

Art and memory: Magdalenas¹ por el Cauca²

Neyla Graciela Pardo Abril¹

¹ Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia

Corresponding author: Neyla Graciela Pardo Abril (ngpardoa@unal.edu.co)

Published 12 January 2022

Abstract

Adopting an interdisciplinary framework of Memory Studies and Art and employing semiotics with a multimodal and multimedia character, it is explored how social groups in Colombia memorialise the violence of the internal armed conflict. The reflection associates the victims' experiences with those expressions of commemoration and remembrance that are narratives embodied in visual and scenic art. It is explored how a semiotic landscape of memory is created through a performative artistic proposal. In this landscape, not only cultural frames can be determined, but also the semiotic-discursive resources that give meaning to the relationship between art and memory. The aim is to characterise the performance known as *Magdalenas por el Cauca* (2008) which was recorded audiovisually in several spaces on the internet. It means that, in addition to the ephemeral *mise-en-scène*, there are records of the performative and communicative work. In this article, we analyse the video *X PEREGRINACION TRUJILLO y MAGDALENAS POR EL CAUCA* (2010), one of the records that perpetuates *Magdalenas por el Cauca*. This reparation act is an audiovisual narrative with ethical and political character and produced collectively by relatives of victims, witnesses, artists and other interlocutors, which interpret and assign new meanings to the performance.

Key Words

Colombian armed conflict, *Magdalenas por el Cauca*, multimodal and multimedia semiotics, X pilgrimage Trujillo

Introduction

Latin American societies and particularly Colombia have suffered several periods of systematic violence perpetrated by different types of actors. As a response to the victimising events, collective processes of symbolic reparation have emerged within the communities. One of the main purposes of those processes is the social construction of new meanings as traumatic experiences that “fracture those spatial and symbolic referents used by the communities to organise normal life activities” (Martínez Quintero 2013: p. 40).

Meaning-making processes allow the building of new forms of individual collective organisation and an exploration of updated forms of being and inhabiting the world. It is not only about recovering a version of the past; it is also about looking at its effects in the present and future. “X PEREGRINACIÓN TRUJILLO y MAGDALENAS POR EL CAUCA” (2010) is not only a video, but a work of symbolic reparation that aims to make the past understandable and to help to clarify specific events. This clarification encourages a potential healing process for survivors and victims' relatives in their role as active social subjects.

¹ Magdalena refers to the woman who lamented for Jesus Christ, who died after the crucifixion. ‘Cries more than a Magdalene’ is a popular phrase in Colombia and the term has been appropriated to symbolize the suffering of women in grieving for their relatives.

² Grupo Colombiano de Análisis del Discurso Mediático through ONALME (National Observatory of Memory Processes) cooperates with the network SPEME (Spaces of Memory) on collective memory and memorialisation processes. SPEME – *Questioning Traumatic Heritage: Spaces of Memory in Europe, Argentina, Colombia* has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme and develops a joint programme between universities and technical institutions from Europe and Latin America (Project ID: 778044).

Colombia has suffered under an internal armed conflict that has left 9,165,126 victims (Unidad de Víctimas 2021, RNI retrieved 31 July 2021) due to crimes such as homicide and enforced disappearance, both with a balance of 1,253,597 victims (Unidad de Víctimas 2021, RNI retrieved 31 July 2020). In this social framework, it is our aim to explore the political potentialities of participatory and collaborative forms of artistic practices, in which memorialisation processes are committed to create, distribute, and socialise collective memories of mass violence in the period after the signing of the historic 2016 peace agreement in the Colombian post-conflict. It is necessary to mention that, despite the agreement, the internal armed conflict is not yet over, a condition that is pivotal in its memorialisations as it deepens processes of revictimisation.

The memorialisation, analysed in this paper, corresponds to the victims in the Municipalities of Trujillo, Tuluá and Riofrío, located in the northwest of the Antioquia Department³, between 1986 and 1994, a case that was followed up and interpreted by the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Center for Historical Memory) (2008). According to the information from relatives and humanitarian organisations, 342 victims of homicide, torture and enforced disappearance were registered as the outcome of a joint action on drug traffickers from the north of the Valle Department led by Diego Montoya and Henry Loaiza, paramilitary groups, and the Colombian Military Forces (Revista Semana 2008). The operation was part of a series of joint operations against the guerrillas in this area and in search of territorial control. Trujillo's inhabitants had to witness and suffer selective murders, tortures, forced displacements and enforced disappearances. Additionally, practices such as "social cleansing", assassination of key witnesses, were also carried out so that the crimes would remain in impunity. After these heinous crimes, the bodies were opened, filled with cement, and thrown into the Cauca River so they would not float. The river became a mass grave where the remains of the civilian population were hidden.

"Magdalenas por el Cauca" is a visual and artistic narrative that gives a concrete expression to the necessity of remembering the victims of Trujillo's massacre. In Colombia, the construction of collective memory through art has made it possible to create spaces that interrelate the artistic and political dimensions. This process fosters the appropriation of a civil culture by the citizens as new forms of knowledge are built. In the last decades of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century, Colombian artists have sought to represent violence through different formats and technical media: "installation, video, performance, drawing, interventions in public space, community art etc." (Ramos Delgado and Aldana Bautista 2016: p. 47).

Participatory art has been one of the most relevant art modalities. In this practice, artists elaborate a conceptual

proposal which is executed and, in this case, critically reviewed by survivors, their families, witnesses and a team of artists committed to memory building in Trujillo. This way of producing art focuses on the set of human relationships in their social contexts, rather than on producing meanings as something exclusive or private: the interlocution, the dialogism and the possibility of recovery and dignifying of the "other", are some characteristics of this relational form of interaction (about the interaction ritual, c.f. Bal 2010). Thus, the act of co-creation appears: the author's role is subordinated, and the artistic practice acquires more relevance, making more explicit its purpose of social transformation. As the exhibition pieces are elaborated through collaborative work, they fulfil the requirement of participation and, at the same time, manage conditions of symbolic reparation (Lleras et al. 2019).

