she considers to be a coward as he does not want to be sent to fight in the Battle of Palonegro where, as Mariano Madrid reports to her father, "Hay muertos por todos lados. […] Los están matando como perros" (382). During these days, Julia watches the Battle of Palonegro through binoculars from a church tower and even volunteers to work as a nurse in a field hospital set up by the nuns to receive the injured and mutilated Liberal soldiers. During the days of the battle, Julia engages in a heated discussion with her father, who tells her that he knows that she is pregnant with José Celestino, whom he refers to as "ese pión" (395) and exhorts her to accept Mariano Madrid's advances as, according to her father, if she does not marry, she will forever be seen as a spinster. This scene, in particular, is another example

of how "Valserra" documents the limiting parameters around women's lives that restrict them, as alluded to earlier with the binary gender constructions, to the categories of mother, wife, spinster or whore. For Julia's father, Mariano Madrid's proposal becomes his daughter's final opportunity to marry and dispel her reputation as a spinster. Julia defies her father by telling him that she intends never to marry and that her son will bear the Valserra surname, to which her father replies that an illegitimate child will never inherit his shop: "No me haga reir. ¿Un bastardo heredará el almacén Valserra-Ultramarinos? […] se va a quedar solterona, y con un hijo bastardo" (396). Julia finally stands up to her father, accusing him of hypocrisy and reminding him of the misery he has caused the whole family with his fixation on the continuation of the family name: "[…] usted traicionó a mi madre. Que usted quería un hijo varón y lo buscó fuera del matrimonio. Que usted abandonó a una hija tenida por fuera del matrimonio por el simple hecho de haber nacido mujer. Usted hizo que mi madre se volviera loca" (394). After the heated argument with her father, Julia resolves to forge a new life for herself, where she is free of her father's and society's patriarchal gender roles and can dedicate herself to a true vocation: "Una nueva vida sin realizaciones conyugales. Nuevas realizaciones. Hacer que este sea mi nuevo pasado. No más ultramarinos. Perseguiré una vocación" (396).

In the climactic final scene of "Valserra," Julia describes being awoken in the middle of the night to find that her father has been taken hostage at gunpoint by Mariano Madrid, who has deserted the Conservative army to avoid being sent to Palonegro and has sought refuge in the shop, with two Conservative soldiers waiting outside to arrest him. In a pivotal moment, which mirrors her lover José Celestino's moment of transformation when he abandons the search for his father at the end of *"*Fusilero," Julia takes decisive action and shoots Mariano Madrid with one of her father's firearms. At this moment, Julia converts her initial rebellion of writing in the diary into a tangible act by saving her father's life, shooting dead her suitor and symbolically putting an end to her father's wish for her to marry:

> Quedé aturdida. Nunca pensé que sería capaz de algo así. Mi vida ya no sería la misma. Caminé hasta la silla del escritorio y me dejé caer y me apreté las sienes y me quedé observando el almacén destrozado. […] Quizás el primer momento de libertad de mi nueva vida fuera haberle disparado a un hombre por la espalda. El segundo sería asumir la responsabilidad de esa agresión. (405)

In the final entries of her diary, Julia goes to the battlefield of Palonegro to help retrieve the corpses of the dead Liberal soldiers and wonders if she will find the body of her lover and the father of her child, José Celestino, among the dead: "¿Qué encontraremos allí arriba aparte de buitres que hunden su pico en el reino de la pobredumbre? Voy a buscarte entre los muertos porque no soporto más la espera. Alguien debe haberte visto. Alguien debe saber de ti" (410). In the month following the Battle of Palonegro, and after never finding José Celestino, there are epidemics of yellow fever, smallpox and dysentery in the city. Julia writes about returning home one day to find her father burning up with fever and having convulsions, and she realises that he will not survive much longer. On his deathbed, he asks Julia to promise him that she will one day marry and carry on the family's legacy. In her response, however, she reaffirms her earlier transformation, after the shooting of Mariano Madrid, telling him that she does not intend to marry and that she will continue the family name by other means, namely by dedicating her time to her true vocation of writing: "[…] Pide de nuevo que le haga esa promesa, que haré grande su apellido. El aliento que sale de su boca contiene un hedor a muerte. Le prometo que enalteceré su apellido. Le aclaro que publicaré libros y los firmaré y eso mantendrá su nombre en alto" (415). At the end of the Battle of Palonegro, and after her father's death, Julia Valserra's journey inward comes to a close with her refusing to assimilate into the patriarchal society in an act of self-affirmation, where she resolves to devote herself to her one true calling: writing. The way in which Julia rejects the patriarchal expectations of her family and society at the end of "Valserra," similar to José Celestino's transition to manhood at the end of "Fusilero," allows Julia to achieve a moment of revelation where she strives to forge her own path and seeks, in the words of Virginia Woolf, "a room of her own" in which to write.

