

Part V: The Emergence of Postcolonial memory: Language, Media and Performance

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“2 October Is Not Forgotten”: Tlatelolco 1968 Massacre and Social Memory Frameworks

Abstract

The massacre of a student demonstration in La Plaza de las Tres Culturas, in the Tlatelolco district of Mexico City, on 2 October 1968, has been the subject of many debates, studies and literary works, whose aim is to keep the event alive in the collective memory and to tell ‘the truth’ about what happened that night. But is this aim achieved by any Tlatelolco discourse? Probably not. Nor, as I argue, is it necessary. What, then, is the function of the Tlatelolco discourses? Is it a matter of the state and popular discourses being at loggerheads in their respective claims to accuracy and ‘truth’? Or is it something else, led not by the search for truth, but by the need for emotional reconciliation? This essay is an in-depth case study of the narratives of the massacre from the perspective of the theory of posthegemony and Maurice Halbwachs’ studies of social memory frameworks. By focusing in such detail on the way the massacre is represented in the contemporary media, the essay determines how memory builds on narratives that emerge in the response to political violence in the modern media society. The most successful narratives are built on the emotions released immediately when the affect wave ‘crests’, so that those emotions are the strongest and the most relevant to the moment of affect and change of habit.

I.

In 1968, Mexico was getting ready to host the nineteenth Olympic Games. But over the summer student protests and strikes by teachers, university professors, doctors and railroad workers dominated the capital’s headlines. Student protests were particularly detrimental to the plan of the governing PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional)¹ to present the country as a haven of democracy. Between July and October there were several serious altercations between students from vocational and preparatory schools and police and army forces in the

¹ PRI, or Revolutionary Institutional Party, was Mexico’s ruling party from 1929 when it was established by Plutarco Elias Calles under the name of PNR (National Revolutionary Party). It was renamed PRM (Mexican Revolutionary Party) by Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938, and PRI by Manuel Ávila Camacho in 1946 (see Judith A. Hellman, *Mexico in Crisis* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), 33-54). In 2000 it lost presidential elections for the first time to PAN (National Action Party), but regained control of the country in 2012, when Enrique Peña Nieto became President

capital; among these was the attack on the San Idelfonso School on 26 July. In early August the National Strike Council (CNH) was formed, uniting students and professors of several universities and preparatory schools in Mexico City. With representation in schools and universities all over the country, the CNH was the organizing force of the student movement.² On 1 September 1968, President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz delivered his fourth report, focusing on the importance of the Olympic Games for the country's image as a haven of democracy en route to economic prosperity. He condemned the "recientes conflictos" [recent conflicts] in the capital, seeing them as outsiders' attempts at discrediting Mexico and ruining the upcoming Olympics. He also promised that the army would respond quickly to any attempt at sabotaging the country's security.³ The students and academics saw this promise put to action as the stand-off between the government and the students continued with the occupation of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) campus on 18-30 September,⁴ the dispersion of a silent demonstration in Zócalo on 13 September⁵ and, finally, the attack on the demonstration in Tlatelolco.

On 2 October, ten days before the Olympic opening ceremony, the CNH organized a demonstration in the Plaza of Three Cultures, in a middle-class residential district of Tlatelolco in Mexico City. The original plan was for the demonstration to start in the Plaza and continue to Casco Santo Tomás, a campus of the National Polytechnic School (IPN). However, with the growing presence of police and army around the Plaza, it was decided not to proceed with the second part of the demonstration. The demonstration started around 16:00; by 18:00 the demonstrators were about to leave the Plaza. At this point, a helicopter flew over the Plaza and several fireworks were set off. This must have been the signal to the members of the Olímpia Battalion, a special plain-clothed taskforce, who had mixed in with the CNH representatives on the third floor of the Chihuahua building and, according to most witnesses, opened fire on the police and army troops, thus provoking a retaliatory response.

² See, for example, Raúl Álvarez Garín, *La estela de Tlatelolco* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1998), 110-4; Patricia Fournier and Jorge Martínez Herrera "Mexico 1968: Among Olympic Fanfares, Government Repression and Genocide", in Andrés Zarankin, Pedro Funari and Melisa Salerno, eds, *Memories of Darkness: Archaeology of Repression and Resistance in Latin America* (New York: Springer, 2009), 145-74.

³ Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, "IV Informe de Gobierno del Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos Gustavo Díaz Ordaz 1º de septiembre de 1968", in *Informes Presidenciales: Gustavo Díaz Ordaz* (Mexico City: Dirección de Servicios de Investigación y Análisis, 2006), 202-308.

⁴ Ryan Long, "Traumatic Time in Roberto Bolaño's *Amuleto* and the Archive of 1968", in Keith Brewster, ed., *Reflections on Mexico '68* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 128-43 (p. 128).

⁵ Gareth Williams, *The Mexican Exception: Sovereignty, Police, and Democracy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 117-20.

The response was ruthlessly well coordinated. Armed troops entered the Plaza along with police and opened fire on the demonstrators, bystanders and reporters. Many were killed or wounded in an ensuing gun battle that lasted into the night. Media reports of casualties varied from 20 dead and 75 wounded (3 October), to 30 dead and 53 wounded (4 October); finally, on 5 October Mexico City's largest daily newspaper *El Excelsior* reported 33 dead and 62 seriously wounded as the final official number of the Tlatelolco casualties. Although these numbers are not deemed even remotely accurate, there is no popular consensus on how many died that night. Estimates range from 50 dead and 1,000 wounded⁶ to at least 500 dead and several thousand wounded;⁷ the number of 267 dead and 1,200 wounded (reported by John Rodda, a *Guardian* sports correspondent)⁸ is frequently quoted and accepted as the closest to the actual figure.

The massacre soon became the subject of many passionate debates. The majority of texts produced outside the state discourse tried to establish 'what happened' and find out 'the truth' about the events in Tlatelolco;⁹ this, arguably, became the principal aim of the 'Tlatelolco literature'.¹⁰ This corpus contributes to the public discourse of the massacre and includes such seminal works as Luis González de Alba's autobiography *Days and Years* (1971), Elena Poniatowska's testimonial work *Tlatelolco, Tlatelolco* (1971), Luis Spota's controversial novel *The Plaza* (1971/72), poetry by José Carlos Becerra, Rosario Castellanos, José Emilio Pacheco, and others.

The analyses of the Tlatelolco literature focus on its relationship with the state discourse and the way it challenges the untruthfulness of the official version of 'what happened on 2 October'. Critics agree that the Tlatelolco literature contributes to the discourse of 'the truth about Tlatelolco' and the analysis of the event in the context of Mexico's past and present¹¹ in what Edward Said calls a contrapuntal way by "according neither the privilege of 'objectivity' to 'our side' nor the encumbrance of 'subjectivity' to 'theirs'".¹² While Said examines the interaction of the colonizer and colonized perspectives, Harris' contrapuntal

⁶ John Womack Jr, "The Spoils of the Mexican Revolution", *Foreign Affairs* 48 (1970), 677-87 (p. 684).

⁷ Hellman, *Mexico in Crisis* (note 1), 205, note 24.

⁸ John Rodda, "'Prensa, Prensa': A Journalist's Reflections on Mexico '68", in Keith Brewster, ed., *Reflections on Mexico '68* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 11-22 (p. 18).