The artists Gabriel Posada and Yorlady Ruiz conceived and gave material shape to the work of art for the very first-time in 2008. The exhibition is a combination of a performance and some paintings on rafts where the artist depicted faces of the mothers whose sons and daughters disappeared or were murdered and whose remains are still in the river. This is a "site of memory" where the victims' relatives perform remembrance rituals. In 2010, a pilgrimage along the Cauca River, together with an exhibition, brought about the whole artistic experience. "X Peregrinación Trujillo y Magdalenas por el Cauca" (Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5EshU1M_CQ) shows how a sociocultural and political phenomenon gets the dimension of persistence over time and is part of a process of massive visualisation in culture. The video, object of our analysis, makes possible to deduce schemes, to identify codes and to recover meanings and social interactions as it is an action motivated and structured through collective interest. It is also an action orientated towards and coordinated with "others" who act as actors or participants and establish relationships with each other that involve not only people, but also objects.

Collective memories, co-creative art and symbolic reparation

Social groups and victims of the armed conflict and of historical violence, in general, find spaces of memory in artistic expressions. Spaces of memory are understood as series of existential relations that guarantee dialogues and interactions related, not only to strategies for context transformation, but also those ways of representation of violent events that define the condition of "victim". In spaces of memory, meanings of location, territory, areas of influence, ethical and political responsibilities, power relationships and resistance exercises, *inter alia*, are re-

3 A Department is a territorial and administrative division in Colombia.

covered. In spaces of memory, the knowledge, linked to traumatic events, is appropriated and socialised. Thus, these events are updated for the purpose of identifying and imaging ways of social co-existence. Spaces of memory are semiotic and discursive expressions that shape diverse ways of understanding social existence since they build and give sense to the semiotic devices. All works of art, ethically and politically focused on the dignity and visibility of victims, are considered actions of symbolic reparation (Moffett 2015). It can be conceptualised as the set of governmental and socio-cultural policies and actions aimed to guarantee the victim's dignity, eliminating all forms of re-victimisation. In addition, if survivors, witnesses and supportive communities are called to participate in the artistic production, the result is necessarily a co-creation or a participatory work of art.

Participatory or collective artistic expressions are practices that formulate spectra of co-creation in which co-authorship is legitimised on the aesthetic and political conceptualisation of the narrative (Osorio Bermeo 2018). This double condition grants the work of art the potential to become the support and the negotiating process for symbolic reparation. The reparation is integral and comprises two aspects: material and symbolic. Reparations are mechanisms through which governments open spaces for the victims to express suffering, to guarantee their individual and collective acknowledgement and to promote their dignification. In these spaces, processes aimed to fulfil the moral and legal obligation to provide material and symbolic reparations are associated with processes that guarantee the necessary socio-economic conditions for the victims and their communities to have a dignified life (Naidu 2004). Symbolic reparation, according to the Victims and Land Restitution Law, “includes the display of works or acts of public scope or repercussion aimed at the construction and recovery of historical memory, the recognition of the dignity of the victims and the reconstruction of the social fabric” (Law 1448 of 2011).

Art has the power to creatively represent painful experiences as, through its narrative, it enhances dialogical and restorative collective memories. Art encourages citizen action and seeks for more horizontal political exercises that could promote a transformation of a social context. In collective memory, all remembrances from the past are interwoven and shape a common knowledge in a social group. However, this conceptualisation, originating in the work of Maurice Halbwachs (1992), does not make clear the connection with the political “doing” and “acting” of societies. Collective memory has a political function linked to the narrative that is expressed, silenced or forgotten (Jelin 2020). In the post-agreement phase in Colombia (2016), the rewriting of memory's narratives have also meant that the government, elite and power groups have used the tensions over the memory of the internal armed conflict to deny or distort what happened in the conflict. This has encouraged the

return to old and new versions of the violence. These are useful to current socio-economic and political interests which are linked to the mechanism of neoliberal policies that are unaware of a sense of community identity, of the collective organisations and of the multicultural and multi-ethnic character of the country, constitutionally established in 1991.

The resulting socio-cultural consequences imply forms of revictimisation of those who are marginalised for not falling within the ethnic, cultural and socio-political standards of the nation, even when they are functionally and factually members of society. In this process of discrimination, a hierarchy of victims is created and actors, who, in many cases, are perceived by communities of victims as perpetrators, are imposed as heroes. Collective memory becomes a source for the construction of identities as it enhances dignity and self-respect of victimised individuals and communities.

The audiovisual narrative recovers a collective effort to represent the unrepresentable of the violence of the Colombian armed conflict. Thus, the video becomes a symbolic and material connection that enables a transition from conflict, pain and death into ways of explaining, understanding and interpreting the traumatic experience as it recovers the aesthetics of the victim and updates that of the perpetrators. From this perspective, the short documentary interweaves sound and visual elements making visible diverse voices in the construction of a narrative, articulated to the socio-political and cultural death of those defenceless people, whose acts of resistance transit the Cauca River. The relationship between the individuals and the objects is part of the staging's iconology. The victims' clothing embodies not only a sense of absence but, specifically, recovers the sense of the need for justice for a specific criminal act. In this case, the crime is, in the typology of the armed conflict, “enforced disappearance”.

In the national shift that Colombia is experiencing still in 2021, a visual and artistic work, such as “X Peregrinación Trujillo y Magdalena por el Cauca”, uses a creative strategy that updates itself to question the absence of policies and governmental efforts for memory building. In the framework of the post-peace-agreement phase and with a still ongoing armed conflict, the memory actions have not been capable of responding to the challenges of the integral reparation process. Society responds by structuring a process stemming from the survivors, the collectivities, the supportive society, the victimised groups and the artists. The interests and attitudes of the political and economic elite, along with the absence of international cooperation for a permanent cessation of human rights violations in the country, are undermining those ways to comprehend and explain the social fabric's disintegration caused by violence. This situation also subverts processes through which communities confront and resist injustices and humiliations, framed in a conflict that has been strengthened in the last three years.

