

**ANALYSIS OF THE ARMIES BY EVELIO ROSERO: A VIEW FROM THE  
SUBJECTIVITY OF VIOLENCE**

María Sofía Carreño Brochero

David Stiven Silva Velandia

A monograph submitted to the faculty of ECCI university in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Professional in modern languages

Nelson Pérez, Chair

Program of modern languages

ECCI university

Bogotá

September, 2021

*¿Será posible que antes que nos maten a  
todos seamos capaces de reaccionar?*

Jaime Garzón Forero

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank life and god for this wonderful experience and motivation to make our first ideas become a monograph. We want to thank our families for all the support throughout the time we were growing as students to become professionals. Without that support it would not be possible to accomplish these objectives. We are also very thankful with the *Semillero de condición humana* whose professor in charge is Nelson Perez, also our monograph chair, who we thank for all his patience, his time and his knowledge. Finally, we want to say thanks to our institution: ECCI university for being our second home during all this years of learning.

## ABSTRACT

This monograph aims to make an analysis of the novel *The armies*, by Evelio Rosero, a novel that tells the story of Ismael Pasos, an 80-year-old teacher who worked in the small towns of Colombia until he reached San José. There Ismael resides with his wife Otilia and he stands out not only for having taught to read and write to most of the people of the town, but in his old age he also becomes that distant spectator who narrates in a typified, normalized way, and almost natural, the violent events, the traumas and the culture of violence created by the conflicts between legal and illegal armed groups. In order to show the impact and some effects of the state abandonment that the novel exposes, it is intended to relate some violent events that occurred in Colombia with the situations that take place in San José. Likewise, in this work it will be found the concept of Empathic Unsettlement, a term proposed by the American professor and historian Dominick LaCapra (2001), as the literary resource that the writer used when deciding how to tell his novel. It should be emphasized that Rosero did not experience violence directly, however, he takes the necessary experience for the narrator from the information published in the different media.

**Key words:** historical memory, empathic unsettlement, violence, normalization of violence, *The armies*.

## Resumen

Esta monografía pretende hacer un análisis de la novela *Los ejércitos*, de Evelio Rosero, novela que cuenta la historia de Ismael Pasos, un profesor de 80 años de edad que ejerció dentro de los pequeños pueblos de Colombia hasta llegar a San José. Allí, Ismael reside junto a su esposa Otilia y él se destaca no solo por haberle enseñado a leer y escribir a la mayor parte de las personas del pueblo, sino que en su vejez también se convierte en aquel espectador distante que narra de forma tipificada, normalizada y casi natural, los hechos violentos, los traumas y la cultura de violencia creada por los conflictos entre grupos armados legales e ilegales. Con el propósito de mostrar el impacto y algunos efectos del abandono estatal que expone la novela, se pretende relacionar algunos hechos violentos ocurridos en Colombia con las situaciones que se protagonizan en San José. Así mismo, en este trabajo se encontrará el concepto de Desasosiego Empático como el recurso literario que utilizó el escritor al decidir cómo contar su novela. Es preciso recalcar que Rosero no vivió la violencia directamente, sin embargo toma la experiencia necesaria para el narrador desde la información publicada en los diferentes medios de comunicación.

**Palabras Claves:** memoria histórica, desasosiego empático, violencia, normalización de la violencia, los ejércitos.

## Table of contents

Abstract	3
Resumen	4
Table of content	5
Introduction	7
Chapter 1. Problem statement	11
1.1 Research question	14
1.2 General objective	14
1.3 Specific objectives	14
Chapter 2. Theoretical framework	14
2.1 Violence	15
2.2 Culture of violence	17
2.3 Empathic unsettlement	20
2.4 Hermeneutics	22
2.5 Historical memory	24
Chapter 3. State of art	27
3.1 Violence	28
3.1.1 Half a Century in the company of the One Hundred Years of Solitude	28
3.1.2 Implications Around the Phenomenon of the violence in Ashes of the Wind by Hernando Tellez	28
3.2 Culture of violence in literature	29
3.2.1 The Phenomenon of Cultural Violence Behind	

the Literary Work, The Study of Comparative Literary Model by Sylvie Meiliana.	29
3.2.2 Violencia novelada, una mirada comparativa a las novelas Muertes de fiesta y Los ejércitos del escritor colombiano Evelio Rosero Diago	30
3.3 Historical memory	33
3.3.2 Spanish Literature and the Recovery of Historical Memory	33
3.4 Empathic unsettlement	34
3.4.1 "This, too, was myself ": Empathic Unsettlement and the Victim/Perpetrator Binary in Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	34
Chapter 4. Methodology and analysis	36
4.1 Direct violence	37
4.2 Violence since state abandonment	46
4.3 Other important symbols of violence	50
4.4 Culture of violence	52
4.5 Empathic unsettlement	56
4.6 Historical Memory	60
Chapter 5. Conclusions	64
References	68

## Introduction

Since the beginning of Colombian history, expressing the political opinion about victims of violence has been complicated due to the fear imposed by the same violent events, however, the authors implicitly used them as an inspiration to write stories. In Colombia, it starts from one of the most popular wars, The Thousand Day's War, that showed a significant battle at the end of the XIX century that started because of a non-conformism between liberals and conservatives. Therefore, at this time some of the novels inside Colombian literature stopped using the different romantic stories and they adopted the new political and violent facts, where the most common authors were from the bourgeois people, where the stories were focused on the high-life tradition. For instance, according to Jorge Andrés Cárdenas (2018) in his article *Panorama de la literatura sobre el conflicto armado en Colombia, siglos XX y XXI. Consideraciones sobre su desarrollo y evolución narrativa*, some novels that show this particularity in Colombia are *Pax* by José Rivas; *Diana la cazadora* by Clímaco Soto, and *A flor de tierra* by Saturnino Restrepo which are considered as the base of violence in literature.

Later, Colombia lived deeper this fight between liberals and conservatives entitled bipartisanship that became stronger after Jorge Eliecer Gaitan's murder, most popularly known as *The Bogotazo*. By then, the literature of some Colombian novels had evolved taking into account the perspective of the people who survived armed violence, however, Cárdenas (2018) highlights that while this happened, the role of the victims who died had not yet played a leading role in some of the novels. Furthermore, as literature was nearer to violence, pictures of mutilated bodies started being used as literary resources. It is taken as a reference the books: *El*



*gran Burundún Burundá ha muerto* by Jorge Zalamea; *El coronel no tiene quién le escriba* by Gabriel García Márquez and *La casa grande* by Álvaro Cepeda.

Based on the above, at the end of the '80s, a new type of violence started being narrated in books, the marginal violence which used to be more testimonial by telling the urban conflict produced by drug trafficking and army conflict due to the emergence of guerrillas. In accordance with Cardenas (2018), in the same article already named above, some of the most accurate books which described this violence in cities were *Rosario Tijeras* by Jorge Franco and *La Virgen de los sicarios* by Fernando Vallejo. In contrast, some literature nowadays tries to show the actual conflict between the different army groups as guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the government, where the novel *The armies* written by Evelio Rosero can be positioned.

Taking into consideration the history of violence reflected in literature over the years, this work is intended to approach the analysis of the development of the work *The armies*, regarding the childhood and perspective of Evelio José Rosero. This writer is from Bogotá, Colombia and is the author of the aforementioned novel which was published by Editorial Tusquets in 2007. That same year, this novel was awarded with the *II Prize Tusquets Editores de Novela* and the *National Prize for Literature* awarded by the Ministry of Culture. A few years later, in 2009, *The armies* was chosen from among nearly 300 works worldwide to be awarded the Foreign Fiction Prize by The Independent newspaper in recognition of the best work translated into English. It should be noted that Rosero has lived most of his life in Bogotá, however, the nostalgia generated by the memories of his childhood in Pasto has greatly influenced him. There, he began to read and into that process, he thought for the first time that he would also like to be a writer as

Daniel Defoe and set out to write his first novel at the young age of 10 years old, transgressing the novel *Robinson Crusoe*.

Based on Rosero's writing process, it should be noted his book *En el lejero*, which was published in 2003 and it was the first novel in which the writer dealt with the issue of forced disappearance by brutality, cruelty and permanent impunity. This novel is written in a spontaneous way encompassing the dreamlike, symbolic and allegorical point of view, literary resources that the writer uses as a strategy to face the issue of violence in Colombia. It is evident then that Rosero had adopted an empathetic attitude due to the victims' situation of the armed conflict's violence in Colombia, who were mostly peasants who lived in small towns unprotected by the State. This appropriation was derived from his childhood lived in Pasto, Nariño and as a traveler to the towns of this department, he accessed the rural environments that take center stage in most of his novels. During those years of violence in the first half of the 21st century in Colombia and through television, Rosero showed on the verge of tears the painful testimonies of mothers looking for their children and families, crying for the loss of a mother or father, as well as the countless posters of missing people that the news published every day.

All this experience greatly affected his development as a Colombian citizen and especially as a writer, since he acquired an eager need to communicate this situation, but unlike his novel *En el lejero*, his desire that time was to convey the reality in an objective and truthful manner. At that moment, Rosero began to write *The armies* to get closer to reflecting the consequences of the armed conflict from the point of view of a defenseless civilian who emerges amid the crossfire between armies.

...Sometimes these armies even work together and help each other, like the Colombian Army with the Paramilitaries, as has been proved, the massacres and everything...I began to put together all this around the life of the teacher Ismael Pasos, his wife and his town. (Lee Por Gusto, 2016)

Thanks to the video interview <sup>1</sup>with Evelio Rosero elaborated by Juan David Correa in 2009 and published on YouTube by the channel Lee Por Gusto, it is possible to obtain a personal perspective of the author in the elaboration of *The armies*, as well as in the development of the characters, from which it is evident that the profession of the main character, Ismael Pasos, is not random. This character is a teacher who taught to read and write in the towns of Colombia, who provided education and refused to cease existing, that is why Ismael represents the hope of the country, according to Rosero. Likewise, in this interview, Evelio Rosero reveals that all the massacres and/or violent events in the book occurred in the reality of Colombia. The author claims to have read cases about the above in newspapers.

...When they send to the shopkeeper the finger of his wife and son, I read that in a newspaper clipping. The army officer who starts firing on the civilians, saying they are guerrilla groups, and then he goes mad, as well, also happened. Everything told there happened, even the act of pretending to be dead. You read in the papers, "they pretended to be dead so that they would not be killed", they hide among the corpses so they would not be killed (sic). That situation seemed very shocking to me and this points out

---

<sup>1</sup> Video retrieved from <http://www.leeporgusto.com> consulted in 2021.

something central in my novel since Professor Ismael pretends to be dead from panic.

(Lee Por Gusto, 2016)

In this statement, there are several contrasts of violent events between the book and reality, allusions with which Rosero empathized throughout his writing. As a newspaper reader and news viewer into the big city from Bogotá, he developed his point of view objectively to turn it into the perspective of a civilian who lives in one of the many Colombian towns with a violent atmosphere. Some of the most relevant occurrences are the violence against women, armed conflict, kidnappings, massacres, child violence, physical violence and mental violence.

Besides, the empathy of the author is crucial in this analysis with a hermeneutic approach since Rosero transmits his experience from the literary resource of *Empathic Unsettlement*, a term proposed by the American professor and historian Dominick LaCapra (2001). This resource can affect the mode of representation or significance of the message in different ways. Therefore, thanks to the information analyzed up to this point, our first hypothesis proposes the involuntary use of this tool in the narration of the novel. This monograph has the purpose of getting closer to answering how a violence culture impacts society inside and outside the novel.

## Chapter 1. **Problem statement**

After reading *The armies* by Evelio Rosero, among the most relevant topics in the novel we could highlight solitude, state abandonment and violence. These ones motivate us to ask ourselves: what is the effect that the state absence has on the victims of social violence that is reflected in the novel *The armies*? To ask this question it was necessary to read about Rosero and his biography and the big steps he has followed in order to grow up as a writer. It was decided to

search the subjectivity of violence due to the author's perspective. With this reading it is seen the resignation surrounded by armed conflict in the San José town.

