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Between the Stone and the Mirror:

Tlatelolco 1968 Massacre and Poetic Debates on the History of Violence

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On 2 October 1968, ten days before the Olympic Games began in Mexico, a student demonstration in the Plaza of Three Cultures in the Tlatelolco district of the capital was attacked by the army, paramilitary squads and police. Many were killed, including residents of the apartment blocks in the square. The massacre soon became the subject of many debates, studies, and literary works, whose aim is to keep the event alive in the collective memory and to tell “the truth” about what happened that night.

The first poetic responses to the massacre told the story of the Spanish Conquest of the Aztec empire as a metaphor for the Tlatelolco massacre. We shall explore these texts to determine whether the parallels drawn between the Tlatelolco 1968 massacre and the pivotal events in Mexican history reveal the habitual or affective nature of “2 de octubre.” The analysis is based on the theory of posthegemony with a particular focus on the notions of affect and habit, exploring these in the context of Maurice Halbwachs’s theory of collective memory. The essay focuses on the hitherto unexplored theoretical perspective of the posthegemonic nature of a violent event’s symbolic value.

1968 was a year of worldwide turmoil and Mexico was no exception. In preparation for the Olympic Games (opening on 12 October in the capital), Mexico found itself amidst student protests and strikes by teachers, university professors, doctors and railroad workers. Student protests were particularly detrimental to the PRI's¹ plan to present the country as a haven of democracy. Between July and October 1968 there were several serious altercations between students from vocational and preparatory schools and police and army forces in the capital. First, Vocational School No. 5 was taken over by the *granaderos* (riot police) on 23 July; an attack on the San Ildefonso School followed on 26 July and tension grew. With further invasion of the city's schools and university campuses by the army, the scene was set for a major showdown.

On 1 August 1968, the Consejo Nacional de Huelga (CNH) was set up to coordinate the student movement and to provide it with a more focused agenda. Soon afterwards, the CNH published a statement containing six demands, which became the student movement's aims from this point onwards: "1. Libertad a los presos políticos. 2. Destitución de los generales Luis Cueto Ramírez y Raúl Mendiola, así como también del teniente coronel Armando Frías. 3. Extinción del Cuerpo de Granaderos, 'instrumento directo en la represión' y no creación de cuerpos semejantes. 4. Derogación del artículo 145 y 145 bis del Código Penal Federal (delito de Disolución Social), 'instrumentos jurídicos de la agresión.' 5. Indemnización de las familias de los muertos y a los heridos que fueron 'víctimas de la agresión' desde el Viernes 26 de julio en adelante. 6. Deslindamiento de responsabilidades de los 'actos de represión y vandalismo' por parte de las autoridades a través de la policía, granaderos y Ejército." (cited in Álvarez Garín 52) However, these demands were largely ignored by the government and the invitation to open a dialogue was left unanswered in the fourth presidential report, delivered by President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz on 1 September 1968. A silent demonstration was held in the Zócalo (Long 128) in protest against Díaz Ordaz's blatant dismissal of the above demands and refusal to open up a dialogue. Following the demonstration, the army occupied the UNAM campus on 18-30 September (Williams 117-20); the students' hopes for an open dialogue were dashed as the President showed in no uncertain terms that he would follow Article 89, Section VI of the Constitution in that, as he

¹Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), was Mexico's ruling party from 1929, when it was established by Plutarco Elías Calles under the name of PNR (Partido Nacional Revolucionario). It was renamed PRM (Partido de la Revolución Mexicana) by Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938, and PRI by Manuel Ávila Camacho in 1946 (Hellman 33-54). In 2000 it lost presidential elections for the first time to the PAN (Partido de Acción Nacional), but came back to power in 2012, when Enrique Peña Nieto became President.

stated in his report, he would be obliged to “disponer de la totalidad de la fuerza armada permanente o sea del ejército... para la seguridad interior y la defensa exterior de la Federación” (Díaz Ordaz 264).