The Cauca river: a site of memory and an art space for mediatisation and communicative interaction

In this article, we propose to characterise the mediated artistic proposal “Magdalenas por el Cauca” using the mediation process recorded in the video “X Peregrinación Trujillo y Magdalenas por el Cauca” that was collectivised on YouTube in its first media update. When representing this work of art, a communicative process and an interaction with multiple, diverse and virtual interlocutors take place; collective memory invokes unpredictable dialogues.

“Magdalenas por el Cauca” was performed in two phases: in the first, photographic records of sections of the river and contiguous areas were made. At this stage, an exhibition of these photos was displayed and the audience was asked to tell a story or express their reaction. In the second phase, female members of AFAVIT⁴ painted the faces of victims’ mothers holding portraits of the disappeared victims on large pieces of fabric. Later, the artist placed these fabrics on rafts that were set adrift in the Cauca River simulating the victims’ dead bodies that were carried along by the force of the river’s current. The rafts followed one another as if they were in a procession. In some of them, additional symbolic elements and images, such as a woman holding a cross, were also placed or the representation of La Llorona, a Colombian mythical character who endlessly suffers her children’s disappearance (Osorio Bermeo 2018).

In the work of art, iconic and metaphoric elements are clearly marked. One of them is the intertextual reference to Magdalena, a biblical character who lamented for Jesus Christ and, in a culture influenced by Christian beliefs, it refers to a woman who has lost her loved ones. The video on YouTube not only recovers the symbolic value of “Magdalenas por el Cauca”, but also testifies through its narrative to the necessity to reveal the landscape of horror and death into which the river was transformed. An iconological reading of the rafts evokes the bodies of the disappeared and their mothers. The river is conceptualised as a site of memory, a space of interaction and rituals that create metaphorically a sense of funerals that could not take place and transform to that of a cemetery. Life and death are a journey. A blue cross embodies the co-existence with religious beliefs in which pain must be humbly endured, beliefs that are also serving a right-wing political position and which are addressed symbolically through the blue colour, which stands for the Colombian Conservative Party. The alliance between the Church and the Conservative Government in power favoured political violence in the country, especially in regions, such as Valle del Cauca (CNMH 2008).

“Magdalenas por el Cauca” commemorates all those people who were victims of homicide and enforced

disappearance, dignifying survivors, victims’ families and especially the mothers. Considering that the exhibition and procession is a symbolic act of visitation, the video “X Peregrinación Trujillo” (2010) recontextualises the rituality and performance of the population that also follows actively and visually the crafts’ path, praying for the disappeared. The performative act embodies the co-creative art which involves not only its creator, but also who takes part in the pilgrimage. The exhibition-procession develops from the installation and the performance as artworks, to the ritual and commemoration as acts of memory. These two dimensions generate a semantisation of the river as they manage signification processes that include meaning-making beyond death and tragedy (Perdomo 2015).

The exhibition/procession moves away from canons of patrimonialisation as it falls within the scope of “ephemeral” art and includes twenty community acts (the last one held on 7 November 2020 (CELAM 2020), in which the work is recreated in a co-authored act. It is a process of memorialisation that formulates/shapes the collective memory of a collection of communities and which expresses their will to make it visible in the whole country and socialise it with their interlocutors on the internet. Even when the exhibition-procession is materially preserved in time, it also displays its permanence in social cognition. What is remembered, silenced or forgotten is embodied in the experience of those individuals who participate in the ritual, the workshops and other events that the work of art fosters. Art becomes a medium for catharsis, a source for healing and for relief of the pain caused by the perpetrators as it builds a space to symbolically recover and bid farewell to the bodies of the disappeared. The landscape is intervened by the community as an expression of the religiosity and resistance of the communities. To recover the river as a form of purification, the collective artistic intervention is transformed into a public testimonial narrative. The testimonial narrative is a discursive unit that creates visibility for the victims of the Colombian internal armed conflict, dialogically creating a space on the public stage to be inserted from the life experience in the memorialisation processes.

Through “Magdalenas por el Cauca” and the performance “X Peregrinación Trujillo”, it is possible to infer the potential of collective artistic practices to build spaces for interaction, in which those collective and individual memories of a painful past, caused by the violence in the internal armed conflict, are invoked and made visible. Memorialisation processes activate a political potential and encourage new artistic expressions of supportive co-creation embedded in collaborative practices. These processes become forms of production, design and socialisation of collective memories. In this case, survivors, victims’ relatives, witnesses and trauma inheritors, in general, are active participants who recover their presences and experiences. Their memories are interwoven with

4 Association of victims’ relatives of Trujillo.

those of the individuals who were more directly involved, with the memories mediated by the community and memories indirectly built, despite the proximity to the victim. Thus, the video “X Peregrinación Trujillo” (2010) updates “Magdalenas por el Cauca” as a work of art: the video manages mediated memories and fosters collectivities able to appropriate and keep the memories alive, despite State policies that tend to deny or obscure them. José Obdulio Gaviria, former advisor to the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, expressed: “Denying the conflict is a position based on facts” (*El Espectador* (Debate 10) 2019). In this tension, it is certain that the conflict happened, not only based on factual evidence, but also on institutionalised discourses, in which this is evident:

During the peace negotiations between the government of Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC, the Comisión Histórica del Conflicto Armado y sus Víctimas⁵ (CHCV) was created to examine the causes, development and effects of the armed confrontation in Colombia. As a result, twelve essays and two reports were written by intellectuals with a clear plurality of approaches and explanations about the war that the country has suffered (Garzón Vallejo and Agudelo 2019).