Taking into account the previously said, the problem suggests to analyze the real historical context of the relation between the Colombian state and the legal or illegal armed groups, likewise the different ways of submission that suffered every person in the book, who decided not to be part of the war. To do this, we are going to keep in mind how the novel narrates the events. It means the way that the author exposes that violence, what it is based on and how it is developed. For instance, it is important to highlight the following quote from the book *Violencia política y conflictos sociales en América Latina*, written in 2013 by César Barreira, Roberto González and Fernando Trejos:

Today, as in other latitudes, the structures of violence in Colombia migrate in different ways, depending on the scenario. From a massacre to a beating of the husband or father / mother, from a fight between neighbors to a confrontation with a knife involving the school youth. Perhaps the forms in which violence occurs in society change over time, mutate to other forms, which become visible or are covered in invisibility. (Barreira et al., 2013)

Additionally, it is important to highlight the main role the government has for the non-repetition of violent acts and its responsibility when its absence generates an internal culture. This term is used in this work as the repetitive behavior generated as a consequence of violence in the novel's town, San José, where the normalization of violence is a "cultivated" <sup>2</sup>culture. The

---

<sup>2</sup> The RAE academic and philosopher, Emilio Lledó, establishes the term "cultivated ignorance" and defines it as that decreed and planned ignorance that affects matters of territoriality, force or power.

same absence is shown in *The armies* and at the same time it forced people to be quiet about the violent experiences they have had, being witness.

According to these ideas, an analysis of the novel *The armies* will be done, focused on the issue of violence and armed conflict. Taking into consideration the way in which Rosero develops the named themes, a brief comparison will be made, among the similarities and differences about the Colombian social crisis in reality and in the novel. It is not possible to define a specific period of time as Claudia Maya highlights in her article *Literatura y Sociedad*.

*Los ejércitos de Evelio Rosero y la narración de la violencia en Colombia:*

The novel renounces one of the elements of verisimilitude that Van Dijk attributes to journalistic discourse, to underline the factual character through precise data on times and places, figures, testimonies of witnesses. These data appear, but suspended in the non-place and non-time of the tragic recurrence of dramatic events and the diversity of places and characters that are forced to appear daily in the face of violent events. (Maya, 2011)<sup>3</sup>

Starting then from the words by María Maya, it is possible to reference facts of Colombian reality on which the narration is based, however it is unlikely to specify a year or a specific date in the historical framework of the novel.

Finally, it is important to mention that among our purposes, we want to show the relevance of the culture of memory through *The armies*. The history of Colombia can be expressed and materialized by the Colombian novel. The above, not only in an effort to commemorate, but also in order to have the opportunity to rescue the lessons that the internal war has left us through the years. This final purpose is aimed at all the people who read our

---

<sup>3</sup> Own translation.

research, being modern language students and teachers the closest to implementing this issue in their learning.

### **1.1 Research question**

Why does the absence of the State impact the social violence victims reflected in *The armies* by Evelio Rosero?

### **1.2 General objective**

To explain why the normalization of violence is generated; and its relationship with the absence of the state that the narrator reflects in *The armies*.

### **1.3 Specific objectives**

- To analyze the types of violence to which the San José town and its population are subjected.
- To contribute to the construction of historical memory in Colombia with the analysis of *The armies* of Evelio Rosero.
- To recognize the socio-cultural crisis generated by the armed conflict in Colombia.
- To define the literary resource of *Empathic Unsettlement* proposed by Dominick La Capra and used by the author Evelio Rosero when writing his novel *The armies*.

## **Chapter 2. Theoretical framework**

Among the antecedents that are related to this monograph, our principal analysis too will be the importance of having a clear concept of the terms *violence*, *Empathic Unsettlement* and *memory culture*. Hence, through the comparison between the definitions given by three different authors, all the necessary perspectives for the development of our work will support the analysis in progress.

## 2.1 Violence

During the following process of searching deeply the concept of violence, it is taken into account as the principal reference the book *Violence and its causes* written by Jean-Marie Domenach, an intellectual writer, where it is possible to understand some points of view where violence can be defined:

What we today call ‘violence’ gradually came to be understood from three main points of view: (a) the psychological aspect, an explosion of force assuming an irrational and often murderous form; (b) the ethical aspect, an attack on the property and liberty of others; and (c) the political aspect, the use of force to seize power or to misappropriate it for illicit ends. (Domenach, 1981)

On this basis, the three points of view that can be demonstrated in the novel *The armies* can be taken. These three points of view of violence can be considered as the main base to analyze and define it. On the other hand, we have a definition that The PAHO (Pan American Health Organization) offers that “violence is the intentional use of force or the real power as a threat against oneself, a reason, a group or community that has, as a consequence, the probability of psychological harm, injuries, death, lack or bad development”<sup>4</sup>

With this definition, we can say that violence is every act that has negative consequences which affect the lives of those who have to suffer these acts. Domenach also uses an example to go further in the definition of violence. He says:

---

<sup>4</sup> Own translation.



I shall apply the term violence to the use of force, whether overt or covert, in order to wrest from individuals or groups something that they do not want to give of their own free will. Theft is not always violence. Rape always is. And if rape is a conspicuous and, so to speak, pure form of violence, it is because it obtains by force what is normally won through loving consent (Domenach, 1981).

This definition is a little bit more complex than the previous one given by the PAHO. But it can also fit in the three points of view given by Domenach, who also states that violence is difficult to categorize depending on the situation but we can have a general definition of it. Also, violence is seen by the human being perspective as a conscious animal but not as a behavior that represents everything. For instance, if a volcano erupts in a violent way it does not mean it is an act of violence.

In the novel we can see the violence as it is itself. A combination of the two meanings of violence can affect the main character's life and environment. This force was applied by *the armies* affecting the citizens' freedom and generating consequences in the future. The use of these violations of freedom were taken as a political power for crimes and illicit acts.

On a different view, J Corsi (1994), as Domenach does, also categorized the violence but this time, in his book *Violencia Familiar Una Mirada Interdisciplinaria sobre un grave problema*. Corsi gives it an elaborated definition.

Violence is always a form of power exercise through force used (be it physical, psychological, economic, political) and implies the existence of an "above" and a

"below", real or symbolic, which usually takes the form of complementary roles: father-son, man-woman, teacher-student, employer-employee, young-old, etc. <sup>5</sup>(J, Corsi, 1994)

Therefore, during this work we are going to apply the definition provided by Domenach because it is one of the most accurate. Thanks to this definition, it is possible to relate it with the violence's symbols in the novel, where the definition given by Jorge Corsy will also complement the necessary perspective.

## 2.2 Culture of violence

Once the reading of the novel was done, it was possible for us to perceive the naturalness, vulnerability and exclusion that exists within the universe of *The armies*. As it is known up to this point in the investigation, Rosero's intention was to generate a criticism based on the normalization of the events, thus showing a narrator involved in violent stories generated by the internal armed conflict. Ismael Pasos was the spectator and compiler of the tragedies that succumbed in the streets of the town of San José, but nevertheless he normalizes the pain and anxiety experienced when narrating them. This is the reason why the culture of violence becomes one of the most relevant terms in this research.

At this point, it is important to highlight the role of the Norwegian sociologist and mathematician Johan Galtung, one of the main authors who have contributed internationally to peace studies. Galtung proposes the concept *Triangle of Violence*<sup>6</sup>, in which the relationship and interaction between violence in three primary aspects and conflicts is evidenced. For the above,

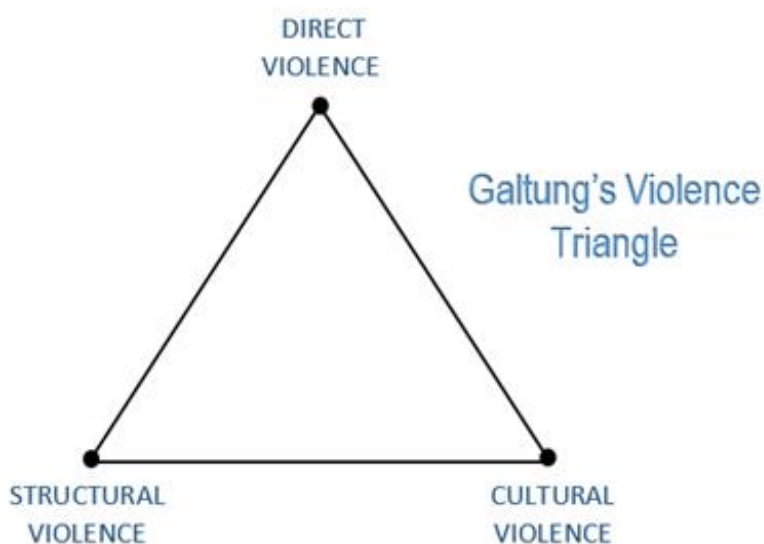
---

<sup>5</sup> Own translation.

<sup>6</sup> The ABC Galtung's triangle was officially presented in 1971.

Galtung refers to the conflict as one that leads to violence, thus discarding conflicts without violence. This is seen from three dimensions that are Direct violence, Structural violence, and finally Cultural violence. The violence culture is:

Those aspects of culture, in the symbolic sphere of our experience (materialized in religion and ideology, language and art, empirical sciences and formal sciences - logic, mathematics - symbols: crosses, medals, crescents, flags, hymns, military parades, etc.), which can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. (Galtung,2003)<sup>7</sup>



Galtung, J. (1969). Galtung's Violence Triangle [Illustration]  
Recovered from Violence, Peace and Peace Research.

In this way, when it is using any aspect of a culture as a tool to justify violence, we are talking about the installation of a culture of itself. In these circumstances, it is necessary to understand the Galtung's perspective of the other two violence types. On the first hand, Direct Violence makes reference to the evident violence manifestation, usually physical, verbal, or

---

<sup>7</sup> Source: Galtung (1969). Own translation.

psychological. On the other hand, Structural violence is that generated by systematized political, social or economic structures. This violence prevents the satisfaction of basic needs and is very hard to identify.

Consequently, and according to Galtung (2003), although direct violence (death or mutilation) and structural violence (exploitation) show a greater dimension of damage, both need cultural violence (conformity) to legitimize their use. Galtung (1998) developed another relevant relation in this triangle: the one between cultural and structural violence. They both cause direct violence by using violent actors as instruments who rebel against the structures, and, again, use culture to justify and even reward these acts of aggression.

The culture of violence causes its normalization and there are some important factors that generate it. With the purpose of highlighting them in this work, there are some examples taken from authors who drew on Galtung's work. One of them is the perspective of Izaskun Orue and Esther Calvete (2012) in their his work: *La justificación de la violencia como mediador de la relación entre la exposición a la violencia y la conducta agresiva en infancia*. Orue and Calvete expose how violence normalization is generated by the values instilled from childhood, as well as digital consumption and direct or indirect experience. In this way “a child exposed to violence may conclude that aggressiveness is appropriate to solve conflicts with others or to obtain what one wants. Previous studies have found that the belief that aggression is acceptable can predict aggressive behavior” (Calvete, 2008; Huesmann and Guerra, 1997). For this reason, we can consider as another important example in our investigation the relation between violence normalization with the overexposure of violence.

The overexposure of violence refers to the daily and viralized display of violence in an environment, thus generating a collective reaction of normalization. According to an anonymous article published in the Prevention of Violence program of the Mexican foundation Carlos Slim (2019), this reaction of violence generates some situations: puts more attention on the consequences than on the causes, making it difficult to recognize the violent pattern; apathy in the face of Human Rights violations; and finally dehumanization and lack of solidarity. (Los peligros de normalizar la violencia, 2019)

It is essential to understand that cultural violence not only expands, but also adapts to all forms of coexistence. This generates ethnocentrism, hierarchy, meritocracy and excludes respect for human rights, phenomena where hereditary fear is predisposed as the only protective shield of the communities that experience the daily violence of the armed conflict.