⁹ See Victoria Carpenter, "'You Want the Truth? You Can't Handle the Truth': Poetic Representations of the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre", *Journal of Latin American Research* 21.1 (2015), 35-49.

¹⁰ See Luis Leal, "Tlatelolco, Tlatelolco", *Denver Quarterly* 14.1 (1979), 3-13.

¹¹ See Leal, "Tlatelolco" (note 10); Alejandro Toledo, "Anotaciones: el 68 en la novela Mexicana", in *La palabra y el hombre* (Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico, Jan-June 1985), 23-26; Marco Antonio Campos and Alejandro Toledo, *Poemas y narraciones sobre el movimiento estudiantil de 1968* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Coordinación de Humanidades, Dirección General de Publicaciones, 1996), 11-28.

¹² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 259.

reading of González de Alba's and Poniatowska's works focuses on the relationship between "the authoritarian state and dissident groups within Mexican civil society."¹³ I would argue that the process of deconstructing the state version of the Tlatelolco discourse is not just the 'dismantling of the official version of history' – both official and public versions are created simultaneously and both use each other's most powerful or effective means of attracting the public's attention to particular aspects of the narrative, particular images that evoke the strongest emotional reaction. To test this hypothesis, our study will present an in-depth analysis of the newspaper coverage of the massacre, exploring the process of creating the memory of a violent event and determining whether this memory is characterized by factual accuracy about the event or by the emotional context enveloping the facts.

Harris' affirmation that the texts produced by the public version of the Tlatelolco discourse aim "to promote the reader's sense of mistrust, even disbelief, in the face of pronouncements by the country's leaders on the events at Tlatelolco"¹⁴ rests upon the accepted binary of the state and the public versions of the event – and he recognizes this shortcoming. Our study will challenge this binary and the aporia that is arguably the principal characteristic of the relationship between the state and the public discourse when it comes to narrating a violent event. The state discourse is represented by the public statements made by the government officials as well as the media coverage of the massacre. The public discourse consists of the texts composed outside the government/media sphere: these include essays, testimonials, prose, and poetry.

The contrapuntal nature of the state and public Tlatelolco discourses is a hegemonic formation, based upon the principles of equivalence and difference within an "antagonistic terrain"¹⁵ of populist relations; to quote Jon Beasley-Murray: "a hegemonic formation consists in the articulation of a historical bloc whose unity is not pre-given but constituted in and through the very process of its articulation on an 'antagonistic terrain'."¹⁶ However, the characteristics of the Tlatelolco discourse, as we will see, are not of purely hegemonic nature. In short, the Tlatelolco discourse reveals not a unity against an antagonistic terrain, but a unity of a shared emotional sphere – a posthegemonic construct.

This essay will examine several narratives of the massacre from the perspective of the theory of posthegemony (in particular, the role of affect) and Maurice Halbwachs' studies of social

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 75, 85, 136.

¹⁶ Jon Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 44.

memory frameworks. I will argue that the texts accepted as ‘telling the truth’ about the massacre are built on the emotions released immediately when the affect wave ‘crests’, so that those emotions are the strongest and the most relevant to the moment of affect and change of habit. I will focus on the following texts about the massacre: the articles published in the two largest daily newspapers of Mexico City *Excelsior* and *El Universal* on 3 October 1968, Fernando Carmona’s essay “Genealogy and Actuality of Repression” (1969), and Rosario Castellanos’ poem “Memorandum on Tlatelolco” (1971).

II.

In order to understand the nature of posthegemony, we will begin by exploring the nature of hegemony. The concept of hegemony has been the subject of numerous sociological and cultural studies which focus on power relationships in modernity, juxtaposing hegemony and subalternity.¹⁷ Hegemony is “an ‘organizing principle’, or world-view (or combination of such world-views), that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization into every area of daily life”.¹⁸ But society does not blindly accept its fate of the oppressed – there is always a cogent resistance to hegemony in various forms, both overt and covert.¹⁹ This resistance is termed subalternity. Generally speaking, most theorists agree that the juxtaposition of hegemony and subalternity characterizes modern Latin American nation-states and, arguably, colours Latin American cultural identity.

However, the relationship between hegemony and subalternity is not as straightforward and unidirectional as it would appear. Examining Gayatri Spivak’s seminal study of the subaltern, Peyman Vahabzadeh points out that it lacks the link between the subaltern and hegemony – an omission which proves detrimental to the theory of subalternity because it presupposes that marginality challenges the centre. He goes on to argue that colonial hegemony bases itself on consent by “offering explanations that would immediately establish meaningful links

¹⁷ The nature of hegemony in Latin American cultural studies is discussed at length in Jesús Martín-Barbero, *Communication, Culture and Hegemony*, trans. Elizabeth Fox and Robert A. White (London: Sage Publications, 1993); Neil Larsen, *Reading North by South: On Latin American Literature, Culture, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); and Alberto Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Carl Boggs, *Gramsci’s Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), 39.

¹⁹ William Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention”, in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds, *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 355-66 (p. 357).

with the common sense and experiences of the colonized masses”.²⁰ Thus, the masses, the marginalized, the subaltern are both the recipients and the source of the knowledge upon which hegemony is founded. The Gramscian notion of ‘subalternity’, according to Vahabzadeh’s interpretation, is an intrinsic part of hegemony, without which hegemonic power would not be possible. This study once again refutes the idea that hegemony is simply domination. Vahabzadeh argues against the ‘hegemony=dominance’ axiom, challenging Guha’s definition of hegemony as “a condition of dominance in which the moment of persuasion outweighs that of coercion”.²¹ Indeed, this definition reinforces the idea of a unilateral, unidirectional distribution of power, which is untenable, as Beasley-Murray aptly demonstrates in his analysis of the Sendero Luminoso movement in Peru.²²

Although hegemony fails to run its full course to complete domination and total consent, there is no clear-cut alternative hierarchical arrangement of a single centre ruling a social group. Instead, another order arises from a different type of power distribution. This order is called posthegemony. Briefly, posthegemony is “the shift from a rhetoric of persuasion to a regime in which what counts are the effects produced and orchestrated by affective investment in the social.”²³ Posthegemony represents the relationship between affect, habit, and multitude.

Under posthegemonic conditions, affect replaces consent as it forces social bodies to interact beyond the production of feelings. Affect is the essence of primacy, and excess and emotions are its aftermath. Emotions lead to the change in the securing of social order, or what Pierre Bourdieu calls habit,²⁴ and unite the populace into a cogent social unit. This unit, or the multitude, is “an internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity (or, much less, indifference) but on what it has in common”.²⁵ The multitude is then guided into action by a shared emotional sphere where power is dispersed among its members.

However, a shared emotional sphere is difficult to sustain without affect reigniting it and stopping it from slipping into new habit. When affect subsides, habit returns (albeit in a

²⁰ Peyman Vahabzadeh, “The Conditions of Subalternity: Reflections on Subjectivity, Experience and Hegemony”, *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes* 3.2 (2007), 93-113 (p. 104).

²¹ Ranajit Guha, “Discipline and Mobilize”, in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, eds, *Subaltern Studies VII: Writing on Southeast Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 69-120 (p. 72), quoted in Vahabzadeh, “Conditions of Subalternity” (note 20), 105.

²² Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony* (note 16), 226-83.

²³ Jon Beasley-Murray, “On Posthegemony”, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 22.1 (2003), 117-25 (p. 120).

²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: CUP, 1977), 72; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 53.

²⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 100.

different form); emotional residue is now experienced as low-level anxiety.²⁶ Bourdieu extends the idea of habit to habitus, “a product of history”, and posits that it “ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, through an action, tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time”.²⁷ Affect and habit are considered two conflicting sides of social order. While Deleuze sees “the violence and social intensity of affective experience” as the key to society’s function, Bourdieu highlights “a low-intensity resonance that tends to preserve, transmit, and reproduce social order in everyday life”.²⁸ I would argue, however, that affect and habit represent two complementary aspects of the ‘order of bodies’: initial interaction (affect) and its post-emotional state (habitus). The force that keeps the two functioning together is the collective memory.

The divergence of the collective and institutionalized memory is at the centre of Maurice Halbwachs’ discussion of the nature of collective memory. The collective memory equates to the public discourse, whereas the institutionalized memory is the state discourse; the opacity of the collective memory makes it difficult to be fully assimilated by the institutionalized ‘history’. The state hegemonic culture is juxtaposed by the subterfuge of the ‘collective whisper’ located on the margins of the hegemonic order; this juxtaposition, as theorists argue, characterizes the collective memory and the memory of the events it preserves.²⁹

Halbwachs introduces the notion of social memory frameworks as a necessary condition of remembering an event and retaining it in the collective memory: “it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection”.³⁰ Social memory frameworks arise from social interactions:

It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories. [...] most frequently, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or that we suppose they could have asked us.³¹

²⁶ Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony* (note 16), 168.

²⁷ Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice* (note 24), 54.

²⁸ Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony* (note 16), 201.

²⁹ Angel Enrique Carretero Pasin, “Maurice Halbwachs: Oficialidad y clandestinidad de la memoria”, *Athena Digital* 13 (2008), 95-103 (p. 96). See also Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1988) and Michel Maffesoli, *Ordinary Knowledge: An Introduction to Interpretative Sociology*, trans. David Macey (Cambridge: Polity, 1996).

³⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* [1941, 1952], trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38.

³¹ *Ibid.*

The change of frameworks determines the nature of remembered events and this can change as society changes: “society represents the past to itself in different ways: it modifies its conventions. As every one of its members accepts these conventions, they inflect their recollections in the same direction in which collective memory evolves.”³² The frameworks sustain themselves through multiple recurring recollections of the past: “various capacities for memory aid each other and are of mutual assistance to each other. But what we call the collective framework of memory would then be only the result, or sum, or combination of individual recollection of many members of society.”³³ The events that might destroy the continuity of a particular group (or society as a whole) are erased from the collective memory: “society, in each period, rearranges its recollections in such a way as to adjust them to the variable conditions of its equilibrium”.³⁴ We could also argue that these recollections are adjusted to restore some of the original affect of the event in order to strengthen the group to which the event belongs.

Halbwachs’ social memory frameworks are similar to Frederick Charles Bartlett’s idea of ‘schemata’: “social conventions, institutions and traditions formed by persistent group tendencies constitute ‘group schemata’; just as the individual images, ideas and trains of thought formed by persistent personal interests constitute ‘individual schemata.’”³⁵ They also echo Bourdieu’s view of the endurance of habit through the replication of social practices.³⁶

The relationship between memory and habit can be expressed as follows: “Even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu”,³⁷ which is habit. The narratives about the Tlatelolco massacre written immediately or very shortly after 2 October present the story within a familiar social context (or habit): the government is corrupt; the press is ‘bought’ by the government; the students are either troublemakers or our only hope for a better future; there is an outside threat to Mexico’s security, democracy, etc. When affect arises it confronts this habit, releases emotions, and forces a change of habit. So the contribution that habit makes to social memory frameworks is characterized by the emotions released when affect arises: the populace is angry at the corrupt government and press and it grieves for those innocent people who died

³² Ibid., 173.

³³ Ibid., 39.

³⁴ Ibid., 183.

³⁵ Frederick Charles Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 299.

³⁶ For a parallel between Halbwachs’ demographical research and Bourdieu’s study of the social order see Remi Lenoir, “From Maurice Halbwachs to Pierre Bourdieu: Social Nature or Naturalised Social Construction”, *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 38.1 (2001), 41-53.

³⁷ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (note 30), 49.

in the Plaza. Emotions and habit combine to form a social memory framework; neither emotions nor the ‘present social milieu’ can be removed without destroying the framework and forgetting the event.

The emotional cycle associated with the massacre was first identified as anger/disbelief/shame;³⁸ later, grief replaced disbelief.³⁹ When affect releases these emotions, a solid foundation for a social memory framework associated with the massacre is established. The texts evoking these emotions will be deemed the most reliable or believable and are more likely to remain in the centre of public attention even if they carry fragmented or incomplete information about the massacre (or even no factual information about the massacre at all). Habitus affects and is affected by long-lasting social practices, and the collective memory serves to retain and interpret these practices within the contexts of old and new collective experiences: “the collective memory is closely linked to a lived experience integrated into a group’s history and it is defined in relation to this history.”⁴⁰ This process of interpretation involves both remembering and imagining: “The desire to know the past [...] is ... served by imagination, which supplements or takes the place of memory when the latter fails.”⁴¹ I have argued that imagination is used to restore the affective aspect of the events being remembered, hence affect imprints itself upon the process of remembering the event and preserving it in the collective memory.⁴² Factual accuracy becomes secondary to the affective nature of the memory of events – they are no longer ‘facts’ but cultural products, “rhetorical artifices and not [...] depositories of data from which a factual truth may be construed”.⁴³ When an event is retained in (and later recalled from) the collective memory, its affective nature evokes a distinct set of emotions in the populace and the accuracy of the memory is no longer significant. In fact, I would posit that, as long as the emotions evoked in the populace are the ones associated with the affect of the event, the texts evoking them are deemed accurate or ‘truthful’.

³⁸ Victoria Carpenter, “The Echo of Tlatelolco in Contemporary Mexican Protest Poetry”, *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 24.4 (2005), 496-512 (pp. 504, 510).

³⁹ Carpenter, “You Want the Truth?” (note 9).

⁴⁰ René Kaës, “Rupturas catastróficas y trabajo de la memoria: Notas para una investigación”, in Janine Puget and René Kaës, eds, *Violencia de Estado y psicoanálisis* (Buenos Aires: Lumen, 2006), 177, quoted in Alberto Javier Mayorga Rojel, Luis Nitrihual Valdebenito and Juan Manuel Fierro Bustos, “Imaginario social, memoria colectiva y construcción de territorios en torno a los 30 años del golpe militar en Chile”, *Anagramas* 10 (Jan-June 2012), 19-36 (p. 22). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

⁴¹ Edward Shils, *Tradition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 52.

⁴² Carpenter, “You Want the Truth?” (note 9), 40.

⁴³ José Rabasa, *Inventing A-M-E-R-I-C-A: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism* (Norman, OK and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 9.

III.