The video gives concrete shape and perpetuates the construction of a collective knowledge that is integrated into social cognition, enabling emotional dialogue as a basic understanding and an ethical view of the violent past. The video also allows the appropriation of an aesthetic capable of sustaining its commitment to individual memories which become collective as that knowledge is managed, formulated and reflected in a dialogic process; the past is creatively built by using and giving shape to this kind of knowledge (Rigney 2016). It is precisely in social cognition where collective memory is structured and has meaning, insofar as it is organised in the cultural and axiological background of a community.

In the video, a set of static images in large format, moving images of a religious and festive ritual, songs of resistance, declarations, denouncements and life declarations are articulated. A multiplicity of social actors are involved: witnesses, survivors, leaders, community members as solidarity agents, civil and religious authorities, organised children and rafters, amongst other actors. There are multiple discursive genres: testimonies, political speeches including elegies and resignification of objects, such as clothing items, flowers and the rafts that, while passing, allow us to visualise what surrounds the river with the objects and people that pass through the waters; this is how the semiotic landscape is constructed. The semiotic landscape is conceptualised as a dynamic communicative interaction that materialises an artistic expression with multiple and diverse knowledge, which

is amplified and updated in the act of remembering; and produced and interpreted from its sign character.

The relationship between memory, creation and imagination defines forms of knowledge that are spatially and temporally located and enhances other narratives from new interlocutors which recover violent events of the internal conflict. This is what Levy and Sznajder (2002) called “unlimited cultural memories”: these are sources of knowledge which produce perceptual experience, articulate emotions and make “others” visible: their traumas, concerns, expectations and hopes. This cognitive process connects through representation in the present, the past and the future. The video records intangible expressions, individual and collective memories in which the dialogue that structures the process of memorialisation is formulated. The aim is to construct civic responsibility as it is anchored to the art co-produced by the victimised communities. Paterson (2017) points out that it is only through participation that members of a community are empowered, not only to imagine a change in solidarity, but to manage it in the search for the desired society. This way of proceeding empowers those who seek through social action for a transformation of a violated and vulnerable society.

Reading the mediated semiotic landscape

Addressing media expressions implies to recover its design, production and interpretation process in interaction. This requires tools of transdisciplinary nature through which the study of a discourse involving diverse interwoven signs is formulated. Verbal language, non-verbal sounds, static and mobile images, colour and technological support media are used to make them function in the process of memory building and to create proper conditions to formulate strategies to achieve peace. Through the multimodal and multimedia study of a video, the semiotic modes, the appropriated resources for the construction of meanings (materialised in cultural frames) and discursive representations are investigated.

Following the approaches of Kress (2010) and Van Leeuwen (1999), Multimodal and Multimedial Critical Discourse Studies (MMCDS) are defined as a transdisciplinary and critical-reflective position that addresses discursive units, as characterised by materialising in different sign systems (modes), the relationship that goes from cognition to the social reality represented; and, for distributing and socialising the discursive units through technological sources. In this perspective, the processes of signification come from the inter-sign relationships that are typified in the discourse and from the material and technological devices that are available in the culture.

⁵ The Historical Commission of the armed conflict and its victims (CHCV) was responsible of studying and investigating the phenomenon of violence in Colombia, as well as determining responsibilities of those who participated or had any sort of involvement in it.

The characteristic media and multimodal expressions of contemporary media activity – come to life in signs – are not external phenomena to the social subject that uses them. Consequently, approaching them involves the individual who is defined by the conditioning of his social-communicative reality (Norris 2016). It is postulated that action and interaction bind social actions, memory processes and history, defining the identities of the actors (Norris 2016). The understanding and the explanation of a mediated act involves, at least, the meaning's producer and the mediator; it addresses the tension that goes from the one who produces the meaning to the way in which the media transforms the signification, especially when it is staged on a platform like YouTube. Given the characteristics of the selected corpus, Rheindorf's (2019) proposal is adopted to reveal the differences handled between the social actors involved in the act of communication, the objects used and the symbolic world they build and inhabit. This implies selecting fields of social action and specific discourses situated to carry out a transversal analysis of the discourse.

The YouTube video "X Peregrinación Trujillo (2010)" is analysed to describe forms of interaction, to recognise and explain the relationships generated between the semiotic modes involved, to establish representations that are created in the socio-cultural frameworks and to give an account of the relationships amongst co-creative art, memory, symbolic reparation and collective social action. The video is a short documentary that supports the collective artistic action and functions as an index of the institutional and governmental support received. A short documentary can be characterised as short-time audiovisual work which expresses a representation about a type of reality from the perspective of those who document it. The main strategy is related to the type of video-assembly which gets a concrete shape through the articulation of semiotic resources producing a space and a temporality different from that of the represented events, in this case, the exhibition and pilgrimage. The short documentary becomes a narrative that goes far beyond the socio-discursive practices represented, managing a new type of memorialisation, whose purpose is not only to contextualise the artistic work "Magdalenas por el Cauca", but also emotions as the visual complements the auditory elements (Martínez and Salway 2005).

Methodologically, the video is analysed from a mixed perspective since its segments are decoded sequentially and additively. Schemes are developed, theoretical assumptions are made and interactions are delimited; at the same time, meanings attributable to actions and actors are recovered, as well as their motivations and interests. In addition, relationships between the participants and the artifacts that have a meaning in social interaction are established. Natural settings as places for interaction are

also recovered, as well as categories, such as density and permanence.

"Density" is understood as the set of qualitative values that come from the observation of the interaction through which the characteristics of individuals and artifacts are perceived in the video. The category "permanence" facilitates the recovery of the space/time sense that the medium guarantees and makes accessible the interactions, so they update and go through a process of re-semantisation channelled via the interlocutors. Within the framework of *permanence*, the characteristics of the communicative situation, the role of artifacts and accessories, the spatial organisation, the semiotics modes and the general atmosphere, represented in its place of production and interpretation, are verified (Knoblauch et al. 2014).