### **2.3 Empathic unsettlement**

It is well known that the role of the author in the novel has to be differentiated from the narrator, because the realities in the novelist's life are invented to improve the story. The author has the ability to mix his/her experiences in the development of the novel and yet objectively distance himself/herself from the work to detect the changes that must be made. However, for Alejandro Marcos, teacher of creative writing, excluding feelings and experiences in the novel would be also a mistake in the narration, since "The ideal is to be able to let the text delve into everything necessary in ourselves so that there is truth in it" (Marcos, 2018). Highlighting this, it is possible to affirm that the experience of the author can be considered as a very important part of the novel. That is why the *Empathic Unsettlement* is involucrate in the analysis of *The armies*.

Rosero's empathy is understood as a key piece for this analysis, where the term *Empathic Unsettlement* would be directly related. This term was used for the first time in 2001 in the book *Writing history, writing trauma* by Dominick LaCapra. This thinker defines Empathic Unsettlement as one that "poses a barrier to closure in discourse and places in jeopardy harmonizing or spiritually uplifting accounts of extreme events from which we attempt to derive reassurance or a benefit" (41-42).

Regarding the definition and use that is given to Empathic Unsettlement, LaCapra, American historian and Emeritus Professor from Cornell University, gives this name to the textual materialization of trauma. That is to say, in the case of literary writing, when an author takes into account the traumatic dwellings of others, he tries to express what LaCapra calls an *empathic unsettlement*:

The Empathic Unsettlement stylistically upsets the narrative voice and counteracts harmonizing narration or unqualified objectification yet allows for a tense interplay between critical, necessarily objectifying reconstruction and affective response to the voices of victims (LaCapra, 2014).

Succinctly, Empathic Unsettlement generates an important change in the narrative, one where unconditional objectivity is counteracted and instead appears the tense relationship between critical reconstruction, naturally objective, and the affective response was given to the voice of the victims. Through this literary resource, the interpretation of a third party about the perspective of the victim is set aside, as well as the role of the victim as an inferior being is discarded in the narrative. On the other hand, LaCapra gives a name to that narrative that

manages to activate the critical vision of the reader through the experiences and feelings of the victim, without the need for sensationalism.

Rosero achieves the same in the development of his novel by adopting an instinctive approach that makes *Empathic Unsettlement* a key piece. This last is important in order to understand Rosero's determined intention when writing forcefully about the life of Ismael Pasos, narrator and protagonist of the cruel reality of the town of San José.

## 2.4 Hermeneutics

As it has been mentioned throughout this monograph, it is really important to have in mind the different meanings we are going to use to clarify and support the ideas we are giving. Hermeneutics is a term that can have different meanings depending on the authors and on the focus it has. One of the most general definitions exposes that hermeneutics is the art and science of the interpretation of texts and speeches. Therefore, the word *hermeneutics* comes from Greek which means *translate* and *interpret* (Elio Vegas, 2020).

For Gadamer (1998), prominent German philosopher, hermeneutics is also considered a capacity of the human being more than a methodology, where the main reason is to find an objective interpretation of a text. This means not an absolute truth but an objective point of view by taking into account the perspective between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader. Gadamer refers to hermeneutics in a philosophical way by saying that it is an *understanding art*. This term means that it is also the desire of human beings to understand and have a truth.

Going deeper into Gadamer's definition of hermeneutics, Morella Arráez (2006) said:

Gadamer (1995) tries to demonstrate how hermeneutics refers to the ideal of an exact and objective knowledge where understanding is the original ontological character of human life, which leaves its impression on all man's relationships with the world. In this way, hermeneutics not only speaks of the procedure of some sciences or the problem of a correct interpretation of what is understood, but also refers how understanding is not one of the possible attitudes of the subject, but the way of being of existence as such.<sup>8</sup> (Gadamer, 1995 as it was cited in Morella Arráez, 2006)

According to that, we can say that it is a search to find the most precise interpretation but also bearing in mind the knowledge of human beings and their capability of understanding. It means that it is focused on ontology and philosophy as the way of human thought. On the other hand, and based on Alberto León, (2009) in his article *The hermeneutic swift on Martin Heidegger's phenomenology*, for the magazine *Polis*, Gadamer's ideas were based on M. Heidegger's who tried to define hermeneutics as a philosophical methodology to discover the existence of human beings.

Pursuant to Analía Becherini (2014), in her article *La vertiente hermenéutica: la filosofía de Gadamer y la síntesis de explicar y comprender de Ricoeur*, there is another definition given by Ricoeur which is to understand hermeneutics as the interpretation of different texts written in our culture. It means that it can constitute an activity which has a restricted object, referring to the written signs in contrast to comprehension that encompasses every way of signs an individual can emit.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Own translation.

<sup>9</sup> Own translation.



Considering the last definition, we can say that Ricoeur tries to explain that hermeneutics is not just the interpretation of texts but also the speeches. To understand better, we can take the following quotes from Analía Becherini:

We consider it is necessary to understand what he means when he talks about discourse, in order to understand Ricoeur's arguments. The author argues that speech is an occurrence because it is something that happens, which is different from what exists. If it is a spoken speech, the event is inconstant, it disappears almost at the same time it is emitted, without leaving any traces. On the contrary, when the discourse is in writing, the possibility of undertaking the analysis through hermeneutics opens up. Here we can again see the question of the object to understand in the case of spoken discourse and, on the other hand, the discourse to interpret, which would be the writing. (Analía Becherini, 2014)

In this context, we want to take hermeneutics' definition of Hans-Georg Gadamer. We find this definition as one of the most complete and can support the ideas of this monograph because it focuses on the written signs as we are focusing this study on the novel. In addition, we can take Ricoeur's definition in some cases when necessary due to it being more focused on speeches and other non-written signs.

## **2.5 Historical memory**

Historical memory is one of our base definitions that supports our monograph. We can start by saying that in a general way historical memory is a mixture of history and memory meanings and recognizing the main role of *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*. This is a

Colombian public entity created by the Colombian state with the purpose of gathering oral testimonies, texts, documents. These documents can allow us to recognize the violence facts to make visible and dignify the victims of social and armed conflict.

In addition, this information that is being collected is available for all the citizens and the researchers who want to go behind the facts; and opt to acquire more knowledge about it and to avoid these unfortunate events from happening again. Furthermore, the idea of this information is to be used by other authors to multiply the studies about the same topic.

We have introduced a little bit about what *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* does so far. Now we want to take the definition of historical memory from theirs:

Historical memory is a vehicle for the clarification of violent events, the dignity of the voices of the victims and the construction of a sustainable peace in the territories. The duty of memory of the State, which is enshrined in the Victims Law, means that national and territorial authorities must play an important role in promoting processes of construction of historical memory, as a contribution to the realization of the right to the truth, and the right to comprehensive reparation for the victims. (Centro de Memoria Histórica, 2015)

This definition given before puts the victims in the center, but the definition of historical memory can have a different focal point such as politics. Katherine Hite, an American author and academic, defines historical memory as:

The concept of “historical memory,” often expressed as “collective memory,” “social memory,” or for political scientists, “the politics of memory”, refers to the ways in which

groups, collectivities, and nations construct and identify themselves with particular narratives about historical periods or events. Historical memories are foundational to social and political identities and are also often reshaped in relation to the present historical-political moment. (Katherine Hite, n.d.)

She called the politics of memory a way to identify and construct narratives starting from historical events, which means that it is taken directly from the present to generate an identity in the future and not to forget what caused a consequence.

Now, we can conclude that historical memory is the connection that every human being has with his/her past and with the respect and value they give to it. It is the appreciation of the acts that could have created consequences in the past to create awareness in the present, it means, they are used as a mirror for the bad events not to happen again.

There is another definition that can be more accurate for this research, Jheison Torres Ávila (2013), in his article *La memoria histórica y las víctimas*, mentioned:

Societies with traumatic pasts are subject to ethical-political and legal obligations. It means, to an ethics of memory as a social fact. A commitment that has as its first point of attention the victims and the survivors, the authority and a point of view of the witness, who "sees and reveals what the human eye of the contemporary citizen does not suspect" The survivors are not only testimonies of a past that does not want to pass, but figures who concentrate and project around them a series of values that are embedded in the very legitimacy of our political regimes. The right of democratic memory is shown to us as an indispensable requirement to advance in the improvement of our democratic rights. A

civil right that public institutions have the obligation to legislate, develop and apply.<sup>10</sup>

(Gálvez, 2008 as it was cited in Torres Ávila, 2013)

As we said in the previous lines, we argue that the definition of Gálvez matches much better with this monograph because it takes the meaning of historical memory in the context of a traumatic past referring to conflict. This definition fits in the context of the novel which exposes the violence and questions the historical memory of the main character of the book.

To conclude, in this section it was possible to delve into the different terms within literature, and specifically within the novel this work aims at analyzing, such as: violence, violence culture, Empathic Unsettlement and historical memory. In this way, we could choose a unique perspective in each concept in order to delimitate its use in our study. As a result of this careful research and with the purpose of fulfilling the objectives proposed in this investigation, we can define those terms as our four main categories for the novel analysis.

### **Chapter 3. State of art**

In the previous chapter, we mentioned the different concepts we want to apply in this monograph. Now we want to identify some investigations we consider important to take as a reference in our research. For instance, some articles and monographs are not identical studies but are related to the topics we are reaching.

---

<sup>10</sup> Own translation.

### 3.1 Violence

#### 3.1.1 *Half a Century in the Company of One Hundred Years of Solitude*

This novel is analyzed from different points of view, but one of the most significant is violence. In fact, Gabriel García Márquez, its author, does a follow-up of almost the whole Colombian history since the beginning. And this reference is an opening to different studies, for instance, the article *Half a century in the company of One Hundred Years of Solitude* written by Daniela Renjel Encinas.

In her article, Renjel (2017), exposes that violence is not just the backside of the desire but also it is considered as a resource that allows continuing building the story. It means that without violence there would not be a story. She stated that one of the most important aspects to consider is the visualization of the void generated by violence and its greatest metaphor: war and the proliferation of violence through the birth of children with an unfortunate destiny, generation after generation.

#### 3.1.2 *Implications Around the Phenomenon of the Violence in Ashes for the Wind by Hernando Tellez*

This monograph, written by Walter Hernández Villamizar, is an analysis that gives a principal concept which is *ideologeme*, the pure interpretation of the book *Ashes for the wind*. He argues that this concept weaves perfectly with the book and all its tales by using an example as a definition. Additionally, he highlights the following information:

Every ideological product is part of the social and material reality that surrounds man, it is an element of his materialized ideological horizon. Regardless of the meaning of a word, it is first and foremost about a materially existent word, as a spoken word, printed, transmitted in a low voice, to the ear of others, thought through an internal speech; that is,

the word is always an objectively existent part of the man's social environment. (Bajtin, Mijail as it is cited in Hernández, 2016)<sup>11</sup>

After giving some definitions, Hernández just based the whole study on *ideologeme* and the comparison between the book and reality. It means the categories a literary book can show from the real and social context, which reveals what is the social environment it belongs to. In fact, Hernandez just wants to connote that this novel does not need to say what its story is based on, for someone to realize what it is inspired by.

### **3.2 Culture of violence in literature**

#### **3.2.1 *The Phenomenon of Cultural Violence Behind the Literary Work, The Study of Comparative Literary Model by Sylvie Meiliana.***

After deep research of the relation between violence, culture, and literature, one of the clearest investigations about this relationship was the article of Sylvie Meiliana (2017). Her perspective was based on two novels: *Memoirs of a geisha* by Arthur Golden and *The dancer* by Ahmad Tohari. Although the stories within these novels are different, both share one thing in common and correspond to the conclusion of the author of this research: cultural violence can be physical, psychological and sexual (Meiliana, 2017). In the name of Japanese culture, sexual violence happened in the novel *Memoirs of a geisha*.