Immediately after the massacre, information about it came from two main sources: the capital's daily newspapers (of which *Excélsior* has the biggest circulation, with *El Universal* being a close second) and eyewitness accounts. Since the eyewitness accounts did not reach the wider audience until at least a year later, the public received the first news of the massacre from the capital's daily newspapers.

We will begin our analysis by exploring how the evening of 2 October was described in the capital's newspapers the next day. There were many points of agreement but, equally, many points of contention in the way the events of the night before were told. The facts reported in the capital's newspapers were the same in general, but some details differ – the most notable detail is the number of victims, which is hardly surprising considering that at first the journalists were reporting as eyewitnesses. They received information from the official sources about the number of casualties late at night on 2 October. These discrepancies notwithstanding, there was hardly any denial that the massacre had happened, nor did the newspapers downplay the massacre, contrary to what most of the Tlatelolco public discourse says.

The demonstration started at 17:30 with speeches from the representatives of the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), and National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). The demonstration was proceeding as planned, although there were rumours circulating in the Plaza that there were dozens of police agents, dressed in plain clothes among the demonstrators (“había decenas de agentes policiacos, vestidos de civiles”).⁴⁴ This is not the only time that infiltration is mentioned: there are several hundred agents of the Federal Justice Police, Office of the General Prosecutor, and the Federal Security Department (“varios centenares de agentes de la Policía Judicial, de la Procuraduría General de la República, de la Dirección Federal de Seguridad”), they also blocked both staircases (“cubrieron las dos escaleras de acceso”) in the Chihuahua building.⁴⁵ General Marcelino García Barragán also refers to some elements (“algunos elementos”)⁴⁶ influencing the students, which suggest that this infiltration is the students' own work (or, at least, the

⁴⁴ “Recio combate al dispersar el ejército el mitín de huelguistas” [Fierce Fighting as the Army Disperses a Strikers' Demonstration], *Excélsior* (3 October 1968), 13A.

⁴⁵ “Edificio Chihuahua, 18 horas” [The Chihuahua Building, 18:00 hours], *Excélsior* (3 October 1968), 4A.

⁴⁶ “La libertad seguirá imperando” [Freedom Will Continue to Rule], *Excélsior* (3 October 1968), 12A.

students – or CNH – knew about it). We will return to this point when we discuss the notion of a conspiracy.

By 18:10 the demonstration was winding down as it was decided not to continue to Casco Santo Tomás.⁴⁷ According to most articles, the demonstration was proceeding smoothly and peacefully; however, in the article “Freedom Will Continue to Rule”, the Secretary for National Defense General Marcelino García Barragán is quoted as saying that at 17:30 police requested army backup because of a gunfight between two groups of students (“un tiroteo entre dos grupos de estudiantes”).⁴⁸ No other newspaper article reports this; this was also refuted by General Luis Cueto Ramírez (Chief of Police of Mexico City), cited as saying that “la policía no pidió la intervención del ejército, sino que le informó de lo que ocurría” [the police did not ask the army to interfere, it just let the army know what was happening].⁴⁹

At 18:10 (or about 45 minutes after the demonstration started, according to “Fierce Fighting”), fireworks were launched in the Plaza.⁵⁰ “Gun Battle in the Tlatelolco District” suggests that this was the starting point: “Quizá era una señal; tal vez, causó una confusión” [Perhaps it was a signal; most likely it caused confusion],⁵¹ and “Fierce Fighting” indicates that the fireworks surprised the demonstrators: “Los manifestantes dirigieron, casi automáticamente, sus miradas hacia arriba. Y cuando comenzaron a preguntar de qué se trataría, se escuchó el avance de los soldados” [Demonstrators looked up almost automatically. And when they started to wonder what this could mean, they heard the soldiers approaching].⁵² This implies that the demonstrators were unaware of the fireworks being used to signal the start of an armed confrontation, whereas the army knew exactly what the fireworks were for. The speed with which the soldiers moved and the sheer numbers of troops and armed vehicles suggest that this was hardly a spur of the moment decision to help out the police (as indicated in García Barragán’s statement that the police had requested help some forty minutes before the troops arrived in the Plaza). This is supported by the description of the agents’ actions in “The Chihuahua Building”: as the fireworks appeared, “varios centenares de agentes [...] llegaron y gritaron a los periodistas: ‘Bájense!’ Llevaban las

⁴⁷ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

⁴⁸ “La libertad seguirá imperando” [Freedom Will Continue to Rule] (note 46), 12A.

⁴⁹ “Explica el hecho García Barragán” [García Barragán Explains What Happened], *La Prensa* (3 October); cited in Jorge Carrión, Daniel Cazés, Sol Arguedas and Fernando Carmona, *Tres culturas en agonía* (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1970), 214.

⁵⁰ “Edificio Chihuahua” [The Chihuahua Building] (note 45), “Se luchó a balazos en Ciudad Tlatelolco” [Gun Battle in the Tlatelolco District], *Excélsior*, 3 October 1968, 1A; “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44).

⁵¹ “Se luchó a balazos” [Gun Battle] (note 50), 1A.

⁵² “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

pistolas en la mano” [several hundred agents [from the departments mentioned above] arrived and shouted at the journalists, ‘Get down!’ They carried handguns].⁵³

Another point upon which all articles agree is that there were many soldiers and police agents in the Plaza. Both “Fierce Fighting” and “The Chihuahua Building” note the presence of police agents in plain clothes, with either a cloth (“Fierce Fighting”) or a white glove (“The Chihuahua Building”) on one hand as a means of identification. It is clear, then, that the demonstration was infiltrated by the government forces; since the agents were carrying handguns (according to “The Chihuahua Building”), it was hardly a peaceful infiltration.

The agents with a white glove appear in many texts from the public discourse corpus. For example, Juan Miguel De Mora quotes from an official document about these,⁵⁴ but *El Excelsior* also reported the agents being in the Plaza, so the fact of the agents is not disputed; what probably is disputed is which side the agents represent. “Fierce Fighting” suggests that they were government forces acting against the students:

Se calcula que participaron unos 5,000 soldados, y muchos agentes policiacos, la mayoría vestidos de civil. Tenían como contraseña un pañuelo envuelto en la mano derecha. Así se identificaban unos a otros, ya que casi ninguno llevaba credencial, por protección frente a los estudiantes.

[It is estimated that there were about 5,000 soldiers and many police agents, most of whom were in plain clothes. They had their left hand wrapped in a cloth as a password. This way they could identify each other, since almost none of them carried IDs to make sure they were safe among the students.]⁵⁵

The idea of a preplanned sabotage of the demonstration begins to emerge and the students are not the originators of the plot, since the agents had to conceal their identity so as not to provoke the students.

The ensuing gun battle was continuous and fierce. All articles published on 3 October use words like “intenso” [intense], “generalizado” [widespread], “ininterrumpidamente” [constantly], to show what a hellish experience it was; one of the articles even calls the Plaza “un infierno” [an inferno].⁵⁶ The deafening effect of gunfire mixed with screaming and crying also appears in many articles; the feeling of powerlessness and inevitable demise permeates the texts: “ningún ser humano podía escapar al fuego concentrado, de alto poder, que allí se estaba registrando” [nobody could escape continuous fire of high-power weapons that was

⁵³ “Edificio Chihuahua” [The Chihuahua Building] (note 45), 4A.