Representations are analysed in two dimensions: the appropriation of their symbolic meaning and the permanent re-semantisation. Epistemologically, it is assumed that semiotics go through all possible explanations to characterise all the semiotic modes involved. Consequently, the video is an integral system of signs, that is, it has a multimodal character and is socially distributed through technological resources (YouTube in this case) which also make it multimedial. The possible meanings and senses come from the design elements of the environment and their production, as well as from the density and permanence of the audiovisual data of the video, being recovered as a discourse and a narrative.

Reshaping the semiotic landscape of memories

The forms of interaction include the objects, from which the relationship with the actors is established and the relationship with the environment is formulated. In the interval between 0:00 and 0:11 seconds, the first ritual of religious nature comes out, including a location where a prayer is attuned, the image of a crucified Christ and an altar with flowers and a candle in the foreground. Without transitions, a ritual of resistance appears, marked by a procession accompanied by chanting the song written by Mercedes Sosa, "I ask only of God". There is an intertext between the song's title and nuclear issues related to the *X Pilgrimage's* topic: religious beliefs, resistance and denunciation against war. The resistance ritual appears in the interval between 0:12–0:18 seconds and lets us recognise the stanza: "I ask only of God/ that I am not unmoved by injustice/ that I am not slapped on the other cheek/ after resigning myself to injury by a claw/"⁶.

Between the seconds 00:30 and 00:40, another intertext links religious beliefs with the seeking for resistance: the verse written by Juan Antonio Espinoza⁷: "You cannot

6 Original text in Spanish: "Solo le pido a Dios/ Que lo injusto no me sea indiferente/ Que no me abofeteen la otra mejilla/Después que una garra me arañe esta suerte/".

7 Original text in Spanish: "No se puede sepultar la luz" / "Y si no, las piedras gritarán - la invencible causa de los pobres /".

bury the light” / “If you do, the stones will scream – the invincible cause of the poor”. These lines are related to the biblical quote in Luke 19:40 which tells about the impossibility of silence as testimony, despite the attempts of silencing it. The singing is performed, while the image displays in a high angle shot the scene when people walk to the river highlighting two verbal indexical markers that guide the interlocutor in space and time: “Riofrío, Valle del Cauca” and the MOVICE⁸ billboard. In 1993, the Third Brigade of the Colombian armed forces entered the Municipality of Riofrío and pretended to combat guerrilla forces, when actually they were fighting civilians. Thirteen people were killed and several more were injured and were later presented as wounded in combat and as ELN militants. This crime against humanity has gone unpunished as the Supreme Court of Justice declared null the legal process against the perpetrators (CNMH 2008).

From second 00:40 to second 00:46, a large-format pictorial image is displayed, focusing on Carmen Londoño’s face. She is considered one of the *Magdalenas* since one of her children, revealed in an inset at the bottom right, was killed in the Trujillo Massacre. The pictorial image by Gabriel Posada is based on a photograph taken by Jesús Abad Colorado for the report “Trujillo, una gota de esperanza en un mar de impunidad”⁹ (*Magdalenas por el Cauca*, undated). This section of the video is accompanied by the verse “Ay, Magdalena, ay, Magdalena”, part of the song “Alma de caminante” by Martha Elena Hoyos. These lines work as a link to introduce the segment 00:47–00:59 seconds where a religious authority, ‘Padre Antonis’ – Episcopal Church, exhorts transposition of the meaning of death into that of life by saying: “After meeting her master, Mary Magdalene set out to announce life. You and I will set out to announce life”¹⁰. The discourse carries political content since its purpose is to formulate and build models of behaviour to establish a social body. A relationship between what is proclaimed and the characteristic ritualisation of the preaching is elaborated. Between minutes 01:00 and 01:12, there is a declaration accompanied by a kinesic gesture, characteristic of the Catholic-Christian rites, using the hand facing the river: “We declare restoration of life in this place”¹¹. In the liturgy, the preaching/declaration has a performative character: it is considered that the restoration is executed on the symbolic and material level.

Symbology acquires meaning in the framework of the exhibition/procession as an act of remembrance. The performativity and rituality of the people who visually accompany the rafts’ route performing post-mortem reparation acts, enables *Magdalenas por el Cauca* to acquire

signification. This artistic and mediated project provides the sociocultural conditions to build an active collective memory. The victims and survivors find a space to affirm their identity and socialise their common history of exclusion. The video becomes the support for co-creation of memory through art, as it connects and creates dialogues with virtual audiences transforming collective knowledge. These transfigurations provide new horizons to collectivise memories.

From 1:14 minute onwards, the life or festivity ritual materialises the restoration. The participants in the pilgrimage start dancing, there is an instrumental sound that results from the performing of the Brass Quintet of the *Instituto de Cultura de Pereira*. The presence of sister Maritze Trigos stands out amongst other actors as, from her role of a religious authority, she acts as companion, in horizontal relationship and as an active member of the Asociación Familiares Víctimas de Trujillo¹² (AFAVIT). The nun, although dressed as a civilian, legitimises the ritual by authority. Between minutes 1:42–1:47, in a wide shot, one of the rafts is displayed which is later on driven away by the current of the river. This moving image serves as an anticipation, prolepsis, of what is going to happen.