The girl was told about the tradition of mizuage. Her older sister told her that mizuage was “the first time a woman’s cave is explored by a man’s eel” (Golden, 1997 as it was cited in Meiliana, 2017). A man made a great deal of money in the pursuit of mizuage.

The tradition of mizuage was a tradition when the girl before becoming a real geisha, her virginity was sold to a man who could pay a record amount (Meiliana, 2017).

---

<sup>11</sup> Own translation.

On the other hand, Meiliana (2017) recognized the same cultural violence in *The dancer*, managing to develop her comparative investigation from the cultural acceptance of sexual, physical, and psychological violence. This research allows us to compare the distinctions in the normalization of violence between the perspective of Colombian culture from *The armies* and the Asian culture.

### **3.2.2 *Violencia novelada, una mirada comparativa a las novelas Muertes de fiesta y Los ejércitos del escritor colombiano Evelio Rosero Diago***

Taking into consideration the previous reference of violence culture in literature, the development of our research led us to this degree work, presented by Wilmer Vera Castro (2013) to opt for the Master's degree in Literature. In order to achieve an assertive contextualization in the comparison between *The armies* and *Muertes de fiesta*, both novels by the writer Evelio Rosero, Vera clearly reflects some of the most important Colombian aspects of violence in the twentieth century. Vera begins by talking about the Thousand Day War that lasted until 1902, an ending with legal gaps that years later would show serious consequences which are necessary to take into account in our monograph.

In the first place, Vera mentions The Banana Massacre, which was perpetrated on December 6th and 5th of 1928 in Ciénaga, Colombia, after the United Fruit Company workers strike. According to Vera (2013), this is the first crucial violent event caused by state politics that prioritized and protected the interests of multinationals that also fed the mercantile economy. The aforementioned multinational company flatly refused to make an agreement and in view of this, the government of President Miguel Abadía Méndez ordered the Colombian army to confront the banana plantation workers. The military man in charge was General Carlos Cortés Vargas, who that morning gave the direct order to set fire to the more than 1,500 strikers who were in the

main square of Cienaga waiting to be heard. Estimating an exact number of fatalities is impossible since according to witnesses, many bodies were loaded onto trains to be thrown into the sea and buried in mass graves. Later, and after the death of countless wounded in the massacre taken to hospitals, General Vargas could not evade the responsibility of taking the lives of 47 civilians. Although many years this was accepted and the terror regime grew, the hard work of the then young lawyer and representative to the Chamber Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and the direct information of the witnesses, it was possible to estimate that the death toll exceeded 2000. This was an influential event in the history of Colombian literature that inspired episodes of the novels *100 Years of Solitude* written by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and *La Casa Grande* by Álvaro Cepeda Samudio.

The next highlighted situation that influenced the violence in Colombia is the assassination of the liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán Ayala in 1948. Gaitán was a political leader with great popular support in Colombia. Gaitán's murder triggered *El Bogotazo*, an event that caused the disturbance of all the habitual tasks of Colombian people. Because of this, another important aspect Vera relates is derived from this period of violence<sup>12</sup>: organized illegal armed groups reappeared with more force than before in Colombia. However, this aspect was not immediately detected and few novels worked on this theme deeply.

It must be understood that it does not correspond properly to the *novel of violence*<sup>13</sup>

novels that in some way had the violent act as a reference, because the main idea was

---

<sup>12</sup> *La violencia* was a period of war between the Colombian Conservative Party and the Colombian Liberal Party initiated due to the assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitán (presidential candidate from the Liberal Party) in 1948. This period of war finished in 1958 and is a significant moment in Colombian history because it provided a before and an after.

<sup>13</sup> According to Vera, the term *novela de la violencia* was most likely used for the first time by the critic Hernando Tellez.



developed through love, work, travel or other issues. But some content does allow an approach and a better understanding of the social roles that were woven in Colombian society at that time (XX century), reflecting, in a way, various manifestations of violence. (Vera, 2013)<sup>14</sup>

In such a way, Vera contemplates the change of perspective that violence undergoes, being seen from the social aspect and then becoming the main topic in literature. That suggests how the culture of violence could be present, taking into account how “the relationship of (...) literature and the subject of violence (...) offers another way of seeing this phenomenon in Colombia and accepting, suddenly, with a lesser degree of alteration, the details that lead to its perpetuation in the collective imaginary of people” (Vera, 2013). As Vera suggests, there are aspects of the culture of violence that also had to be considered in literature and with that purpose, the author of this investigation references some of the work of Roland Barthes.

Barthes, French philosopher, literary theorist and structuralist semiologist, proposes as a subject of study the mythification in society, where according to the author, contemporary violence builds certain cultural characteristics that stereotype violent images, procedures and policies. In this way, for Vera (2013) this phenomenon of mythification is carried out by the same armies that lead the violence in Colombia, an action that in the long term functions as a strategy to generate the normalization of the disassociation and pain caused by the violence of the armed conflict.

Eventually, because of the perspective of Wilmer Vera Castro, it is possible to highlight the social responsibility that the writer Evelio Rosero had in writing his great works *The armies* and *Muertes de fiesta*. Rosero’s responsibility is part of the basic elements that violence literature

---

<sup>14</sup> Own translation.

must have, making it an objective for Vera to demonstrate in his monograph that these novels belong to this literary category. Thus, it is possible to recognize the culture of violence from the construction of reality in literature, a phenomenon that generates criticism and reconstruction of historical memory in the reader.

### **3.3 Historical memory**

#### **3.3.1 *Spanish Literature and the Recovery of Historical Memory***

This is an article written by José González in 2006, in which he tries to explain how literature has been a tool to recover historical memory when it has been affected and destroyed by war (Civil war). González starts by giving four points which he has as a reference to develop the text. The one that matches the most with this monograph is *Literature and memory*.

At this point, González speaks a little bit about the Civil War and the novels that narrated facts about it and how they expressed or took into account the violence of the current era. He focused on *Soldiers of Salamis*, written by Javier Cercas because it has a relevant point: it was written by a modern author. This modern author, from a new era, after the Civil War occurred, rebuilt the past and reconnected with the future, some years later. Therefore, González underlines the points the story was demonstrating and sums up the whole story to give an example of the importance of literature in historical memory. He uses the example of one specific part of the book when the main character's way of thinking evolves. It was because at the beginning of the book the main character thought the civil war was something that occurred just in the past, but then realized it was alive in today's generation.

At the end of the article, González closes with an accurate reflection and conclusion that describes perfectly the main role of literature in historical memory, as well as the feeling of responsibility in the past acts that have consequences in the present and future of humanity. We

can describe this article as very informative and thought-provoking and we also would like to cite this conclusion:

The Civil War was not a conflict internal only to Spanish society. It was also a European conflict in which many countries were involved. Furthermore, it was the first step to the Second World War. The European Union was created with the essential goal of avoiding conflicts and new wars on our continent. In order to create a new European identity, we have to think not only in the future but also in the past, to try and recover the memory of the victims of our tragic history. Social and personal wounds do not heal by keeping the silence imposed by the winners but, on the contrary, by offering the victims the possibility to speak and to express themselves. And in this awakening of the silenced voice of the victims of violence, literature – European literature – must play an essential role. (González, 2009)

### **3.4 Empathic unsettlement**

#### **3.4.1 *"This, too, was myself": Empathic Unsettlement and the Victim/Perpetrator Binary in Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde***

This study, developed by Brittany Bruner and done toward a master of arts degree in 2017, is an excellent proof of how empathic unsettlement can be applied to. Although it is not developed in the violent context, it is developed in literature which guides us and gives us an example of other kinds of research with the same topic or subject.

In this study, Bruner shows how empathic unsettlement can be used for the predator and the victim by using as examples the main characters of the book as the different personalities that Jekyll has. She starts by giving some definitions of the concept of empathic unsettlement using as a first hand reference Dominick LaCapra, and some other aspects about the novel.

After that, she analyzes every part of the book which is most relevant for the study. In fact, she transcribes every part of the book she selected previously and also explains the way empathic unsettlement takes part in. It is a deeper analysis of the novel and also the main concept of *Empathic unsettlement*.

In this following paragraph, it can be seen the focus the author wanted to have for empathic unsettlement:

Utterson's desire to do this for the perpetrator Hyde may only come about through empathy for a perceived victim, Jekyll. Thus, while Utterson is not a perfect model for empathic unsettlement for a perpetrator, he has an open mind, which allows him to protect Jekyll and to promise to protect Hyde to the best of his ability. He, therefore, identifies with Hyde as a person who may need help and empathy by listening to Jekyll's pleas for Utterson to help Hyde. This implies that empathic unsettlement may require an identification with perpetrators that goes beyond mere fellow-feeling, that asks witnesses to cultivate an active discomfort with the process of witnessing (which, in this case, is virtual) that recognizes one's separateness from the perpetrators or victims. (Bruner, 2017)

He can identify that, in this reference, Brittany wants to explain how empathic unsettlement is born when the predator becomes a witness who recognizes a victim and also how it can be a chain effect, when Utterson is involved with Hyde and at the same time with Jekyll due to they are the same person but take different positions.

Finally, she concludes that all the victims and predators, at the end of the novel, are also witnesses in different degrees and ways. Also, she mentions that the predator is a victim, therefore it is impossible to say that *Empathic unsettlement* is just for victims: "One cannot

understand Jekyll without knowing the nature of Hyde, suggesting that *empathic unsettlement* is most powerful when it is extended to both perpetrators and victims as a tool for witnessing” (Bruner, 2017).

In conclusion, knowing the previous investigations addressed in this chapter, their results and the interpretations of each author have been a key piece for our monographic work. Based on the four subcategories of analysis determined, these references offer us different points of view that help us to increase the knowledge necessary to make the analysis of *The armies*. At this point, it was possible to take these studies as a direction guide in order to support us in a new approach and intend not to repeat what has already been investigated.

#### **Chapter 4 Methodology and Analysis**

In this part of the monographic work, we can apply one of our hypotheses which is based on empathic unsettlement and the involuntary use of the same by Evelio Rosero. Since this investigation requires a qualitative analysis from the interpretation, we have chosen to use hermeneutics to make a deeper analysis of the novel. On the other hand, we are going to select some parts of the book with the purpose of doing an elaborate analysis, dividing our subcategories as we have done during this work. Finally, we are applying the concepts we defined in the previous chapter of the theoretical framework as violence, empathic unsettlement, the culture of violence and historical memory.

Additionally, we should underline how important it is to regard the wide nature of violence as our main theme in this monograph. This is why, in order to define our analysis, it is necessary to mention some different perspectives of violence that we could observe when

reading the novel. In this way, this section will be developed using the three types of violence proposed by Johan Galtung.

The first type mentioned corresponds to direct violence. It should be noted that this is understood as one that causes injuries, mutilations or even death, repetitive situations that complement the nostalgia of the characters. In the next section, we will talk about violence but this time caused by state abandonment, seeing this as a consequence of the growth of structural violence in Galtung. By way of clarification, structural violence is generated by a political, economic or social organization or system, thus being the absence of an active and necessary presence of the State party to this category. The above types of violence inevitably imply recognition of the last type of Galtung's structuring: cultural violence. With an important emphasis for our monographic work, cultural violence will be seen in our third and fourth sections, developing respectively the analysis of some symbols of violence within the novel and of the culture of violence as its normalization.

#### **4.1 Direct violence**

As we already defined violence in our theoretical framework, it would be important to show the meaning of violence reflected with real examples provided directly by *The armies*. On the first hand, we can highlight the fear and also the repercussions of violent acts. When Ismael is with her old students, he mentioned the death of a poor guy:

The women are old now, though quite a bit younger than Otilia; they were my pupils, I remind myself, flaunting my memory, I identify them: *Rosita Viterbo, Ana Cuenco*. Now each of them has more than five children, at least. The boy who was disturbed by Rosita's charm, the hitching up of her skirt, was it not Emilio Forero? Always solitary,

he was not yet twenty when he was killed, in the street, by a stray bullet, without anyone knowing who, where from, how. (Rosero, page 14)

Ismael does not mention too much about Emilio Forero nor his history or personal life, but he mentioned the way he died. This particular way, by a stray bullet, but more than the way is what happened after that, because nobody knows who did it or how and also nobody was interested in it. In this fragment, we can also observe the state's abandonment because there was nothing the state did to know what happened or to solve this situation that could be considered as a crime. Another thing we can consider is Emilio Forero's age, he was just crossing the line from a teenager. It is how violence does not take into account anyone's age.