⁵⁴ Juan Miguel De Mora, *Tlatelolco 1968: por fin toda la verdad* (Mexico: Editores Asociados, 1973), 65.

⁵⁵ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 14A.

⁵⁶ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

noted there [at the Chihuahua building].⁵⁷ All sources agree that the most intense gunfire lasted about 29 minutes, after which it decreased in intensity but continued for another several hours. According to “Fierce Fighting”, the army, in light tanks and armoured vehicles, fired machine-gun rounds almost constantly (“las fuerzas militares, en tanques ligeros y vehículos blindados, lanzaban ráfagas de ametralladora casi ininterrumpidamente”).⁵⁸ This suggests little to no resistance from the crowd and therefore casts doubt upon the idea of unarmed police being attacked by well armed snipers or the two sides being evenly matched in arms. Perhaps the most poignant summary of the situation in the Plaza appears in “Tlatelolco, campo de batalla” [Tlatelolco, Battleground] in *El Universal*: “No se trató de unos cuantos tiros sino de una batalla en forma que aterrorizó a miles de personas: niños, mujeres y hombres que viven en esa zona” [We are not talking about a gunshot here and there but a battle on such a scale that terrified thousands of people: children, women, and men who live in the area].⁵⁹

All sources reported that machine guns, submachine guns, handguns and high power rifles were used by the army, police and agents: there were machine-guns, 45 and 38 calibre handguns, and 9-mm pistols.⁶⁰ “Fierce Fighting” describes how soldiers were firing machine gun rounds almost constantly (“ráfagas de ametralladora casi ininterrumpidamente”), as well as stating that the tanks showed up after the gunfire started and moved right up to the Chihuahua building, so they already knew where to go.⁶¹ The Chihuahua Building was the focal point of the activity, since the speakers and most members of the CNH were there.⁶² When the tanks entered the Plaza, they went to the front of the Chihuahua building: “Por el poniente a un costado del edificio de la Secretaria de Relaciones, comenzaron a aparecer tanques ligeros. Llegaron hasta las puertas del edificio ‘Chihuahua’” [From the westhand side of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs building, light tanks started entering the square. They drove up to the doors of the Chihuahua Building].⁶³

⁵⁷ *El Universal* quoted in Jorge Volpi, *La imaginación y el poder: Una historia intelectual de 1968* ([1998] Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 2006), 329.

⁵⁸ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

⁵⁹ “Tlatelolco, campo de batalla” [Tlatelolco, Battleground], quoted in Volpi, *La imaginación y el poder* (note 57), 330.

⁶⁰ “Edificio Chihuahua” [The Chihuahua Building] (note 45), 4A.

⁶¹ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

⁶² “Edificio Chihuahua” [The Chihuahua Building] (note 45), “Se luchó a balazos” [Gun Battle] (note 50), “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44).

⁶³ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

All articles agree that there were dead and wounded, including soldiers and children.⁶⁴ The images of the dead and wounded are accompanied by the images of crying women and children, incessant gunfire and people being gunned down: “muchos se tiraban al pavimento, se retorcían, habían sido alcanzados por las balas” [many fell on the pavement writhing as they were hit by bullets].⁶⁵ The images of people running and getting killed and the depersonalized references to the gunfight and to rounds (“titoreo” and “ráfagas”) are shared across both state and public discourse.

All sources agree that there was widespread fear, panic and confusion in the Plaza. Among these harrowing images are terrified people running for their lives (“carreras” [rush]),⁶⁶ people running back and forth (“la gente corría de un lado a otro”),⁶⁷ hysterical women, shouting men, crying children (“había mujeres histéricas, hombres que gritaban, niños que lloraban”);⁶⁸ hysterical women holding children in their arms (“mujeres histéricas con sus niños en los brazos”);⁶⁹ families running carrying their little ones and risking being wounded (“cargando a sus pequeños y arriesgándose a ser heridos”);⁷⁰ and innocent people being killed – a man was shot as he was running back to his flat to save his baby daughter.⁷¹

Confusion reigned supreme in the Plaza, as people ran to hide or tried leaving the buildings. However, confusion was not confined to the Plaza alone. Foreign and national journalists who were in the Plaza or learned about the events from their colleagues were looking for accurate information. Two press conferences were convened on the night of 2 October. One, held by General García Barragán, was covered in *Excélsior*, and presented what became the main ‘party line’: the army responded to the police’s call for help when two groups of students started firing at each other; when the soldiers arrived they were attacked by snipers and returned fire.⁷² The other press conference was held exclusively for the foreign journalists: “desde las 22 horas, en el Centro de Prensas del Hotel María Isabel, [...] empezaron a inquirir sobre los acontecimientos. Algunos de ellos, que los presenciaron, dieron informaciones diversas. Ante eso todos insistieron en obtener información oficial”

⁶⁴ “Tlatelolco, campo de batalla” [Tlatelolco, Battleground], quoted in Volpi, *La imaginación y el poder* (note 57), 329-330; “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A, 14A; “Edificio Chihuahua” [The Chihuahua Building] (note 45), 4A.

⁶⁵ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

⁶⁶ “Edificio Chihuahua” [The Chihuahua Building] (note 45), 4A; *El Universal* quoted in Volpi, *La imaginación y el poder* (note 57), 329.

⁶⁷ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14A.

⁷⁰ *El Universal* quoted in Volpi, *La imaginación y el poder* (note 57), 329. This scene is quoted in Elena Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco* [1971] (Mexico City: Biblioteca Era, 2008), 226.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* This scene is quoted in Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco* (note 70), 226.

⁷² “La libertad seguirá imperando” [Freedom Will Continue to Rule] (note 46), 1A, 12A.

[from 22:00, in the Press Centre of the María Isabel Hotel, [the journalists] started asking what had happened. Some of them, who witnessed the events, were giving conflicting information. As a result, everyone insisted on receiving official information].⁷³ At the press conference, attended by Fernando M. Garza (Director of Presidential Public Relations), Raimundo Cuervo (foreign press coordinator for the Olympic Organizing Committee) and Gonzalo Castellot (Head of the radio and tv section of the Cabinet), foreign journalists received, unofficially, plenty of information (“no de manera oficial [...] amplia información”).⁷⁴ One wonders whether such opacity was necessary, since most of the events of the evening appeared next day in the capital’s largest daily and other newspapers, describing the horror of the gunfight and indicating in no uncertain terms that the government forces were responsible for it. In fact, there were several journalists from *Excélsior* and *El Universal* in the Plaza, covering the demonstration. As the news of a gunfight reached the editors of *Excélsior*, they sent more journalists to the scene:

Una vez que se tuvo conocimiento de la refriega, Excélsior envió al sitio de los sucesos a los reporteros Jaime Reyes Estrada, Emilio Viale, Miguel Angel Martínez Agíz y Fausto Fernández Ponte, así como a los fotógrafos Ricardo Escoto y Carlos González, y a los camarógrafos del Noticiero Excélsior-Automex, Javier y Roberto Zetina e Ignacio Malfabón.⁷⁵

[Once the news of the gunfight were received, Excélsior sent the following reporters to the scene: Jaime Reyes Estrada, Emilio Viale, Miguel Angel Martínez Agíz and Fausto Fernández Ponte; photographers Ricardo Escoto y Carlos González and a camera crew from the Noticiero Excélsior-Automex, Javier y Roberto Zetina and Ignacio Malfabón were also dispatched to the scene.]