At 2:04 minutes, a *fade to black* is displayed, signalling the closure of the ritual of life or festivity and a more artistic and political ritual is introduced in which individuals with different degrees of authorities appear. Their presence is relevant because they are representatives of the victims, their relatives and the supportive civil society. María Isabel Espinoza, a writer born in Pereira who lives in the region, intervenes in the video – which is deduced from what is deictically indicated in the video (“Cartago – Valle”). The artist, called “the poet of the death” (Perdomo 2015), stands on a platform where pictorial images of portraits in white and black of some of the disappeared victims are placed, together with a pictorial image/portrait of one of the *Magdalenas* in large format and full colour and a cross that connects the *mise-en-scène* with the “Fundación Guagua”. This is a social organisation committed to the defence of human rights which focuses on victims of the State in issues, such as forced disappearance, extrajudicial executions and crimes attributed to State forces or officials committed in the context of the armed conflict (URL: <https://fundaguagua12.wixsite.com/fundacionguagua/sobre-nosotros>).

The intervention is characterised by the voice of the artist who narrates the events seen from the outside, but with a subjectivity legitimised by being an artist/witness of the dead bodies floating down the river. This scene implies an emotional event for the victims, survivors, rela-

8 MOVICE is a national movement that brings together groups of organisations that represent the victims of State crimes committed in the context of the internal armed conflict.

9 Trujillo, a drop of hope in a sea of impunity.

10 Original text in Spanish: “María Magdalena, después de encontrarse con su maestro, salió a anunciar la vida. Ustedes y yo, saldremos a anunciar la vida”.

11 Original text in Spanish: “Declaramos restaurada la vida en este lugar”.

12 Association of relatives of victims of Trujillo (AFAVIT).

tives and community members. Evidentiality is produced through first-person modalisation and a phenomenon of hyperbaton, an inversion that gives the narrative a more poetic direction: “dissolved bones” and “grieving black vultures”¹³. The reading is accompanied by an inset where images of the exhibition/pilgrimage held in 2008 can be seen, these, by substitution, representing the bodies of the victims floating down the river without specific direction. This is how a memory process is updated:

Funerals in the Cauca River had become daily bread. The river waters became a casket coach carrying them without a destination. I say this because some of the corpses could not be recovered for identifying them or to bury their dissolved bones. Many remain in the stomach of fishes and of grieving black vultures (María Isabel Espinosa 2010).

The reiterated audiovisual resource of *fade to black* creates a temporal leap and brings into focus the label “Grupo infantil AFAVIT”¹⁴. Immediately, a girl appears speaking on behalf of a gathering of children and youths. In her words: “This group is called Jimmy García Peña in honour of a boy who was killed at the age of 18 months. He was killed in Naranjal”. The presence of the group is an indexical marker of children and young people as victims of the massacre and creates a sense of activism and resistance of those who, because of their birth, did not witness the massacre. The mnemonic resource in the children’s intervention is anaphoric: “we are seeds, we are memory, we are life, we demand justice”. In Western societies, children are symbols of hope. The verbal and graphic expressions transmit a process of socialisation, anchored in the construction of identity and desirable social transformations.

The next transition marker is a wide shot of the river in which an object on a raft is focused, covered in a white material and partially hidden behind the vegetation. Simultaneously, in *voice off*, a man who produces a remembrance act is heard. Eduardo Carreño (minute 3:08–3:58), member of the *Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear*¹⁵, who has followed the case unofficially, addresses the people around the stage. The visual context is composed by black and white photographs of the disappeared victims, the crosses – three of them different from the cross placed at the centre – and, in the first third, at the right corner, there also appears an artistic image in large format of Evangelina López, mother of one of the disappeared who symbolically embodies every mother of the disappeared youths or children. In his speech, Carreño expresses his condition as a social subject and his point of view about the memory process in which he is immersed:

Recalling today 20 years of [the disappearance of] Tiberio, of Alba Isabel and of their companions,

the victims whose mortal remains were thrown in the Cauca River [...] We believe that this case is symbolic on the national and international level, that is, what has been built for the victims. [...] In 1995, former President Samper publicly assumed responsibility for these crimes. We cannot forget them. We must reiteratively provide support to the victims [...], all the victims of State crime regardless of the region or sector they belong to. Neither forgiveness, nor forgetfulness! Punishment to the murderers! (Eduardo Carreño 2010).

In this speech, various temporalities are presented. The first is 1990, the year in which the priest Tiberio Fernández, his niece Alba Isabel Giraldo and other companions were assassinated. Members of the Colombian security forces used torture and sexual violence before they murdered them. The second is 1995, when Samper recognised the State’s responsibility for these crimes. “Magdalenas por el Cauca”, performed on 17 April 2010, evokes the anniversary of the murder of Tiberio, Alba Isabel and 25 other persons, artistically represented in “La Ofelia de Trujillo”.

In minute 4:02, the *fade to black* displays the motto “Magdalenas por el Cauca”, initiating the spiritual and memorialisation ritual. The rafts navigate down the river with images and artistic representations alluding to the victims and allegorical to the topic of the Magdalenas. At minute 4:04, an inset in a wide shot shows two rafts being driven; the use of a zoom effect magnifies the shot and brings the image closer to the observer. When the inset is enlarged, it is possible to observe that the rafts are driven by young men and that the closest raft in the shot is the one of Ofelia Trujillo. The implied intertext is the work of art “Ofelia” by the painter John Everett Millais in which the female character of the same name commits suicide and her body appears floating with flowers in a stream. The resource of intertextuality is expressed by iconological markers (the woman floating in the stream and the flowers), through which the senses of the violent death are recovered. To represent Ofelia, an image of Alba Isabel Giraldo’s face was chosen (Perdomo 2015). From minute 4:25 onwards, there is a close-up that allows the observation of the elements accompanying the sculpture, amongst them being an image on the chest of Father Tiberio Fernández, flowers and the faces of 25 of the disappeared, which collectively make up Ofelia’s dress.