On the contrary, we had a part of the novel where it exposed the kidnapping and the forced disappearance. This is a memory of Claudino, the town healer. He recounted his encounter with an unknown army while he heals Ismael's knee:

-You thought your time had come -Yes. I thought I was dead. - I say. -That's what I thought four years ago' - His voice moves away, like his story.

-It was already late and I was in the hammock, taking off my shoes, when they appeared. 'Come with us' they said. I told them I didn't mind, whenever they wanted, I told them all I asked was a bit of sugar water in the mornings. 'Don't complain,' they told me. 'We'll give or not give you whatever we feel like, depending on our mood.' That was a brutal walk; at full speed, as if the soldiers were closing in on them. 'And this one, who is he? Why did we bring him?' one of them said. None of them know me, I thought, and I didn't know any one of them either. I'd never seen them in my life; their accents were from Antioquia; they were young and they climbed; I kept up with their pace, of course.

They wanted to get rid of my dog, who was following us”. ‘Don’t shoot him,’ I said. ‘He obeys me. Tony, go home,’ I begged more than ordered him, pointing down the path toward the cabin, and this blessed Tony obeyed, lucky for him. (...)

-That was four years ago, the same day they took Marcos Saldarriaga.

-Who could have imagined it, the very same day? Nobody told me that.

-Because I never told anyone to stay out of trouble.

-Of course.

-After walking all night, when it was starting to get light, we stopped in that place they call the Three Crosses.

-They took you that far?

-And I saw him there, sitting on the ground, Marcos Saldarriaga. They took him further, not me.”

-And how was he, what did he say?

-He didn’t even recognize me.

Maestro Claudino’s voice is pained:

-He was crying. Remember he is, or was, pretty fat, twice the size of his wife. He just couldn’t go on. They were looking for a mule to carry him. There was a woman as well: Carmina Lucero, the baker, remember her? From San Vicente, Otilia’s town. (...)



Someone told me she died in captivity, after two years. I still didn't know who they were, whether they were guerrillas or paras. Nor did I ask them. The one in charge reprimanded the boys. (Rosero, 17)

When Ismael crosses paths with Maestro Claudino, in what he thinks was a persecution, he is told that Maestro Claudino was also surprised by an unidentified army that just took him as a prisoner. In that way, we can connect the fact that Maestro Claudino did not talk to anybody about his experience and how he was a victim and a witness. Maestro Claudino also recognized a couple of people kidnapped that same day who were not as lucky as he was. Among them was Carlos Saldarriaga, a citizen of San José kidnapped by an army the same day they tried to take him away, and Camila Lucero, the baker of Otilia's town. In this way, we can say he did not reveal any information because of his fear and the experiences of the town where nobody talked about that because everyone was afraid of dying. It is seen how silence is a clue of fairness and none justice. Everybody knows it but it is just ignored without any guilt.

Therefore, we can see how reality can be reflected in the novel. A lot of people have been disappeared by *The armies* and nobody ever knows where they went, where they are or if they are still alive or dead. That is how Colombian violent times are marked with forced disappearance and kidnapping which are acts of violence.

In another part of the novel, it is seen how cowardice and despair can provoke violence. It was when Captain Berrío attacked the civilian population:

At that moment the Captain's jeep drives up noisily, bouncing over the stones of the plaza: Berrío leaps out of it and looks at our group, will perhaps order us to go home, to

anywhere under cover; he is pale, disheveled, he opens his mouth, but without a sound, as if swallowing air; several seconds pass like that. 'Guerrillas!' he shouts all of a sudden, pointing at us, 'you are the guerrillas!' and continues walking up toward us. His face was disfigured with rage, or was he going to cry? In one moment, as if catapulted by bitterness, he reached to his belt and drew his pistol. Days later we found out from the newspaper that his attempt at freeing the hostages was a failure, that six of his men were wounded, that they were "waylaid" by a recently dynamited road, a trail planted with landmines. Does that justify what he did? (...) He aimed at the group and fired; someone fell beside us, but nobody wanted to know who it was, all of us hypnotized by the figure who still had us in his sights, now from a different angle, and was shooting, twice, three times. Two fell, three. The soldiers were surrounding Berrío now, in time, and he put his pistol in its holster and turned his back, jumping into the jeep and retreating from the plaza. (Rosero, 33-34)

Furthermore, the desperation of Captain Berrio caused death to some soldiers and civilians. This act of intolerance is the same one related to the false positives in Colombia when the Captain accused them of being guerrilla. Berrio did not have pity with the victims as many generals from the Colombian Army did not have with the young Colombian teenagers that disappeared to fill up reports as dead guerrillas. In addition, it can be seen in this scene that the first line soldiers, the young men, also suffer more than the generals. The captain abandoned the town in his car and they were left as the other people as if they were more civilians. In the real Colombian situation, the first-line soldiers are the ones who die in combat.

Furthermore, the desperation of Captain Berrio caused death to some soldiers and civilians. This act of intolerance is the same one related to the false positives in Colombia when the Captain accused them of being guerrilla. Berrio did not have misery with the victims as many generals from the Colombian Army did not have with the young Colombian teenagers that disappeared to fill up reports as dead guerrillas. In addition, it can be seen in this scene that the first line soldiers, the young men, also suffer more than the generals. The captain abandoned the town in his car and they were left as the other people as if they were more civilians. In the real Colombian situation, the first-line soldiers are the ones who die in combat.

Taking into account the civilians stuck in the army conflict, Ismael was in front of the guerrillas and almost die for a grenade was thrown by one of the soldiers from guerrillas:

(...) But the last of them stops for a second and during that second turns to look at me as if he wanted to say something or as if he recognized me and was about to ask if I were me, but he has not said a word, he does not speak, is he going to speak to me? I make out the sallow, young face, as if through fog, the eyes two black ignited coals; his hand goes to his belt and then he tosses, gently, in a curve, something that looks like a stone. ‘A grenade, my God’, I scream to myself, am I going to die?

We both watch in suspense the trajectory of the grenade, which falls, bounces once and rolls like any other stone three or four meters from my house, without exploding, exactly in between Geraldina’s door and mine, at the edge of the pavement. The boy looks at it for a second, ecstatic, and speaks at last: I hear his voice filling the street like a celebration “Hey, it's your lucky day, Granddad, buy yourself a lottery ticket”. (Rosero, 34)

As we mentioned in the theoretical framework, violence is an act that can affect the liberty of others and is related to power. The guy who threw the grenade to Ismael was not only acting with violence, he was also enjoying the act of normalizing the victim. He and the other guys did not see Ismael as a threat and they just decided to get fun with his worry.

This same derision is also seen when Ismael ran into other soldiers and they just put a man that was about to die and they told Ismael to finish their work and kill the man who was agonizing:

I am startled, without looking at them directly. I hear them return, taking an age, to my side. They have settled on something abominable among them. They drag over a body and drop it down beside me. He must be very badly wounded: his face and chest bathed in blood. It is someone from the town, someone I know, but who? -Well- says one of the men to me. Well? And the man -Do him the favor of killing him? - He hands me a pistol, which I do not take:

-I've never killed anyone

-Kill me, papá- shouts the wounded man, with great effort, as if he is already speaking to me from much further away, and he rolls onto his side, trying in vain to look me in the eye; the tears prevent him from doing so, the blood that covers his face.

-You kill him- I say to the one offering me the pistol. -Can you not see that he is suffering? Finish what you started. (Rosero, 61)

Now we can see the desperation of the victim, the poor guy who was agonizing and just told Ismael to kill him for compassion. The way the predators do not have any sympathy with the victims, the violence rises up to a higher level when the perpetrator forces the victim to become a perpetrator too. We want to go back to our State of art when giving examples of study about Empathic unsettlement, the author shows how the victim could be also a victimizer. It can be seen due to trauma and the consequences of violent acts.

We cannot know if after all this suffering the guy died or not, but we can find how violence can be seen after the acts. When the perpetrator finishes the violent acts and just disappears. What can happen after the acts finishes, it is possible to introduce more consequences as helplessness and resentment, for instance, when Ismael found different victims by himself:

As soon as I arrived at the hut the fierce silence showed me what it had to show me.

Otilia was not there. The body of Maestro Claudino was there, decapitated; at his side the dog's corpse, curled up in the blood. They had written on the walls with charcoal:

Collaborator. Without trying, my gaze found the Maestro's head, in a corner. Like his face, his tiple guitar was also smashed against the wall: there was no need to take it down, I thought, absurdly, and the only thing I screamed at that moment was Otilia, her name. I walked around the cabin several times, calling her. It was the only place I had left.

(Rosero, 39)

When can show the last thing violence can break from a victim; hope. Ismael was sure Otilia was with Maestro Claudino and after finding him decapitated, his hope breaks down. The traumatic scene is in company with a message: collaborator, which was done intentionally to let the other victims know the same thing could happen to them. This is another way of violence

which generates terror and submission. Consequently, it is an act that puts the aggressors in that superior position, they took over the power.

Into the bargain, to have other examples of these ways to create terror and submission, is the last part of the book where he can see the limits an aggressor can cross:

Incredibly pale, face down, lay Eusebito's corpse and he was paler still because naked, his arms under his head, the blood like a thread seemed to still flow from his ear; a hen pecked about, the last hen, and she inexorably approached his face. (Rosero, 65)

Violence does not take into account any age, therefore some of the victims are children as Eusebito, who was first kidnaped by the guerrillas and was found dead by Ismael. The signs of violence can be shown in the way Eusebito's corpse position was. The way his face was down is how the other victims can identify who was the repressor and the responsible ones.

To end this part of the violence we would like to refer a final part we want to analyze how violence appears:

In a wicker rocking chair, was—fully open, exhausted—Geraldina naked, her head lolling from side to side, and on top of her one of the men embracing her, one of the men delving into Geraldina, one of the men was raping her: it still took me a while to realize it was Geraldina's corpse, it was her corpse, exposed before these men who waited. Why do you not join them, Ismael? I listen to myself demean myself: why do you not explain to them how to rape a corpse? Or how to love? Is that not what you dreamt of? And I see myself lying in wait for Geraldina's naked corpse, the nakedness of the corpse that still glows, imitating perfectly what could be Geraldina's passionate embrace. These men, I thought,

of whom I only saw the profiles of their deranged faces, these men must be waiting for their turn, Ismael, are you too waiting for a turn? I have just asked myself that, before the corpse, while hearing her sound of a manipulated, inanimate doll—Geraldina possessed again, while the man is only a ferocious gesture, half-naked, why do you not go and tell him, not like that, why do you not go yourself and tell him how? (Rosero, 65-66)

In this last scene, necrophilia was evidenced as a way of violence, the moment when the soldiers raped Geraldina even though she had already died. It demonstrates the violence against women and how they can suffer its consequences.

#### **4.2 Violence since state abandonment**

Within our delimitation in the present hermeneutical analysis, it is necessary to observe violence from the structural point of view. It should be noted that we seek to get closer to determining the role of the absence of the State within the armed conflict reflected in *The armies*, understanding this as the disinterest and avoidance of responsibility that a state should have in a vulnerable population. In this way, the first situation that reflects this condition in the novel is on page 17, where Ismael's mind and physical pain might not be on his side in a confusing situation. In context, Ismael wants to seek out the healer Claudino to alleviate the severe pain in his knee. He lives in Chuzo's mountain, following the bridle path, however the pain does not let Ismael advance and he thinks he cannot get there. At that moment the darkness of the road and the footsteps they hear fill him with fear.