Clearly, then, there were videocameras in the Plaza, recording what was going on. Another photographer present at the scene was Jaime González, who was covering the demonstration with the journalist Ramón Morones. González “was wounded by a soldier. His camera was taken from him and smashed on the pavement. Then it was stomped to smithereens. When he tried to protest he received a bayonet wound to his arm” (“fue herido por un soldado. La cámara fotográfica le fue quitada y estrellada contra el suelo. Después fue hecha añicos a culatazos. Cuando trató de protestar, recibió un bayonetazo en una mano”).⁷⁶ A statement was published on the front page of *Excélsior*, recording this attack and expressing the

⁷³ “Veinte muertos, 75 heridos y 400 presos” [Twenty Dead, Seventy-Five Wounded and 400 Arrested], *Excélsior* (3 October 1968), 9A.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 14A.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

newspaper's vigorous protest against the attack (“enérgica protesta por el atentado”).⁷⁷ Other articles noted that the journalists were attacked and arrested along with students: “Agazapados, pegados a la pared de las escaleras, impulsados por gritos de los propios agentes, dos periodistas bajan al segundo piso” (“Grabbed and pushed against the walls on the stairs, hurried along by the shouting agents, two correspondents go down to the second floor”).⁷⁸ Some of them were injured, beaten and even lightly wounded (“Algunos de ellos [journalists and photographers] maltrechos, golpeados y hasta con lesiones leves”).⁷⁹

Following the media coverage, a number of essays and analyses appeared in 1969-70, trying to put together a coherent picture of what happened on 2 October 1968, analyse the narrative that emerges and record the ‘truth’ about the massacre in the collective memory. Fernando Carmona’s essay “Genealogy and Actuality of Repression” is among these publications.⁸⁰ Carmona admits from the onset that there are many accounts (some of which contradict others) and the only sources of information are the press and statements from the eyewitnesses. He sums the problem up thus: “lo que ocurrió en Tlatelolco es tan confuso y contradictorio en tantos aspectos, que no será fácil que se llegue a reconstruir los hechos en todos sus detalles” [what happened in Tlatelolco is so confusing and contradictory in so many aspects, that it won’t be easy to reconstruct the events in every detail].⁸¹ However, there is still enough information to answer the questions he posits: who opened fire first, and on whose orders; what information was this decision based on; what other steps could have been taken and why did the officials decide to use force; what happened exactly; how many were killed and how many wounded; of these, how many students; and finally – and very importantly – what role did different factions play in “a movement as heterogeneous as the student movement” (“un movimiento tan heterogéneo como el estudiantil”).⁸²

Citing articles from *La Prensa*, *Diario de la tarde*, *Excélsior* and other newspapers,⁸³ Carmona identifies the first inconsistency: according to García Barragán, the police asked the army to interfere at 17:30,⁸⁴ but according to all published statements, the first signs of trouble were the shots fired after the fireworks had been launched at 18:10. Carmona’s

⁷⁷ “Atropello al Excélsior” [Outrage against Excélsior], *Excélsior* (3 October 1968), 1A.

⁷⁸ “Edificio Chihuahua” [Chihuahua Building] (note 45), 4A.

⁷⁹ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 14A.

⁸⁰ In Carrión et al, *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), pp. 170-246.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Quoting from the newspaper coverage of the massacre is a widespread practice in the Tlatelolco essays (see, among others, Ramón Ramírez, *El movimiento estudiantil de México, julio-diciembre de 1968* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1969); Poniatowska, *La noche de Tlatelolco* (note 70); De Mora, *Tlatelolco 1968* (note 54); Orlando Ortiz, *La violencia en México* [1971] (Mexico City: Ed. Diógenes, 1973)).

⁸⁴ “La libertad seguirá imperando” [Freedom Will Continue to Rule] (note 46), 12A.

information, however, is slightly different: he says that, “as everyone knows [...] everything started at 18:30” (“como todo el mundo sabe [...] todo empezó a las 18:30 horas”), citing Félix Fuentes from *La Prensa*, 3 October 1968; yet *Excélsior* and *El Universal* reported 18:10 as the time the events unfolded. Carmona continues examining the contradictions between García Barragán’s statements and the testimonials of journalists from *La Prensa*, *Le Figaro* (Paris), and *Le Monde* (Paris). Surprisingly, he does not include the articles published on 3 October in *Excélsior* in this discussion, citing instead Claude Kiejmann’s article in *Le Monde* and Philippe Nourry’s article in *Le Figaro*, both appearing on 5 October.⁸⁵ Similarly, José Luis Mejías’ article “Tragic Demonstration”, published in *Diario de la Tarde* on 5 October appeared as “Fierce Fighting” in *Excélsior* on 3 October.

Carmona notes that gunfire continued till 20:30.⁸⁶ Other sources vary from around one hour,⁸⁷ to five hours (“el combate se prolongó durante cinco horas” [the battle went on for five hours]),⁸⁸ to over nine hours, as sporadic gunshots were still heard in the Plaza around 3:00. The newspapers do not give the exact time the gunfire stopped but all agree that it continued sporadically into the night: “La noche entró [...]. De la explanada de la plazoleta, ya en poder del Ejército, surgían constantes ráfagas” [Night fell [...]. On the concourse of the square, now under control of the army, gunfire continued nonstop].⁸⁹

Carmona cites the number of casualties quoted in *Le Monde*: “Más de 20 Muertos en México Durante un Tiroteo entre el Ejército y los Manifestantes” [More than 20 Dead In Mexico during a Gun Battle between the Army and the Demonstrators],⁹⁰ which is supposed to be the official tally, somehow suppressed in the Mexican papers. Yet on 3 October *Excélsior* reported the same number of casualties (20), while in *El Universal* the number was 29. By 5 October *Excélsior* and other daily newspapers were quoting official figures of 33 dead and 62 seriously wounded.⁹¹ Why resort to a lower number from a foreign newspaper? Possibly because of what is said in the article after the headline: *Le Monde* notes that paramedics were not allowed to approach the wounded. However, this is not necessarily accurate, since the head of the DFS (Federal Security Department) was quoted as calling for ambulances to come with sirens on.⁹² Similarly, the statement by the hospital staff on strike refers to the

⁸⁵ Both Kleijmann’s and Nourry’s articles are cited extensively in Poniatowska’s *Tlatelolco* (note 70), De Mora’s *Tlatelolco* (note 54) and Ortiz’s *La violencia en México* (note 83).

⁸⁶ Carrión et al, *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), 215.

⁸⁷ *Excélsior* cites twenty-nine minute-long intense fire in “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

⁸⁸ Carrión et al, *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), 70.

⁸⁹ “Recio combate” [Fierce Fighting] (note 44), 13A.

⁹⁰ *Le Monde* (4 October 1968), quoted in Carrión et al, *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), 219, note 115.