At this point in the novel, it appears that, despite undergoing multiple gendered violences of war, José Celestino and Julia Valserra emerge as transformed individuals. However, in the third part of the novel, "El eclipse," José Celestino's transformation at the end of "Fusilero" is seemingly cancelled out by his death at the end of the Battle of Palonegro.

In "Epilogue," the two *Bildungshelden* José Celestino and Julia Valserra appear to be briefly reunited as a weary José Celestino is lying injured on a battlefield littered with corpses. For a moment, he sees an apparition of Julia, who, along with other volunteers, is gathering up "calaveras de rostros desconocidos que luego deposita una sobre otra en forma de pirámide" (599), an apparent reference to the real-life ossuary of victims of Palonegro, later photographed by Amalia Ramirez Ordoñez in 1901. This vision of Julia, however, perhaps only a "espejismo de la resolana" (602), is abruptly interrupted by José Celestino's violent death at the hands of oncoming Conservative soldiers, who slit his throat in the final action of the novel: "[…] el corte helado del metal le traspasa la garganta. [...] La mujer ya no está" (603). José Celestino's death at the end of the novel, unlike Julia's transformation, therefore, effectively nullifies his *Bildung* obtained throughout "Fusilero," and reads, I argue, as a commentary on the failed attempt to unify the country through war and about how its young citizens, who are traditionally the promise of the nation in the classic Bildungsroman, are brutally sacrificed in the violent process of nation-building. This bleak vision of the nation is further underscored in the final line of the novel, "Lejos del cuerpo, la batalla continúa" (603), which could be understood as not only referring to the continuation of the War of a Thousand Days after the Battle of Palonegro, but also to the subsequent violent episodes of Colombia's history, which were to come later and have been analysed in previous chapters of this thesis, where the Liberals and Conservatives have morphed into new actors such as left-wing guerrilla groups, far-right paramilitary groups and violent state forces and which continue to this day as various armed dissident and drug-funded groups.

CONCLUSION

Counter-Histories and the *Pentalogía* in the Context of the Peace Accords and *Informe Final*

In the preceding chapters, I have analysed the multi-faceted manifestations of violence throughout Daniel Ferreira's *Pentalogía*, and, in doing so, I have paid particular attention to the wide range of narrative devices, strategies and techniques that Ferreira has employed in his novels to bring new insight and understanding to different periods of Colombia's 20th-century violence: a narrative focus on extreme, marginal and perpetrator violence; the blurring and confluence of disparate spatio-temporalities of violence; the chorus of peripheral voices that question official accounts of history; and the incorporation of a range of diverse discourses, registers and genres, such as the Bildungsroman. In examining violence in the novels, I have employed a diverse palette of theoretical approaches that help elucidate how the multiple violences analysed have arisen, manifested and morphed throughout the *Pentalogía*. Through emphasis on Ferreira's use of multiple narrative devices, I have also demonstrated how the *Pentalogía* builds on the long-standing literary tradition of violence in Colombian narratives, particularly as a successor to the novels that Figueroa categorised as *narrativas de la violencia*, because of the *Pentalogía*'s experimentalism and its sharper and more profound reflections on the different eras of Colombian violence.