I am drenched in sweat, as if caught in the rain; there is no wind, and, nevertheless, I hear that something or someone is walking on and snapping the leaves and underbrush. I

freeze. I try to distinguish between the shapes of the bushes. The noise approaches; what if it is an attack? It could be that the guerrillas, or the paramilitaries, have decided to take the town tonight, why not? Captain Berrío must be at Hortensia's house, the guest of honor. The noises stop for an instant. Expectation makes me forget the pain in my knee. I am far from town, no one can hear me. They will probably shoot first and then, when I am already dying, come and see me and ask who I am—if I am still alive. But they could also be soldiers, training at night, I tell myself, to calm down. "All the same," I shout at myself, "they'll shoot me just the same." (...) I perceive something, or someone, leaping upon me. I scream. I reach out my arms, hands open, to repel the attack, the blow, the ghost, whatever it is. I know that this gesture is of no use, and I think of Otilia: Tonight you will not find me in bed. I do not know how long I have my eyes closed. (Rosero, 17)

As it can be seen in the example above, Ismael's fear gives him a moment of panic as he tries to climb through the jungle. Ismael's thoughts lead to the conclusion that the narrator accepts his role as a victim of the bilateral war in San José. Vulnerability is evident and Ismael resigns himself to dying, causing his senses to become magnified in a way of survival. Likewise, it is possible for us to identify the narrator's mistrust in his monologue when he thought that the guerrillas, the paramilitaries or even the army could come and in any of these three scenarios he found himself murdered. It can also be noted that Ismael calms down for a moment when he thinks that they are soldiers, however, and due to the indiscriminate violence he has already experienced, the distrust he has of a legal armed group such as the Colombian army proposes a clear effect of the abandonment state in San Jose.



On this basis, it is necessary for us to approach the reasons for the uncertainty that Ismael feels, where we find a direct event in the novel that can explain it better. On page 33 of the novel, the state abandonment can be observed more directly when Ismael is looking for his wife Otilia after the entire town begins to become the location for clashes between armies. By this way, the description in Ismael's narrative makes it possible to identify the tension generated for civilians by the absence of leaders and authorities since, as citizens of San José, they seek to be protected in the midst of attacks of which they are not part.

Some are from this town, others from the mountains: it is not advisable to stay in the mountains when confrontations draw near; they have already hidden their children in friends' houses; they have come to find out what awaits us; neither the Mayor nor his spokesman is in the town hall; there is no one in the offices of the municipal council; where are they? What are we going to do? How long will it last? (Rosero, 33)

Distinguishing the uncertainty reflected in these lines shows the lack of guarantees on the part of the entities responsible for providing security to the people. On the other hand, it is important to highlight the way in which this bilateral war directly incurs the public force due to the indifference in its operations where civilians are inappropriately present. We can take as an example of this indifference the clear narrative description of Ismael in the same context as the previous fragment of the novel.

The soldiers stay alert and still; there must be twelve or fifteen of them; none have turned to look at us, to recommend anything, as on other occasions; at that moment we hear bursts of gunfire, explosions, but still outside of town. (...) other soldiers have made their entrance at the top corner, and they shout to those below, in haste; the shots, the

explosions, intensify, close by, and still no one knows for certain what part of town they are coming from, where to run to? All of a sudden they stop and are replaced by a silence like breathing; the combatants take up their positions, and we, where to go? (Rosero, 33)

Seeing himself immersed in this confrontation, Ismael is a terrified spectator of the indifference of this public force. In this way, in his narration the dissociation between the army and the citizens of San Jose is evidenced. It is possible to analyze that this dissociation generates more impact when there is an established trust in the communities and that it is imposed by the State. However, it may also be considered the apathy and coldness of the combatants in war as emerging symptoms of their condition as victims of violence solutions.

Chapters later, it is possible to show again the intentional abandonment of the public force when Chepe, the town grocer, Ismael and other people from the town go to the police station to denounce the threats that were experienced, however they cannot make their request possible.

As if by common accord we have allowed Chepe to go in alone. He goes in, and comes out again almost at once, his face contorted. We realize before he says anything: there is not a single policeman in the post, where did they go? It did seem strange that there was not an agent or two at the entrance: for the first time we perceive that this silence is too much in San José, a cloud of alarm runs through us all, equally, in all the faces, in the faded voices. I remember Gloria Dorado was leaving in a military truck; was it perhaps the last truck? They did not say anything to us, no warning, and everyone else seems to be thinking the same thing I am: at whose mercy have we been left? (Rosero, 58)

As it is evidenced in the narration, the police forces were not there and without warning, they just left civilians behind, being resignation as the only hope of survival. Leaving to their fate, this is when forced displacement begins to emerge because most of the people in the town abide by the threats imposed on them, making it clear that the internal armed conflict is one of the main causes of this crime.

### **4.3 Other important symbols of violence**

During this analysis, it is also important to say that there are other important symbols of violence referent to common facts. Ismael's sickness is one way of how he is facing violence with a disadvantage for the circumstances that are happening at the moment:

Today I got up early to go out, better to go out, one cannot go for a quiet stroll these days; I hear my footsteps now, echoing one behind the other, speeding up, in a definite direction; what am I doing here, at five in the morning? I discover that the route back to my house is the same one the running shadow took. I stop, it is not prudent to follow fleeing shadows, there are no more shots to be heard, a private matter? Could be; it does not seem like the war, it is another war: someone caught someone stealing, someone simply caught someone, who? I keep walking, stop, listen: nothing else, no one else.  
(Rosero, 23)

Ismael not only has to deal with violence as a common victim, but also as an old guy who was suffering from Alzheimer's. In the scene behind it is possible to see how the war started and Ismael was doing something he did not recognize he was doing. He was fighting to remember

what was happening and at the same time, though he did start forgetting everything, did not forget his objective. In addition, he was conscientious about the ability he was losing.

On the other hand, the ambulance which was transporting someone and got shot in one of its sides and how the ambulance was still going even if it was between the fire, as well as nobody knows where all the people were using guns came from. These acts can just demonstrate that the faster the situation, the bigger the uncertainty. This is the exact part:

An ambulance appears at the same corner, holes all along its flank, but moving at a good speed, and disappears in the direction of the hospital behind a dust cloud; other soldiers have made their entrance at the top corner, and they shout to those below, in haste; the shots, the explosions, intensify, close by (...). (Rosero, 33)

Not even an ambulance was saved from the fire, which shows an act of inhumanity and the worst part of a war. The animals were not saved either and it is how these symbols are useful to identify that violence is not just against humans:

(...) on the ground shiny with water the orange fish still quiver; what to do? Pick them up? What will Otilia think—I wonder foolishly—when she finds this mess? I gather up the fish one at a time and throw them into the sky, far away, so Otilia will not see her fish dead... half the trunk of one of the orange trees, split lengthwise, still trembles and vibrates like a harp, coming apart inch by inch; there are piles of smashed oranges, sprinkled like a strange multitude of yellow drops all over the garden... on the very white pulp of the trunk stripped of its bark, I see a bloodstain, and, on top of the roots, pierced with splinters, the corpse of one of the cats. (Rosero, 36)

Ismael, just surprised, pays more attention to how he could hide the fish from Otilia because he was more worried about Otilia finding the dead fish than the fish death. And not just the animals the three divided into two parts could show other symbols and the aftermath of war and violence left.

#### 4.4 **Culture of violence**

Returning to one of the first violent images that Ismael describes, it is necessary to understand how many details the narrator gives to the story, considering not only the victim but also the perpetrator and his environment. An example of this occurs when Ismael and Otilia meet at the bus terminal and both witness the murder of a fat man dressed in white. The previous event of the novel, already analyzed in the first section on direct violence of this chapter, leaves Ismael a sensation of horror, however what causes his anguish the most is the murderer's cold gaze.

Never before in my life had I been struck by such a dead look; it was as if someone made of stone were looking at me: his gaze made me think he was going to shoot at me until he had emptied the chamber. And that was when I saw: the murderer was not a young man at all; he must have been no more than eleven or twelve. He was a child. I never knew if they followed him or caught him, and I never tried to find it out; after all it was not so much his look that nauseated me: it was the physical horror of discovering that he was a child. A child, and that must have been why I was more afraid, and with reason, but also without reason, that he would kill me too. I fled from him, from where he had been, hunted for the bus station toilet, not yet knowing whether to piss or vomit, while cries rose into the air. Several men gathered around the corpse, no one decided to give chase to

the murderer: either we were all afraid, or it did not really seem to matter to anyone.

(Rosero, 10-11)

Ismael describes the murderer as a boy between 11 and 12 years old, who is not afraid of the people around him as he walks away from the scene. It is possible to infer that one reason why no one wanted to stop the child could be the calm with which he left the place, without fear of being arrested, beaten or even killed. Untouchable, this child is accompanied by his cold and indifferent gaze, which generates a strong sense of panic in Ismael. Within the narrative, Ismael speculates the reasons why a child would murder a person in that way. However, the narrator infers that there are no reasons why a child feels so much hatred so young, and among the panic of the people, he thinks that in the same way he could murder him, for no apparent reason. Despite being aware of this, Ismael decides to ignore the issue and be part of the majority of people who do not consider these situations as their problem. On the other hand, this fragment reflects the culture of violence when Ismael narrates the inability to follow the murderer, and highlights fear and indifference as possible justifications.

Let us remember that the normalization of violence is contained within the great theme of the culture of violence, the latter suggests using cultural aspects as justification for the use or threat of force. In view of the above, the culture of violence can also occur in other situations, as can be seen in the next fragment of the novel:

- (...) Well, remember when we lived in that red building in Bogotá. You spied on the woman in the building opposite, day and night, until her husband found out, remember. He shot at you from the other room, and you told me yourself that the bullet parted your hair. What if he had killed you, that husband, that man of honor?" (Rosero, 11)

In context, this is a dialogue of Ismael's wife, Otilia. She recounts the time when they lived in Bogotá and her neighbor's husband tried to assassinate Ismael because he was spying on her. Thereby, here we can identify the normalization of violence solutions in the novel, demonstrating that culture of violence is not exclusively about armed conflicts, but it also starts from daily life and feeds on each behavior as manifested in the previous passage.

Furthermore, Ismael is a character who is aware of his indifference and has no trouble showing it to others, however, in the next example he tries to simulate an emotional effect with his students in Chepe's store when one of them tells him the tragic news of the day.

They clamor about the horrible discovery of the corpse of a newborn this morning, at the rubbish dump, are they really saying that? Yes, they repeat: "They killed a newborn baby girl" and cross themselves. "Chopped into pieces. God help us.". Geraldina bites her lips. "They could have left her at the church door, alive," she moans—what a beautifully candid voice— and asks of the heavens: "Why kill her?" (...) Rosita, stroking her cheek with one finger and addressing me with mild sarcasm, says: "And what do you think, profesor?" "It's not the first time," I managed to say. "Not in this town, nor in the country." "I'm sure it's not," says Rosita. Nor in the world. That we already know". "Many children, as I recall, have been killed by their mothers after birth; and they always alleged the same thing: it was to save them from the world's misery." "That's horrible what you say, profesor<sup>15</sup>," Ana Cuenco rebels. "How despicable, and I beg your pardon, but that does not explain, much less justify, the death of any newborn baby." "I never claimed it justified it," I defend myself (..) —the inexplicable conscience of an

---

<sup>15</sup> This word was not translated in the book in order to have the same context as the original version in Spanish.

inexplicable country, I say to myself — a burden of a little less than two hundred years (...). (Rosero, 15)

The discovery of the dismembered corpse of a baby in the garbage that morning of March 9 caused great concern, however Ismael does not consider this situation strange, neither in the town nor in the country. Here it is possible to show that the narrator is disinterested in talking about the subject, however, it is possible to show in the reaction of the characters that there is an overload of information about violence in the different media. Likewise, we observe in his final sentence the normalization of violence because it discredits the importance that a situation like this should have, insinuating that the burden of violence has been carried for almost 200 years in Colombia.