At minute 5:16, one of the Magdalenas emerges; it is an artistic image in a large format with a blue and grey-scale background, it is a proposal to represent Rosalba Lozano, whose brother Agustín disappeared and the grief which killed her mother. The grey colour and the woman’s facial expression set a sense of sadness. In minute 5:46, the poet Omar Ortiz intervenes by reading a sto-

13 Original text in Spanish: “Desechos huesos” and “dolientes chulos”.

14 AFAVIT children’s group.

15 José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers’ Association.

ry written in the first person producing a metonymy in which the character of the story represents the victims of the Massacre.

I had my newly polished black shoes on, I looked like a handsome man, (said) my mother during the goodbye kiss ritual. In line, they took my photo for the job application, but quickly they pushed me into a car, they pressed two shotguns to my head and I ended up in a pigsty where they asked me about strangers. No sir! I said and they beat me. Yes sir! I said and they beat me anyway. They did everything as if he had no humanity, no bones, no blood, no soul. I no longer have a blue suit, or an orange tie, nor can I hug Margarita. Now I am a faded photo that my mother carries around in squares and parades (Omar Ortiz 2010).

The poet's reading is accompanied by zooms to the Magdalena with the face of Rosa Elena Montoya, with a black background, creating the sense of death. The woman's circumspect character, complemented by other symbolic elements, such as the presence of a rounded black object placed on her forehead, allows us to infer that a bullet went through her head, leaving the semiotic mark of the act of violence and its remains as she loses part of her corporality, to be placed in the upper left corner. The artistic image of Rosa Elena, made by Gabriel Posada, is a re-semiotisation of the photograph made by Jesús Abad Colorado; the semiotic transformation involves the grey colour of the woman's hair and the face in the photograph of her murdered son, on the chest.

The *travelling* accompanies the raft of a woman who is indexically identified as Consuelo Valencia (minute 6:34). The pink background of Magdalena produces a contrast with the rest of the image. The presence of colour shows the character of Magdalena who is a survivor of the crimes committed against her immediate family. Her two missing sons are presented in a grey-scale, connecting iconology with the region's own sociocultural assessments. The marked shapes of the face, especially the facial folds, are indexical marks of the traces of time.

In minute 7:18, the Magdalena does not represent a person, but is made "in memory of all the women who were raped and murdered". This work of art was made by Orlando Naranjo, president of AFAVIT and relative of a victim. Some of the significant features of the woman represented are colours: black, grey; the red that connotes the blood product of violence; and blue which is culturally related to tears. The raft moves away slowly and this movement is associated with a visual-temporal resource

that not only marks the end of the ritual, but also the distancing of the victims carried away by the river.

Death gives way to life through the symbolic act of accompanying missing lives. Simultaneously, a woman is heard in the background: "They will be rivers of joy for having overcome the horror of death. Rifles are the eyes of war. While some look at the dead, we dream of life" (Maritze Trigos 2010). The statement and the simile emphasise the transformation of the meanings associated with the river. The rafts are followed by the musical accompaniment of an acoustic guitar whose instrumental tones, soft and slow melody and rhythm give a feeling of tranquillity. At minute 8:08, the *fade in black* marks the end of "Magdalenas por el Cauca" and begins the credits that are accompanied by photographs of the *X Pilgrimage*. The video closing, as a unit, is made up of two types of visual resources: Ofelia in 30 different angles and planes, the artistic images of the Magdalenas; and the visual-graphic resources of a fixed image, in which, on the one hand, members of the community are recovered and represented and who actively participate in the pilgrimage as rafters; and, on the other hand, different moments of the resistance rituals of the population, which include a girl victim who makes a tribute with flowers, are shown.

The representation of the exhibition/pilgrimage implies recognising the articulation that occurs between the iconic elements and the central meaning, transposing the meaning of death to that of life. These elements become icons due to the stabilisation of their socio-cultural sense. The conjunction of permanence and density is produced by its social diffusion and media reproduction. In Kohn's (2018) perspective, repetition transforms icons into memory units which are easily recognised by society.

The iconological relationship is formulated within the framework of religious rituals that can be approached in the video through the flowers and the cross. The flowers create an indexical relationship with life and death. Culturally, flowers are a semiotic resource that carries the sense of tribute and respect and gives a theme to the inescapable condition of existence. The cross activates the Judeo-Christian sense of Calvary, the innocent victim and the search for the act of justice.

Within the framework of the festive ritual, whose centre is the sense of resistance, the iconology includes the image of the bridge, which updates one of the social movements for the victims and integrates two meanings: on the one hand, the transition from one situation to another, emulating an armed conflict and the peace process. On the other hand, the transition of life and death, which come together in the river's presence as a route. The rafts became the leitmotif as they recover the victim's presence and generate an intertextual relationship with the Greek myth of Charon's boat: the natural and forced passage between life and death is rebuilt. The T-shirts, worn by those attending the exhibition/pilgrimage, constitute an index of the inescapable act of resistance to which the socio-cultural community of the region is committed in search of guaranteeing reparation and non-repetition.

Table 1. Visual-graphic memory: rituals.

Religious ritual	Festivity ritual	Artistic-political ritual	Spiritual and memorialisation ritual
(0:00–1:13)	(1:14–2:03)	(2:04–4:01)	(4:02–8:00)
Fig. 1a	Fig. 1b	Fig. 1c	Fig. 1d

Source images: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5EshU1M_CQ



Figure 1. A. Religious ritual – 1:08; B. Festivity ritual – 1:31; C. Artistic-political ritual – 2:50; D. Spiritual and memorialisation ritual – 7:21.