One of the main research questions outlined in the introduction to this thesis was related to understanding the ways in which Ferreira examines the *grietas* between official accounts of history. By way of an overall conclusion to the thesis, I would like to argue here that Ferreira, through his narratives, has examined these historical gaps by constructing various counter-histories about disparate periods of Colombian violence. In the novels analysed in previous chapters, I have demonstrated how they work to counter dominant official narratives by shedding new light on twentieth-century Colombian violence. In *La balada*, I posit that the

novel works as a counter-history through the way the narrative foregrounds manifestations of extreme violence that are on the margins of the conflict and not commonly discussed or narrated in other fictional accounts of violence, such as 'social cleansing' murders, paramilitary massacres from the perspective of the perpetrator and extreme domestic and familial violence as an effect of the larger social-political conflict. Furthermore, I show how *La balada* works as a counter-history in the way it controversially explores how the ubiquitous violence in society has blurred the presumed clear lines between victims and victimisers. In *Viaje*, on the other hand, I argue that Ferreira creates a counter-history in the novel through the way he experiments with the merging and blending of spatio-temporalities to demonstrate that specific episodes of historical violence, such as paramilitarism, cannot be viewed in isolation and should instead be tied to or contextualised within earlier periods of violence. This is particularly evident in the way *Viaje* traces paramilitary massacres of the 1980s to the state repression of Bolshevik revolutions of the 1920s and the way that past violence, passed down through the generations from father to daughter and from grandfather to grandson, haunts and shadows the present and future in the novel. In *Rebelión*, the novel could be understood as exploring the *grietas* of history and constructing a counter-history by the way it reinserts into historical memory, through a multiplicity of genres, registers and discourses, the voices of subaltern subjects concerning the land disputes of the 1960s/1970s National Front. In *Rebelión*, Ferreira exposes official accounts of history, transmitted through the hegemonic voices in the novel, to a chorus of peripheral voices, which causes official history to fracture and allows for alternative versions to seep into the cracks. Finally, in *El año*, I argue that Ferreira constructs a counter-history of the War of a Thousand Days by exploring the conflict from the bottom up. This is evident in how the novel shifts the focus away from the critical historical events and figures to foreground the subjective experiences of war of a lowly foot soldier and his pregnant lover in a subaltern and feminine-inflected approach to narrating civil war.

At this point in my conclusion, I will briefly focus on the final instalment of Ferreira's *Pentalogía*, *Recuerdos*. Because of the novel's 2022 publication date, towards the later stages of my research, and the limitations of space and word count, the novel falls outside the scope of this thesis. However, I will briefly describe the novel, explain how it fits in with Ferreira's other narratives and lay out possible avenues for future research. *Recuerdos* deals with the rural violence of the Conservative-Liberal *bipartidismo*, covering the tumultuous decades of the 1920s to 1950s, with the specific backdrop of the foreign oil exploitation in towns on the banks of the Magdalena River and the police repression of the strikes by trade unions and oil workers. Set in the fictionalised town of Puerto del Cacique, which appears to be a thinly veiled Barrancabermeja, the novel centres around the disappearance of the character Alejandro Plata, a young man working in the development of the railroads for the petrol companies in Puerto del Cacique. *Recuerdos* shares many characteristics with the first four novels of the *Pentalogía* analysed in this thesis, such as narrative fragmentation; polyphony; intertextuality, with characters from previous novels reappearing in the stories; circular temporality; the blending of fiction and history; and the inclusion of an assortment of documents and archival material. Although present in other novels in the *Pentalogía*, particularly *Viaje* and *El año*, in *Recuerdos* there is a greater emphasis on nature and the natural world, primarily through the descriptions of the flora and fauna found on the banks of the Magdalena River. Research into this novel, therefore, might look at the representation of nature in the novel, particularly the foregrounding of the Magdalena River and the juxtaposition between the sublime descriptions of natural beauty and the tragic images of the exploitation of nature, police repression and violence. Additionally, future research on the *Pentalogía* might look at how Ferreira, as I have explored with his first four novels, continues to explore the *grietas* of history and violence in *Recuerdos*, looking particularly at how the novel, through what Ferreira describes as an "archivo roto," (Ferreira, "El río") counteracts official amnesia by reinstating the memory of the disappeared.