At the same time, solving the discomfort generated by an act of violence with normalization has become an effective tool for those who use it. This apathetic disconnection from the environment can be learned and imitated and yet, according to Alzheimer's Disease International (2013), an NGO that is officially linked to the WHO, apathy is also a symptom of Alzheimer's disease. Ismael is an older adult who suffers from this disease, therefore it is possible to show several situations where he shows his apathy but we will not be able to distinguish to what extent is his indifferent personality or his Alzheimer's. One of the situations where his illness manifests itself and puts him in danger happens on page 23 of the novel. There, Ismael forgets his way home and is held back by army soldiers who threaten him while they interrogate him.

I set off again toward home, on the other side of the town. I am far away; when did I leave, at what time? I simply did not want to follow the direction of the running shadow.



Now I can go back, the shadow will have gone now, I think, and I think I'm going back but in the plaza the soldiers stop me, they escort me, at gunpoint, to a group of men sitting on the steps of the church. We know each other; over there I see Celmiro, older than I am: a friend dozing. Some say good morning. Arrested. Today Otilia will not be bored by my news. (...) Only some can go, more or less half of us: a soldier reads a list of names. "These can go," he said, and I was astonished: I did not hear my name. Anyway I leave with those who are leaving. A sort of anger, indifference, helps me walk through the rifles without drawing attention to myself. In fact, they do not even look at me. (...)

They load the ones left up into an army truck; they are probably going to interrogate them more closely at the base. "Someone was taken," people are saying. "Who did they take this time?" Nobody knows, and nobody is in a hurry to find out either; someone being taken is a commonplace occurrence, but it is a sensitive subject to enquire about too much, to be excessively concerned. (Rosero, 23)

Ismael goes unnoticed when he manages to escape getting on the army truck due to his physical appearance. According to the narrator, no one in the town wants to know who they are taking and to what, making it clear that this situation has happened before and there are few testimonies that answer the doubts proposed. For them, it is more dangerous to find out too much and worry excessively, fear being the main motivation for increasing a culture of silence, where no one denounces and they prefer not to bother.

#### **4.5 Empathic unsettlement**

Within the framework of literature, the author is the person responsible for the creation and development of narratives, characters, stories, environments and events; who also determines how many elements of his personal life are involved in it. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the historical context of this creation, as well as the culture established in its environment, determine some important points in the novel, specifically in *The armies*, the involuntary use of a valuable tool: The Empathic unsettlement. As it was deepened in the introduction of this monograph, Evelio José Rosero lived all his childhood in some towns and small cities at Nariño, Colombia, where the author acquired great property for the rural culture. Years later, Rosero settled in the capital of the country, however, his experience in the towns was always reflected in most of his novels.

At the beginning of the 21st century, he made the decision to inform himself about the excessive violence that was being experienced in rural areas of Colombia. This determination would help him not only to deeply empathize with the situation, but also to acquire the need to communicate what was happening through his work as a writer. This responsibility with which Rosero wanted to write his novel is not a distinctive characteristic of Empathic unsettlement. On the contrary, this concept of LaCapra highlights the author's commitment and intention when writing about a problem that is not properly experienced by him, but rather adopted by his environment.

LaCapra mentions another resource that characterizes this tool and that Rosero considers from the beginning of writing his work: the hard and tragic veracity with which it seeks to generate criticism or reflection. This veracity is not only reflected in the events narrated, but also in the narrative voice of Ismael Pasos, who can represent the hope of memory and non-repetition

despite bringing with him old age, Alzheimer's and resignation to the violence of the armed conflict in San José. According to the last, there are many examples where it is possible to perceive the empathy of the narrator despite his indifference and condition. In order to show one of these moments, it is necessary to retake one of the possible strongest scenes in *The armies*, an inopportune situation where the victims this time are children who, from their innocence, only count on Ismael not to die.

When I arrive I find several children crouched down in a circle, at the edge of the pavement. I ask them to let me pass, but they stay where they are, their heads almost touching. I lean over and see the children's hands, thin and tanned, stretched out toward the hand grenade. "The grenade," I shout to myself. "It's still there." "Let me see," I say. (...) I reach out my hands, but the boy does not seem prepared to relinquish the grenade. "It's not yours," he says. The rest of them turn to look at me, waiting. They know very well that if they take off running I could never catch them. "Nor yours," I say. "It's nobody's. Give it to me before it explodes, do you want to blow up like that dog they buried with honors?" I plead inwardly that the boy had been among those who attended the funeral of the dog with military honors, on one side of the cemetery, when they played the cornets. And yes, he must know perfectly well what I am talking about because he immediately hands it over. That public burial was useful for something. The other children take a few steps back, moving away from me but still surrounding me. "Go on," I say to them. "Leave me alone with this." They do not leave, they follow me—at a prudent distance, but following me—and where am I to go? I walk through the streets with a grenade in my hands, accompanied by children. "Go away," I shout at them. "Don't follow me. This will blow us all up." (...) Silent, impassive, they are surely

waiting to see an old man blow up in front of them, never supposing that they too would be blown up. (...) I stop at the edge of the cliff. Now the children come too close, one of them, the smallest one, naked from the waist down, is even holding onto my sleeve. "Get away from here," I say. Sweat forces me to close my eyes. I am sure that when I raise my arm and throw the grenade, just from the force I shall need to use to throw it, it will blow up in my hand and I will burst apart, surrounded by children, accompanied by a bunch of children; God knows, sooner or later someone in town will laugh about this: When Professor Pasos blew up he took with him a good number of children, I say to myself, noticing the hard surface of the grenade in my hand, an animal with jaws of fire that will dissolve me in a breath; if I were alone, at least, this would be painless, I would no longer have to wait for you; Otilia, did I not tell you that I would be the first to go? The children remain behind me, I make one last and vain attempt to get rid of them, I endeavor to scare them with gestures, and, instead, they crowd closer around me, voices of men and women call them from afar. I raise my hand and throw the animal over the cliff, we hear the bang, we are dazzled by the little flashes leaping up from below, the colorful lights that thunderously climb the branches of the trees, to the sky. I turn to the children: their faces are happy, absorbed—as if they were watching fireworks. (Rosero, 44)

Until the moment before this scene, we met an indifferent and unconcerned Ismael in the face of the misfortunes of the townspeople. After his wife Otilia disappeared, Ismael's perspective generated a remarkable change in his narration because most of the things he did, was taking into account what Otilia would do if she were not absent. In this way, Ismael's empathy and understanding revolved around Otilia's absence, allowing a protective Ismael to be brought out in this scene. Ismael helped and was willing to give his life without expecting

something in return. Additionally, it is possible to notice as a brief description of some places of the town with the consequences of the indifference impact while Ismael walks with the bomb in his hands. Nevertheless, Empathic unsettlement is not exclusively reflected in this scene, but also at all stages of writing in the development of *The armies*.

Taking into consideration the environment in which Evelio Rosero wrote his novel and the traumas that Colombia was going through, it is possible to determine the general use of the Empathic Unsettlement resource since the author decided how to tell the history that Colombian conflict inspired. As an explanation of the above, it should be remembered that this literary resource can be adopted from the creation of the story of the novel and leads to rescue the alien experiences within the literary creation. Using this resource, Rosero manages to generate a social criticism that moves from the truthful stories that he adopted and transformed in the town of San José, without having to ask for it. This was carried out from his social responsibility based on his role as writer and, above all, as a Colombian citizen.

On the other hand, the voice of Ismael as narrator is essential to recognize the skepticism of Colombians, who, however, can recover the appropriation and empathy for the harsh reality experienced by the victims of the Colombian internal armed conflict, in the same way Ismael did it. Rosero develops this character in order to represent the hope of Colombia and that it generated the moral tools necessary not to forget or repeat this oblivion.

#### **4.6 Historical Memory**

In the last part of this chapter, we want to establish the relationship the novel has with the reality of Colombian history. All the acts in the novel are based on the same, but there are some

which fit more and can demonstrate the facts as more real as they are. It means that the author used the Historical Memory, described by us previously, as a tool to keep in mind and not to forget the worst Colombian moments to avoid violence repetition.

The first one can be identified as the Bojayá massacre where half of the people of Bojayá town died because of a bomb. The author recreated the scene as it was:

Orphaned early—her parents had died when our town was last attacked by whichever army it was, whether the paramilitaries or the guerrillas: a stick of dynamite exploded in the middle of the church, at the hour of the Elevation, with half the town inside; it was the first mass of Holy Thursday and there were fourteen dead and sixty-four wounded—the child was saved by a miracle. (Rosero, 7)

The writer shows this particular scene and it is possible to see how similar it is with reality. We can recognize it because of two symbols; the church and the dynamite with people inside. Also, the combat was between guerrillas and paramilitaries which was the same in Colombian history. The exact date of this massacre was on May 1st, 2002, four years before the novel was published.

Another important fact is that the writer expresses through the narrator how young people are forgetting the past nowadays: *“People forget everything, good heavens, and the young especially, who have no memory even of today; that is why they are almost happy”* (Rosero, 13). It shows a thought-provoking phrase to make people conscious about the importance of the past in the present; historical memory itself. Also, this can represent the normalization of violence and how through time the repetitive acts become normalized in a culture or community.

Talking about repetitive acts, there is another one that caught a lot of casualties in Colombian reality: landmines. This is one of the most common and horrifying ways of violence which has been causing deaths in Colombia. The book shows just the way those artefacts can have people inside a town.

Voices warn me that landmines have been laid around the town: it will be impossible to leave town without the risk of being blown to bits, *'where were you, profesor? All the outskirts of San Jose have been mined during the night, they've deactivated seventy or more devices, but how many remain?'* -Damn- say the voices, there are tin cans, milk churns full of shrapnel and excrement, to infect the victims' blood, what bastards, what assholes; the voices speak of Yina Quintero, a fifteen-year-old girl who stepped on a mine and lost her left ear and eye. Those who came into San José cannot now leave, they say, and nor do they want to go. (Rosero, 40)

In this example of the novel we can analyze how people are obliged to stay in town because of the landmines and how they are built to destroy people. This is the Colombian reality and nowadays they are still active in some rural parts of the country. There are thousands of victims including children, adults and animals who were mutilated because of the explosions of these bombs. This is a little bit contradictory because the violence took people out of the town but at the same time the mines did not allow them.

The mines were not the only thing that terrified people, it was also the kidnapping as a lot of Colombians suffered from being deprived of freedom like animals. Also the trauma and the consequences it left in people.

He turned up at seven in the evening, alone, and gazed at his mother, motionless, speechless, standing like a statue in the doorway. She ran to embrace him, cried, he remained as if asleep with his eyes open, gone for good, and has not been anything but silent since then. Gaunt, skinnier than he had ever been, because he had never been thin and now he was skin and bones, he looked like a child pushed by force into old age: inscrutable and timid, he does nothing but sit, receive food, listen without listening, look without looking, every morning he wakes and every night he sleeps, he does not respond to any voice, not even his mother'. (Rosero, 42)

Eusebito, Geraldina and Brasilero's son, already lived without freedom and showed how a victim is after a kidnapping by guerrillas. He was so shocked as he could not be physically with his mother and the trauma he got did not let him speak. It was an abrupt change in his life if we compare with the previous Eusebito, all his desire to live disappeared. It was not only an emotional change but also his physical appearance was affected.

As we already see, violence can affect children and also the posttraumatic affectations can negatively affect the future of people, which makes it possible to recognize a very vulnerable state for the rest of the lives of these victims. Also, the relatives of the ones who are kidnapped can suffer in different ways. One of them in the novel was Chepe who was the character who represents the anguish of people who have their loved ones kidnapped: "I too had questions: early that morning they had delivered to Chepe, under the door, like a final warning, the index fingers of his wife and daughter in a bloody paper bag. I want to give Chepe my condolences (Rosero, 58).