Conclusion

The icons work as traces of the presences/absences, collectively intervened in an act of dialogic co-creation, which is permanently reinterpreted and signified to permeate the memories with the collective meaning formulated in the Trujillo community. Iconology becomes the axis of the process of co-creation and interaction that is renewed, periodically, in the exhibition-pilgrimage, reformulating collective memory indefinitely. The analysis of the semiotic and mediatised landscape of memory in Trujillo allows us to unravel its socio-political and cultural implications, within the context of the Post-agreement (2016). The multimodal and multimedia memorialisation initiatives constitute fundamental acts of collective resistance against the persistence of violence and human rights violations. In the process of semiotic-discursive characterisation of the video “X PEREGRINACION TRUJILLO y MAGDALENAS POR EL CAUCA” (2010), the artistic image of the victims was recovered, resignifying the meaning of existence in the rituals. Sign systems and the semiotic resources involved have a role in transforming the meaning of death and war into that of life and peace. Iconology and metaphors articulate the different sign systems, structuring the visual-verbal unit at the service of the visual-graphic. There is a verbal

reinforcement that contextualises the beings and objects involved in the rituals and creates reference points for multiple interpretations.

The analytical perspective of the rituals, through which the representations of collective and individual memories are constructed, designed and updated, allowed the recovery of macro-micro-narratives to decipher forms of commemoration that articulate models of the past and (with hegemonic constructions of power) the transformations that update the present and project the future. Latin America requires that, from the studies of language, we explore the connections amongst practices of memorialisation and the symbolic ways of remembering the past as a guarantee for comprehensive reparation and non-repetition of violence, with its continuities and ruptures.

References

- Bal M (2010) Of What One Cannot Speak: Doris Salcedo's Political Art. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226035802.001.0001>
- CELAM (2020) Acto reivindicativo de AFAVIT en Trujillo (Colombia). <http://redongmad.org/acto-reivindicativo-afavit-trujillo-colombia/>
- Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2008) Trujillo: una tragedia que no cesa. CNMH, Bogotá.

- El Espectador (2019) Desconocer el conflicto es una posición basada en hechos: José Obdulio Gaviria. Sección Debate. El Espectador, 10 February, 2019. <https://www.elespectador.com/colombia2020/politica/desconocer-el-conflicto-es-una-posicion-basada-en-hechos-jose-obdulio-gaviria-articulo-857628>
- Halbwachs M (1992) On Collective Memory. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Garzón Vallejo I, Agudelo AF (2019) La batalla por la narrativa: intelectuales y conflicto armado en Colombia. *Revista de Estudios Sociales* (69): 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.7440/res69.2019.05>
- Jelin E (2020) Los trabajos de la memoria. Siglo XXI, Madrid.
- Knoblauch H, Tuma R, Schnettler B (2014) Video Analysis and Videography. In: Flick U (Ed.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, Sage, London, 435–449. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n30>
- Kohn A (2018) Iconic Situations: multimodality, witnessing and collective memory. *Visual Communication* (June): 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357218779117>
- Kress G (2010) *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Routledge, New York.
- Levy L, Sznajder N (2002) Memory unbound: the holocaust and the formation of cosmopolitan memory. *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(1): 87–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431002005001002>
- Lleras C, Forero M, Díaz L, Carter J (2019) Memory Exercises: activism, symbolic reparation, and non-repetition in colombia's national museum of memory. In: Janes RR, Sandell R (Eds) *Museum Activism*. Routledge, Abingdon, 139–151. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351251044-14>
- Magdalenas por el Cauca (2008) Magdalenas por el Cauca. www.magdalenasporelcauca.wordpress.com
- Martínez R, Salway A (2005) A system for image–text relations in new (and old) media. *Visual Communication* 4(3): 337–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357205055928>
- Martínez Quintero F (2013) Las prácticas artísticas en la construcción de memoria sobre la violencia y el conflicto. *Revista Eleuthera* 9: 39–58.
- Moffett L (2015) Elaborating justice for victims at the International Criminal Court: beyond rhetoric and The Hague. *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 13(2): 281–311. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jicj/mqv001>
- X Peregrinación Trujillo Y Magdalenas Por El Cauca (2010) X PEREGRINACION TRUJILLO y MAGDALENAS POR EL CAUCA. November 25, 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5EshU1M_CQ
- Naidu E (2004) Symbolic Reparations: A Fractured Opportunity. 20 pp. <http://www.csvr.org.za/docs/livingmemory/symbolicreparations.pdf>
- Norris S (2016) Concepts in multimodal discourse analysis with examples from video conferencing. *Yearbook of the Poznan Linguistic Meeting* 2(1): 141–165. <https://doi.org/10.1515/yplm-2016-0007>
- Osorio Bermeo M (2018) La pertinencia del arte participativo para el trabajo con víctimas del conflicto armado en Colombia. Master dissertation, Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano.
- Paterson P (2017) Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed. <http://ptoweb.org/aboutpto/a-brief-biography-of-augusto-boal/>
- Perdomo JC (2015) Magdalenas por el Cauca: una memoria que fluye entre las aguas. *Prospectiva* 20: 21–43. <https://doi.org/10.25100/ptws.v0i20.932>
- Political Constitution of Colombia (1991) Colombia's Constitution of 1991 with Amendments through 2005. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Colombia_2005.pdf
- Ramos Delgado D, Aldana Bautista A (2017) ¿Qué es lo educativo de las obras de arte que abordan las memorias en Colombia? *Reflexiones para el debate en torno a la relación arte y memoria. Pensamiento Palabra y Obra* (17): 40–53. <https://doi.org/10.17227/ppo.num17-4403>
- Rigney A (2016) Cultural memory studies: mediation, narrative and the aesthetic. In: Tota AL, Hagen T (Eds) *Routledge International Book of Memory Studies*. Routledge, London, 65–77.
- Revista Semana (2008) La masacre de Trujillo y los mecanismos del terror. <https://www.semana.com/on-line/articulo/la-masacre-de-trujillo-los-mecanismos-del-terror/95142-3>
- Unidad de Víctimas (2021) Registro Nacional de Víctimas. <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394>
- Van Leeuwen T (1999) *Speech, Music, Sound*. Macmillan Education, London, [viii +] 231 pp. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27700-1>