⁹¹ See *Excélsior* (5 October 1968), 1A

⁹² “Edificio Chihuahua” [Chihuahua Building] (note 45), 4A.

disappearance of several interns who came to the event to give medical help (“Pasantes Internos que asistieron al acto, con el fin de prestar auxilio médico”).⁹³ Another and the most surprising inconsistency is that Carmona quotes extensively from Mexico City’s newspapers alongside the foreign press, yet he considers the former to be inaccurate in their depiction of the massacre and the latter to be telling the truth. For example, he says that “el periodista Heinrich Jaenecke, de la conocida revista alemana Stern Magazin (año 21, semana del 15 al 21 de octubre), hizo un reportaje sobre la matanza, también diferente de las versiones oficiales” [journalist Heinrich Jaenecke, of a well-known German magazine Stern Magazin (Volume 21, 15-21 October), published a report on the massacre, also different from the official versions].⁹⁴ Yet there is only one ‘official version’ in Carmona’s chapter – García Barragán’s; and it was refuted on 3 October by General Luis Cueto Ramírez⁹⁵ and, implicitly, by the majority of newspaper articles published between 3 and 9 October in Mexico City. It is possible that Carmona sees the national press coverage of the massacre as an official version, in which case his relying on newspapers for information to counter García Barragán’s version is inconsistent at best.

But are such inaccuracies and inconsistencies relevant to the picture Carmona is painting? He says that it is not necessary to add other testimonials (“no es necesario añadir otros testimonios”);⁹⁶ the testimonials included here are deemed sufficient because they tick all the right boxes in the symbolic value matrix. General consensus about the details of the massacre paints a coherent enough picture to contribute to its symbolic value.⁹⁷ Repeated references to ‘women and children’ and ‘unarmed and defenceless people’ reinforce the victims’ vulnerability and innocence; the description of gunfire as ‘heavy’ and several statements of widespread panic⁹⁸ highlights the disproportionate force used by the government against its own people. The affective nature of the message is best presented in the description of three victims of the massacre: a thirteen-year-old boy with a head wound, an old lady shot in the

⁹³ “A la opinión pública” [For Public Opinion], *Excélsior*, 4 October 1968, 10A.

⁹⁴ Carrión et al., *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), 219-20, note 116.

⁹⁵ “Explica el hecho García Barragán” [García Barragán Explains What Happened] (note 49), quoted in Carrión et al., *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), 214.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁹⁷ Symbolic value “is constructed by re-telling ‘what happened’, each time within a particular emotional context produced by the initial affect” (Victoria Carpenter, “‘Y el olor de la sangre manchaba el aire’: Tlatelolco 1968 in José Emilio Pacheco’s ‘Lectura de los ‘Cantares Mexicanos’”, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 95.4 (2018), 451-74 (p. 471)). Symbolic value is an intrinsic part of social memory frameworks which ensures that an event is kept alive in the collective memory.

⁹⁸ Carrión et al., *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), 216-7.

back, and a young woman with a wound in the left side of the torso.⁹⁹ These three victims appear in other texts, becoming part of the symbolic value of the massacre.¹⁰⁰

When discussing who was responsible, Carmona sarcastically lines up the usual suspects:

Se culpó, naturalmente, a los “conjurados comunistas”, de la “línea dura”, “anarquistas”, “trotsquistas”, “maoistas”, “castristas” y “guevaristas”, con el añadido en esta oportunidad - meramente insinuado, como es costumbre - de la participación de la CIA, la FBI, el Opus Dei y el MURO.¹⁰¹

[Naturally, blame was laid on the ‘Communist conspiracies’, on the ‘hard-liners’, ‘anarchists’, ‘Trotskyists’, ‘Maoists’, ‘Castrists’ and ‘Guevarists’, also using this opportunity to add – merely implied, as is customary – the participation of the CIA, the FBI, Opus Dei and the MURO)].

The sarcastic tone of the list is reminiscent of “Nota al Gral. Cárdenas: Extranjero, la palabra siniestra” (Letter to General Cárdenas: Foreigner, a Sinister Word), by Francisco Carmona Nenclares,¹⁰² “Llamamiento a la paz” (Call for Peace) by Daniel Cosío Villegas,¹⁰³ and “Todavía no sabemos nada” (We Still Do Not Know Anything) by Enrique Maza.¹⁰⁴ All these articles reject the idea of a plot, stating that the problem does not lie with some foreign group, whatever its political affiliations, but in the absence of an open and equal dialogue between the country’s population and its government. The ‘partisan perspective’ of the newspaper coverage of the massacre is noted in the critiques of the Tlatelolco discourse.¹⁰⁵

IV.

The last to join the Tlatelolco public discourse en masse was literature (prose and poetry). However, the first poems written in response to the massacre appeared in *La cultura en México* (the supplement of the journal *¡Siempre!*) on 6 November 1968: these were “El

⁹⁹ Quoted from “Penosa identificación de las víctimas” [Painful Identification of the Victims], *El Universal* (4 October 1968), 1.

¹⁰⁰ Carrión et al., *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), 221; Poniatowska, *Noche de Tlatelolco* (note 70), 225; De Mora, *Tlatelolco 1968* (note 54), 81, 86; Ortiz, *La violencia en México* (note 83), 389. For a discussion of symbolic value, see Carpenter, “You Want the Truth?” (note 9).

¹⁰¹ Carrión et al., *Tres culturas en agonía* (note 49), 221.

¹⁰² Francisco Carmona Nenclares, “Nota al Gral. Cárdenas: Extranjero, la palabra siniestra” [Letter to General Cárdenas: Foreigner, a Sinister Word], *Excelsior* (10 October 1968), 6A, 8A.

¹⁰³ Daniel Cosío Villegas, “Llamamiento a la paz” [Call for Peace], *Excelsior* (8 October 1968), 7A.

¹⁰⁴ Enrique Maza, “Todavía no sabemos nada” [We Still Do Not Know Anything], *Excelsior* (9 October 1968), 6A, 8A.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Ryan Long, *Fictions of Totality: The Mexican Novel, 1968, and the National-popular State* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 195-6, note 8.

espejo de piedra” [Stone Mirror] by José Carlos Becerra and “Lectura de los ‘Cantares mexicanos’” [Reading of the Mexican Songs] by José Emilio Pacheco. Neither poem told the story of the massacre; instead, they related the events of 1968 to the events of the Spanish Conquest of the Aztec empire. Arguably, the best known poetic contribution to the Tlatelolco literature is Rosario Castellanos’ poem “Memorial de Tlatelolco” [Memorandum on Tlatelolco], written in 1971 and published in the collection *Poesía no eres tú* [Poetry Is Not You] (1972):

La oscuridad engendra la violencia
y la violencia pide oscuridad
para cuajar el crimen.
Por eso el dos de octubre aguardó hasta la noche
Para que nadie viera la mano que empuñaba
El arma, sino sólo su efecto de relámpago.

¿Y a esa luz, breve y lívida, quién? ¿Quién es el que mata?
¿Quiénes los que agonizan, los que mueren?
¿Los que huyen sin zapatos?
¿Los que van a caer al pozo de una cárcel?
¿Los que se pudren en el hospital?
¿Los que se quedan mudos, para siempre, de espanto?