On 2 October, ten days before the Olympic opening ceremony, the CNH organised a demonstration in La Plaza de las Tres Culturas, in the residential district of Tlatelolco in Mexico City. The original plan was for the demonstration to start in the square and continue to Casco Santo Tomás, a campus of the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN). However, with the growing presence of police and army around the square, it was decided not to proceed with the second part of the demonstration. The demonstration started around 17:00; by 18:00 the demonstrators were about to leave the square. At this point, a helicopter flew over the square and several fireworks were launched either from the Chihuahua building, the Santiago Tlatelolco church, or the helicopter (witness accounts vary widely on this point). This must have been the signal to the members of the Batallón Olímpica, a special taskforce (plain-clothed and identified by a white glove or a white cloth on the right hand), who had mixed in with the CNH representatives on the third floor of the Chihuahua building and, according to most witnesses, opened fire on the police and army troops, thus provoking a retaliatory response.²

The response was well coordinated and severe. Armed troops entered the square and opened fire on the demonstrators, bystanders and reporters. In an ensuing chaos that lasted anywhere from half an hour to several hours, according to multiple witnesses, many were killed or wounded. Official reports varied from 20 dead and 75 wounded (3 October), to 30 dead and 53 wounded (4 October); finally, on 5 October *El Excelsior* reported 33 dead and 62 seriously wounded and these numbers were not amended any further in the press or in official statements. Neither was there a popular consensus on how many died that night; unofficial estimates range from 50 dead and 1,000 wounded (Womack 684) to at least 500 dead and several thousand wounded (Hellman 205, n. 24), although the number of 267 dead and 1,200 wounded (reported by John Rodda [18], a sports correspondent for *The Guardian*) was accepted as reasonably accurate.

Many Mexican intellectuals, writers, and public figures openly expressed their anger at the violence against unarmed civilians. Octavio Paz summed up the massacre succinctly and bitterly in his resignation letter to Antonio Carrillo Flores, Secretary of External

² The image of a white glove appears in many Tlatelolco poems, newspaper articles, and testimonials. See, for example, “Edificio Chihuahua 18:00 hrs”; “Recio combate” 13A-14A; Del-Río 274; Poniatowska, *La noche* 176 and 182.

Relations (1964-1970), on 4 October 1968: “Las fuerzas armadas dispararon contra una multitud compuesta en su mayoría por estudiantes. El resultado: más de 25 muertos, centenares de heridos y un millar de personas en la cárcel. No describiré a Ud. mi estado de ánimo. Me imagino que es el de la mayoría de los mexicanos: tristeza y cólera” (cited in Sheridan, *Poeta con paisaje*).³ Some wrote about the events to counteract what was perceived to be the lack of accurate official information about the massacre.⁴ José Revueltas, imprisoned in Lecumberri at the time of the massacre, joined Eduardo de Valle Espinoza and Luis González de Alba to produce a passionate essay *Los procesos de México 68: Tiempo de hablar* (published in November 1970), which talks about the reasons for the massacre, contradicting the government’s explanation that it had reacted to a conspiracy followed by insurgency. In February 1971, Elena Poniatowska’s *La noche de Tlatelolco* brought together testimonies of eyewitnesses, statements by the officials, poems, and slogans to paint a moving picture of a peaceful demonstration cruelly attacked and the lives of many irrevocably disrupted.

Soon, “the Tlatelolco literature” grew, carrying the message “that the ideals of the Revolution, so strongly defended by the party in power, had become empty”; disenchantment with the now corrupt image of PRI and frustration with the political climate characterize these works. It is thought that the phenomenon of “Tlatelolco literature” was confined to a relatively small literary community because most writers were “committed to the writing of purely literary compositions” (Leal 13), although by 1968 there was a growing number of politically minded writers who were openly voicing their discontent with the regime (René Aviles Fabila, Juan Bañuelos, José Carlos Becerra, Vicente Leñero, José Emilio Pacheco, Elena Poniatowska, to name but a few). Furthermore, non-literary texts – essays, testimonials, and academic studies – were exploring the reasons for and the aftermath of the massacre. Some texts (such as Juan Miguel de Mora’s *Tlatelolco 1968: Por fin toda la verdad* and Edmundo Domínguez Aragonés’s *Argón 18 inicia*) sought to record what happened; others delved into the psychological and physical damage done by the massacre and similar events from Mexico’s past (María Luisa Mendoza’s *Con Él, conmigo, con nosotros tres*, Marcela Del-Río’s ‘Tlatelolco (Canon a tres voces)’, and others), and some looked to identify and shame those responsible for the massacre and the apathetic majority

³ For a detailed account of Octavio Paz’s reaction to the Tlatelolco massacre and his resignation from the post of a cultural ambassador to India, see Sheridan, “Cartas tlatelolcas” 487-95 and Poniatowska, *Palabras del árbol* 126.