In the final part of the conclusion, I would like to situate Ferreira's *Pentalogía* in the current context in Colombia surrounding the search for truth and the construction of collective memory in light of the 2016 peace accords between the Manuel Santos Government and the FARC. Throughout different periods of Colombian violence, there have been various institutional attempts in the form of multiple truth commissions to explain the violence, give voice to the victims and recuperate collective memory. However, unlike other Latin American countries such as Argentina and Chile, which have gone through periods of post-dictatorship and attempts to reckon with past violence at the cessation of military regimes, because of the cyclical nature of the violence in Colombia, the country's efforts to understand the conflict have been forced to take place while the violence is still ongoing. With the ratification of the 2016 peace agreement, it could be argued now that, although the violence has not entirely ceased, Colombia has entered its own period of post-conflict, which will allow the country to create a distance from its past and begin constructing collective memory, as Ferreira himself has stated in a recent interview:

> Hemos entrado en algo que las generaciones anteriores no tuvieron por estar transitando entre oleadas de violencias: el tiempo de la memoria. Es una fase de catarsis. Este año, 2023, hemos oído algunas de las verdades más sobrecogedoras sobre el conflicto armado y ahora tenemos que integrarlas como sociedad y evitar que algo tan atroz como los "falsos positivos" (ejecuciones extrajudiciales con recompensa) vuelva a repetirse." ("La Pentalogía")

Ferreira argues that the 2016 peace agreement has created a space where the country can finally take stock of its past. This process has been given additional impulse with the recent publication of the *Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad*, the first instalment of which was presented to the nation by the President of the Commission Francisco de Roux on 28th June 2022. The Truth Commission, which was established as part of the peace talks between the Colombian Government and the FARC in Havana, began its mission in 2018 and set up 28 'truth houses' all over the country where it carried out roughly 15,000 individual and collective interviews, gathering approximately 30,000 testimonies, such as those of members of different

armed groups, civilian victims, and even former presidents ("La comisión"). Although the peace accords and the Truth Commission have had their detractors, especially former president Álvaro Uribe and his political party *Centro Democrático,* there is renewed hope within Colombian society that the *Informe Final* can finally provide a starting place from which to heal wounds, reconstruct collective memory and avoid the repetition of the seemingly endless cycles of violence. In addition to the peace accords and the *Informe Final*, Gustavo Petro's leftist government aims to achieve what it terms "total peace," the full implementation of the 2016 peace accords and fresh peace negotiations with other remaining armed actors such as ELN, FARC dissidents and other drug-funded criminal groups.

Within this post-conflict climate and Gustavo Petro's policy of 'total peace,' I would like to conclude this thesis with a final reflection on the *Pentalogía* and the current moment of the country. Although there is a long-standing literary tradition of works dealing with the violence in Colombia, it could be argued that this new climate of reconciliation in the country, brought about by the 2016 peace accords and the *Informe Final,* creates the conditions for an audience and readership that is more receptive to and interested in seeking out literary representations of violence. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Ferreira's first three novels *La Balada* (2011) and *Viaje* (2011) and *Rebelión* (2014) were initially published outside Colombia and were subsequently republished by Alfaguara in 2019, 2017, and 2015 respectively. Perhaps the republication of these novels in Colombia by a significant editorial like Alfaguara indicates a new openness and receptivity to art forms reflecting the years of violence. Therefore, as they have done throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, literature and other art forms, like the *Pentalogía,* will continue to play a vital role in narrating the past. I conclude this thesis with Ferreira's own words, in which he underlines literature's place in working to better understand the different eras of violence and resisting amnesia and official history. According to Ferreira, literature can never be a surrogate for memory, but, as

a conclusion, I would like to argue that narrative projects like the *Pentalogía* can be a starting point for reimagining the past and beginning the process of constructing collective memory for the countless victims of the conflict, especially within the context of Colombia's drive to achieve lasting peace and to put an end to the century-long spiral of violence:

> […] los gobiernos aprovechan la amnesia colectiva para acomodar el relato oficial y negar que ha sido el magnicidio, el oprobio, la tortura, el exterminio, el holocausto, lo que decide el monopolio del poder. El arte se resiste y trabaja contra ese borrado natural y sistemático. Por eso está después de la memoria, no en lugar de la memoria. Tenemos pasado. Hay realidad. Hay hechos. Hay testigos. Hay memoria. Hay crónica. Hay historia. Hay historia madre. Y hay literatura. ("El arte")

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