It was the proof of threat we can observe and how the victims are forced to negotiate. The trauma took Chepe because uncertainty was over him. Finally, we would like to highlight the last scene that can represent Colombian history and reality. It is the forced displacement:

By the school I find a group of people walking in single file, in the direction of the highway. They are leaving San José: they must be thinking the same way I am; it is a large portion of the population that is leaving. Slow and depleted—men, women, old folks, children—they no longer run. They are a shadow of bewildered faces in suspense, before me; the ladies stammer out prayers, one or two men insist on carrying the most valuable belongings, clothes, provisions, even a television set. (Rosero, 62)

The final part of this quote, tries to show us how hope is ruined and the last thing in war is to leave their homes because if they do not leave, they could die. Ismael found more than a half of the town leaving San José and it is the representation of most of the towns in Colombia affected by violence, almost hundreds of civilians abandoning entire towns. One example in real life is Santa Lucía town, an abandoned town due to violence and armed conflict in Colombia.

After the hermeneutical analysis carried out in this chapter, we can deduce that *The armies* is a novel that embodies violence not only direct but also cultural and structural ways that feed a vicious circle where impunity prevails. Although the novel transforms reality into fiction, it does not stop intervening and contributing to the historical memory of Colombia, but on the contrary, it seeks to collect unrecognized facts and events that could happen again if no action is taken.

## Chapter 5. Conclusions

### CONCLUSIONS

In this final part of our monograph work, we intend to share the conclusions we were able to infer after the deep analysis of the novel *The armies*, by Evelio Rosero. First of all, we want to emphasize the presence of violence in much of the novel, including those parts where its normalization is shown. For this, it was necessary to compare several studies whose main focus was violence in literature, of which we emphasize its main characteristics in our State of the art.

From the above, we decided to establish four categories of analysis that emerged from the proposed objectives and that we handled in the rest of our hermeneutical analysis. These categories are violence, culture of violence, empathic unsettlement and historical memory. These are related to the subjectivity of violence and its impact, not only in the novel but also in the Colombian context. For this reason, it is possible to reiterate the contribution to memory and non-repetition of violent acts that Rosero intended to transmit with the publication of *The armies*, an objective that therefore this monograph also aspires to.

On the other hand, Rosero develops his novel using the Empathic Unsettlement as a literary strategy, a tool that is nevertheless used involuntarily. Putting it quite simply, the author sought to differentiate his novel *En el Lejero* from *The armies* by developing a narration tool that would convey more truthfulness and objectivity, this within order to give an appreciation of the scenarios that a large part of the rural areas of Colombia lived at that time. For this reason, in this monographic work we tried to give a name to this literary resource used by Rosero, finding, after an extensive search, the work of the American-born historian of European intellectual history, Dominick LaCapra. Thanks to his different investigations with a social

focus, LaCapra manages to give a perspective from the written and literary discourse to that empathy that is adopted from others. From there, the Empathic Unsettling was born, which he himself refers to as that tool that transforms the style of the harmonized and dehumanized narrative voice, leading it to a narrative that allows the critical and objective reconstruction of the trauma and provides an affective response to the voices of the victims.

Accordingly, we can say that the repetition of violent acts can generate the normalization of violence and, at the same time, a culture of itself. This culture of violence is a consequence of the state's abandonment because it creates an impact on the victims when it avoids its responsibilities, generating different feelings on the victims such as fear, uncertainty, impotence or distrust. In addition, these feelings make victims leave the towns and, in a few words, it generates forced displacement.

The information overload of the media is another important factor that generates indifference and normalization of violence. It is possible to affirm that the lack of emotional response to events such as the deaths generated by the armed conflict, forced disappearance, among others, may be generating the socio-cultural crisis that generates general apathy. It is because of the above that one can recognize in *The armies* the lack of understanding and the culture of silence that spreads through the families of the town. This culture is justified by fear, which ends up making communities obey the threats and demands of the violent.

Determining violence as a subject of study, we find that the writer and intellectual Jean-Marie Domenach affirms that violence is difficult to categorize since the situation in which it occurs is subjective and unique. However, another great expert sociologist solves this paradigm with a great proposal. It is about Johan Galtung, who with his arduous studies on peace and conflicts, raises his triangle of violence, which divides it into three parts: direct

violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Our main focus was on the latter since we were interested in studying the subjectivity of violence from the perspective of the narrator Ismael Pasos and the citizens of San José, recognizing them as victims of the armed conflict. From the above, these three types of violence could be recognized within the novel, fulfilling our first specific objective and allowing us to distinguish the different forms of violence.

Therefore, it was possible to find a relationship between the reality of Colombian history and the situation presented in the novel. Because many of the violent events narrated in the novel are based on real Colombian events, Rosero managed to tell the story of many victims without the need to give specific names or places. It means he uses the real facts adding some fiction to create a combination of both, a strategy that helps to understand that the conflict belongs to all of us as Colombians without distinction.

Finally, it is possible to conclude that the implementation of violence as a unique method of conflict resolution is a fault where not only civilians but also the younger soldiers (of any army) are considered victims. Thereby, recognizing the existence of laws in any type of war, reparation to the victims and a lasting and consistently strong peace process must be considered necessary for non-repetition of the harsh realities that the Colombian literature tells us throughout history.

## References

- Arráez, M., Calles, J. y Moreno, L. (2006). La hermenéutica: una actividad interpretativa. *Sapiens*, 7(2), 171–181. Recovered from: [http://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1317-58152006000200012&lng=es&tlng=es](http://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1317-58152006000200012&lng=es&tlng=es).
- Becherini, A. (2014). La vertiente hermenéutica: la filosofía de Gadamer y la síntesis de explicar y comprender de Ricoeur. *Question*, 1(42), 14–28.
- Bruner, B. (2017). "This, too, was myself ": empathic unsettlement and the victim/perpetrator binary in Robert Louis Stevenson's strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde [Master thesis]. Brigham Young University.
- Calderón, P. (2009). Theory of conflicts by Johan Galtung. *Revista de paz y conflictos*, 1(2). Recovered from: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=205016389005>
- C.M.H. (2015). Memoria histórica. Centro de Memoria Histórica. Recovered from: <https://centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/>
- Corsi, J. (1994). *Violencia familiar, una mirada interdisciplinaria sobre un grave problema social* (1.a ed.). Buenos Aires, Argentina: Paidós.
- Domenach, J. M., U., Unesco, Joxe, A., Unesco Staff, & Laborit, H. (1981). *Violence and its causes*. Unesco.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1977). *Verdad y método: Fundamentos de una hermenéutica filosófica*. Ediciones Sígueme.
- Galtung J. (1990) Cultural violence. *Journal of Peace Research*. 27(3):291-305.  
doi:10.1177/0022343390027003005

- Galtung, J. (1998). After violence: 3r, reconstruction, reconciliation, resolution. Coping with visible and invisible effects of war and violence. *Bakeaz*.
- Galtung, J. (2003A). Peace by peaceful means (Spanish edition). *Gernika*.
- Galtung, J. (2003B). Cultural violence (Spanish edition). *Gernika*.
- Galtung, J. (2003). Galtung's violence triangle [Ilustración]. *En Paz por medios pacíficos. Paz y conflicto, desarrollo y civilización* (Bilbao and Bakeaz, ed.)
- González, J. (2009). Spanish literature and the recovery of Historical Memory. *European Review*, 17(1), 177-185. doi:10.1017/S.
- Hernández, W. (2016). "Implicaciones en torno al fenómeno de la violencia en cenizas para el viento" by Hernando Téllez [Undergraduate monograph] Universidad tecnológica de Pereira.
- Hite, K. (s. f.). Historical Memory. St. Lawrence University. Recovered from <https://www.stlawu.edu/offices/ciis/historical-memory>.
- LaCapra, D. (2014). *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Johns Hopkins University press.
- Lee Por Gusto. (2016, January 6th). Evelio Rosero: *Una novela requiere tanto imaginación como investigación*. [Video]. YouTube. Recovered from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyx1Rm43blA>
- León, E. A. (2009). The hermeneutic swift on Martin Heidegger's phenomenology. *Polis revista Latinoamericana*, 8(22), 1–14. Recovered from: <https://journals.openedition.org/polis/2690#tocfrom1n4>
- Vive Más Seguro (2019) Los peligros de normalizar la violencia. *Historias cotidianas, prevención*. Recovered from: <https://vivemasseguro.org/historias-cotidianas/los-peligros-de-normalizar-la-violencia/>

- Maya Franco, C. M. (2012). Literatura y sociedad. Los ejércitos de Evelio Rosero y la narración de la violencia en Colombia. *Lingüística y Literatura*, (7), 233-240. Recovered from: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=4234562>
- Marcos, A. (2018, 28 de febrero). El narrador no es el autor. *Online y Madrid, Zaragoza, Burgos*. <https://www.escueladeescritores.com/masalladeorion/el-narrador-no-es-el-autor/>
- McKnight, M. (2004). Scarcely in the Twilight of Liberty: Empathic unsettlement in Charles Chesnut's *The Conjure Woman*. *Iowa Journal of cultural studies*, 5(1), 58-76. Recovered from: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/61175041.pdf>
- Meiliana, S. (2017). *The phenomenon of cultural violence behind the literary work, the study of comparative literary model*. Universitas Sanata Dharma. Recovered from: <https://www.usd.ac.id/seminar/lsc/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Sylvie-Meiliana.pdf>
- Molinares Guerrero, I., Tavares, J., Viscardi, N., Barbero, M., Correa L., Estupiñán, M., Favaro, O., Luorno, G., & Diógenes de Aquino, J. (2013). Violencia, derechos humanos y criminalidad. En C. Barreira, R. González & L. Trejos (Eds.), *Violencia política y conflictos sociales en América Latina*. (pp. 09-101). Barranquilla, Colombia: Universidad del Norte, CLACSO.
- Orue, I., & Calvete, E. (2012). La justificación de la violencia como mediador de la relación entre la exposición a la violencia y la conducta agresiva en infancia. *Psicothema*, 24(1), 42-47. Recovered from: <http://www.psicothema.com/pdf/3976.pdf>
- PAHO/WHO: Pan American Health Organization. (unknown). *Violence prevention*. <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/violence-prevention>

- Posada, E. & Cambridge University Press (1998). Fiction as history: The Bananeras and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 30(2), 395–414. Recovered from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/158531>
- Renjel Encinas, D. (2017). Medio siglo en compañía de Cien Años de Soledad. *Revista Ciencia y Cultura*, 21(39), 61-70. Recovered from: [http://www.scielo.org.bo/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S2077-33232017000200004&lng=es&tlng=es](http://www.scielo.org.bo/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2077-33232017000200004&lng=es&tlng=es).
- Rosero, E. (2009). *The armies* (1.a ed.). New Directions Books.
- Scheck, Daniel O. (2007). Dominick LaCapra, Historia en tránsito. Experiencia, identidad, teoría crítica, traducción de Teresa Arijón, Buenos Aires, 2006, 364 p. *Prismas, revista de historia intelectual*, 11(1),226-230. ISSN: 1666-1508. Recovered from: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=387036796008>
- Torres Ávila, Jheison. (2013). La memoria histórica y las víctimas. *Jurídicas*. No. 2, Vol. 10, pp. 144-166. Universidad de Caldas.
- Vegas-Motta, E. J. (2019). Hermeneutics: a concept, multiple visions. *Revista estudios culturales*, 13(25), 121–130. Recovered from: [http://servicio.bc.uc.edu.ve/multidisciplinarias/estudios\\_culturales/num25/art10.pdf](http://servicio.bc.uc.edu.ve/multidisciplinarias/estudios_culturales/num25/art10.pdf)
- Vera, W. (2013, enero). Violencia novelada, una mirada comparativa a las novelas muertes de fiesta y los ejércitos del escritor colombiano Evelio Rosero Diago. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Recovered from: <https://repository.javeriana.edu.co/bitstream/handle/10554/8192/VeraCastroWilmer2013.pdf?sequence=1>