⁴ See Carpenter, “You Want the Truth” for the discussion of this perception vis-à-vis the relationship between factual accuracy and emotional contextualisation.

which did not rise against the corrupt government (Rosario Castellanos's 'Memorial de Tlatelolco' [Castellanos 297-8], Jaime Sabines's 'Tlatelolco 68' [Sabines 39-44], and many others).

In an interview in 1976, Gilberto Guevara Niebla (a member of the CNH) said, "Nadie anticipó Tlatelolco." (Sevilla 102) Yet, the parallels drawn in the Tlatelolco poetry between the massacre, ritual sacrifices of the Aztecs, and the Conquest of Mexico suggest that the massacre was an example of the country's history repeating itself. We shall consider this inconsistency by focusing on the relationship between the unexpected excess and the habitual common sense—in other words, between affect and habit—and exploring this in the context of Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory. The theory of posthegemony will underpin our analysis of the way Mexico's violent past is represented in the poetry of José Emilio Pacheco, Juan Bañuelos, and José Carlos Becerra.

The majority of texts from the public discourse⁵ tried to establish "what happened" and find out "the truth" about the events in Tlatelolco (see Carpenter, "You Want the Truth"); this, arguably, became the principal aim of the Tlatelolco literature (see Leal). Some texts went back to the times of the Spanish Conquest to seek the explanation for the extreme violence of "2 de octubre" in the historical roots of today's Mexico. Among these texts is José Emilio Pacheco's poem "Lectura de los 'Cantares Mexicanos'," in which a narrative of the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire is used to tell the story of the 1968 massacre by metaphorically "[p]ledging history to serve the present" (Campos 56; see also Friis). Pacheco's poem "Lectura de los 'Cantares mexicanos'" and José Carlos Becerra's poem "El espejo de piedra" were the first to be published after the massacre; both appeared in the supplement *La cultura en México* on 30 October 1968. They were followed by Juan Bañuelos's poem "No consta en actas," published in the same supplement on 6 November 1968.

The text which delivers the most emotionally powerful narrative of the massacre is Carlos Monsiváis's essay "Y era nuestra herencia una red de agujeros, 2 October / 2 November 1968: 'Día de muertos'" (295-305). The second and third sections of the essay are about Tlatelolco; the first is about a religious pilgrimage on the Day of the Dead and the Mexicans' attitude towards death. A symbolic link between the two is painfully clichéd; although we would not expect this from Monsiváis's usually subtle narrative, the historical

⁵ See Carpenter, "You Want the Truth" 37, for the discussion on the nature of the public and state discourses of the massacre

link between the massacre, La Noche Triste and human sacrifice is seen as a powerful means of preserving the event in the collective memory.

Another example of drawing parallels between the Tlatelolco 1968 massacre and Mexico's violent past is Octavio Paz's essay "Olimpiada y Tlatelolco," which became part of *Postdata* (1971), an addition to his seminal work *El laberinto de la soledad* (first published in 1950). This essay was not received well, as critics argued against Paz's interpretation of the massacre as an expression of the country's violent nature, evident in the rituals of human sacrifice, multiple wars (from the Conquest to the Revolution), and widespread violence (see, for example, Stabb [52-53]; Sorensen [306-09]; and Volpi [396-97]). However, Pacheco and Becerra were the first to draw these parallels with Mexican history from the Conquest to the Revolution, so Paz's interpretation was not unexpected. I would argue that Paz's critics disagree not with his proposal that Mexico has a history of violence—this is a self-evident fact—but with the way they see Paz interpreting it: there is little that can be done to resist the intrinsic urge to be violent.