¿Quién? ¿Quiénes? Nadie. Al día siguiente, nadie.
La plaza amaneció barrida; los periódicos
dieron como noticia principal
el estado del tiempo.
Y en la televisión, en el radio, en el cine
no hubo ningún cambio de programa,
ningún anuncio intercalado ni un
minuto de silencio en el banquete.
(Pues prosiguió el banquete.)

No busques lo que no hay: huellas, cadáveres
que todo se le ha dado como ofrenda a una diosa,
a la Devoradora de Excrementos.

No hurgues en los archivos pues nada consta en actas.
Mas he aquí que toco una llaga: es mi memoria.
Duele, luego es verdad. Sangre con sangre
y si la llamo mía traiciono a todos.

Recuerdo, recordamos.
Ésta es nuestra manera de ayudar a que amanezca
sobre tantas conciencias mancilladas,
sobre un texto iracundo sobre una reja abierta,
sobre el rostro amparado tras la máscara.

Recuerdo, recordemos
 hasta que la justicia se sienta entre nosotros.

[Darkness engenders violence
 And violence invokes darkness
 To jell in crime.

That is why October the second waited until night
 So that no one saw the hand that clutched
 The weapon, but only its sequel of lightning.

And in that brief livid light, who is it? Who is killing?
 Who are in agony, who are dying?
 Who are the ones fleeing without shoes?
 The ones who end up in the jailpens?
 The ones who are rotting in hospitals?
 The ones who keep silent forever, out of fear?

Who? Who are they? No one. The next day, no one.

The plaza dawned swept clean; the newspapers
 Featured the weather report
 And on television, over the radio, at the movies,
 There was not a single change of program,
 No interrupting news flash or even a
 Moment of silence at the banquet.
 (The banquet continued.)

Don't search for what is not there: clues, corpses.
 Everything has been rendered as offering to a goddess:
 To the Devourer of Excrement.

Don't comb through the files because nothing has been entered
 On the books.

Ah, violence invokes darkness
 Because darkness engenders dream
 And we can sleep dreaming that we can dream.

But here I touch an open wound: my memory.
 It hurts, therefore it is true. It bleeds real blood.
 Yet if I call it mine I betray them all.

I remember, we remember.
 This i sour way of helping dawn to break
 Upon so many stained consciences,
 Upon an irate text, upon an open gate,
 Upon the face shielded behind the mask.

I remember, we must remember

Until justice be done among us.]¹⁰⁶

This poem, like most of other poetic narratives of the massacre, does not tell the reader ‘what happened’. Instead, it offers snapshots of the most shocking images: a Plaza washed of the blood spilled there the night before; a banquet carrying on as if nothing had happened; newspapers presenting the weather forecast as the main news of the day. Emotional charge is very strong, especially towards the end, as anger arises from shame (“sobre tantas conciencias mancilladas, / sobre un texto iracundo” [Upon so many stained consciences, / Upon an irate text]), and, by doing so, unite the multitude in seeking justice for the victims (“hasta que la justicia se siente entre nosotros” [Until justice be done among us]). The poem calls for the memory of the massacre to persist so that justice can be served.¹⁰⁷

The stanza “La plaza amaneció barrida: los periódicos / dieron como noticia principal / el estado de tiempo” [The plaza dawned swept clean; the newspapers / Featured the weather report] is the most poignant; this is probably why the stanza of the poem containing this line is etched on the Tlatelolco memorial erected in the Plaza in 1993. The irony in making the reader pay attention to something as trivial as the weather forecast in the face of the enormity of the events in the Plaza reveals the affective foundation of this memory. The reader is more likely to have a strong emotional reaction, such as anger and rage (both words appear in many Tlatelolco poems), than to question whether the newspapers did indeed ignore the massacre. And, as we have seen, they did not. So, why would this statement be made in the poem that insists upon ‘justice’ and abhors ‘darkness’ that breeds violence? It would be easy to check the fact of media coverage, since all large daily newspapers (*Excélsior*, *El Día*, *Heraldo de México*, *El Nacional*, *El Universal*, *La Prensa*, and others) published articles and photographs, press conference coverage, analyses, emotional reactions, and public statements. Weekly publications, such as the more left-wing *¿Por qué?* and (at times supportive of the PRI) the magazine *¡Siempre!*, also covered the massacre. But does the poem indeed question whether the newspapers were publishing the truth about the event? I would hypothesize that it is immaterial whether the poem accurately represents the way the massacre was covered in the newspapers; what matters is the reader’s emotional reaction to the poem. As I have concluded in an earlier study, Castellanos’ poem (and, indeed, the

¹⁰⁶ Rosario Castellanos, *Poesía no eres tú* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), 297-8; Rosario Castellanos, *A Rosario Castellanos Reader*, ed. Maureen Ahern (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 98-9.

¹⁰⁷ Lucía Melgar, “Rosario Castellanos, crítica de la violencia: Una aproximación”, *Destiempos* 4 (March-April 2009), 395-412 (p. 407).

Tlatelolco poetry) “does not seek an accurate representation of the event. But it does seek a particular emotional response to be safeguarded by the public.”¹⁰⁸

V.

In conclusion, this essay has explored the way the Tlatelolco massacre is narrated in the state and public discourse. The public discourse of the massacre is characterized by the emotional cycle of anger, grief and shame.¹⁰⁹ Affect creates a permanent foundation of social memory frameworks if it produces the anger/grief/shame cycle. The texts evoking these emotions will be deemed the most reliable or believable and are more likely to remain in the centre of public attention even if they carry fragmented or incomplete information about the massacre (or even no factual information about the massacre at all). We have seen that both state and public discourse of the massacre produce this cycle: the content of the articles where the cycle is particularly evident (such as “Fierce Fighting” from *Excelsior* or “Painful Identification of the Victims” from *El Universal*) is then adopted by the public discourse and quoted in support of its version of the massacre. We have also concluded that full factual accuracy of the Tlatelolco narratives is unattainable because of the fragmented nature of the eyewitness accounts, as Carmona’s essay has demonstrated. Finally, we have seen that factual accuracy is not the main aim of the Tlatelolco poetry (as discussed in the analysis of “Tlatelolco Memorial”); instead, the perpetuation of the emotional anger/grief/shame cycle is the purpose and the key characteristic of this type of narrative.

Having considered the Tlatelolco state and public discourse through the prism of the theories of posthegemony and collective memory, we can posit that if the affective resonance at the moment of interaction is sufficiently strong (emotions produced are shared by all and persist over time), social order will be reproduced not with ‘a low-intensity resonance’ but with a strong emotional foundation which will be influencing those coming into contact with it. This emotional foundation is faithfully replicated in the public discourse of the massacre as it borrows the content of the state discourse with the strongest expressions of anger, grief and shame. This emotional triangle is the enduring resonance that keeps the memory of the massacre from sliding completely into habitus. Even if sometimes the massacre moves to the margins of low-level anxiety, an anniversary helps resurrect it closer to the affective

¹⁰⁸ Carpenter, “You Want the Truth?” (note 9), 44-5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

epicentre. And, contrary to the idea of dissent between the collective and the institutionalized memory, Tlatelolco bridges the two as the state and public discourses follow the same affective schemata of narrating the event by disregarding the factual accuracy of the story and concentrating instead on re-igniting the emotional cycle associated with the massacre.