It would appear that the texts published soon after the massacre share this sense of doom: violence has been part of Mexico's history since times immemorial, so when yet another violent event happens, one is inclined to look for similarities in the past rather than try to face the horror of the present. Would this be why the works of Pacheco, Becerra, Paz, Bañuelos and others published very shortly after the massacre tell the story of the massacre by retelling what happened during the Conquest or by quoting from the colonial texts? The horror of the 1968 massacre was presented in no uncertain terms in the newspaper coverage, with the images of hysterical women, crying children, and people being killed mercilessly dominating the front pages of *Excélsior*, *El Universal* and other daily newspapers – so why not use these images? It would not be because those images were not believable – in fact, many texts from the public discourse corpus would use these, sometimes re-writing them and sometimes quoting directly from the press, however "vendida" it may be deemed.⁶ So, what is achieved by drawing parallels with Mexico's violent past? Is it just to re-state the obvious and thus excuse (or even justify) the government's actions on 2 October? I posit that by drawing these parallels, the texts invite us to reconsider the way the institutional and collective memory archives of a violent event are created.

⁶ For further discussion of the nature of Mexican press in the 1960s and its relationship with the government, see Carrasco Puente; Medal 96-7; Enríquez Simón 75-83 and 111-21; Ochoa Campos 142-5; Cosío Villegas 55-7; and Stevens 43-7.

Previous studies showed that the event is more likely to be preserved in the collective memory if the frameworks supporting it contain the emotional cycle of anger, grief, and shame (see, for example, Carpenter, “Y el olor”). This is particularly in reference to a violent event, which would render hegemonic social order non-functioning by disrupting it. At this point, posthegemonic order arises to allow for a meaningful interaction of social bodies, which Deleuze and Guattari term affect (Beasley-Murray 130-32). Emotions released as a result of affect change habit by interfering with the process of securing social order, and unite the populace into a cogent social unit, or the multitude, which is then guided into action by a shared emotional sphere. When affect subsides, habit restores itself; emotional residue experienced as low-level anxiety (168), keeps us safely ensconced in a familiar routine. Habit is both stable and ever changing, accommodating and inciting social change. Bourdieu extends the idea of habit to habitus, “a product of history,” which “ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, through and action, tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time” (Bourdieu 54). It has been argued that both affect and habit belong to the same “order of bodies” (Beasley-Murray 120), but represent two facets of this order: the moment of initial interaction, which is affect, and its aftermath, which is habit (Carpenter, “Y el olor”). If the affective resonance at the moment of interaction is sufficiently strong (emotions produced are shared by all and persist over time), social order will be reproduced not with “a low-intensity resonance” (Beasley-Murray 201), but with a strong emotional foundation which will be influencing those coming into contact with it. In the case of the reproduction of the Conquest discourse, this emotional foundation is replicated in the Tlatelolco 1968 poetry not only by quoting directly from the Conquest-era texts but also by selecting the quotations which contain the strongest expressions of anger, grief, and shame. This emotional triangle is the enduring resonance that keeps the Tlatelolco discourse from sliding completely into habitus and helps it remain within the affective sphere (Carpenter, “You Want the Truth” 45).

When it comes to retelling a violent event, be it La Noche Triste of 1520 or the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968, restoring the affective aspect of the events being remembered is the key aim of the texts. Carpenter (“You Want the Truth”) argues that affect becomes the driving force behind remembering and retaining an event in the form of a cultural product, which “should be taken as rhetorical artifices and not as depositories of data from which a factual truth may be construed” (Rabasa 9). Therefore, “in the relationship between affective

endurance and factual accuracy, the re-establishment of the original emotional reaction to the event is more important than an accurate re-telling of the event” (Carpenter, “Y el olor”).

This indicates the need for a sustainable emotional character of social memory frameworks to keep them strong and effective in preserving the memory of an event. The main principle of Maurice Halbwachs’s theory of collective memory is that social memory frameworks sustain themselves through multiple recurring recollections of the past: “various capacities for memory aid each other and are of mutual assistance to each other. But what we call the collective framework of memory would then be only the result, or sum, or combination of individual recollection of many members of society” (Halbwachs 39). The most successful ones are built on the emotions released at the moment of a violent event; these emotions are retained in the collective memory as the most relevant and the strongest. When a violent event that came out of an internal conflict in the country is remembered, social memory frameworks recreate the emotional cycle of anger, grief, and shame. However, remembering an event is not as straightforward as simply calling it up from the depths of the collective memory: “Even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu” (49). The texts constructing the Tlatelolco massacre narrative shortly or immediately after the event automatically place it in the familiar/accepted social context (or habit): the state is evil and the press is “vendida”; the students are either troublemakers or *crème de la crème* of Mexico’s hopes for a better future; evil (outside or inside) forces infiltrated the movement to destroy Mexico, etc. This milieu is habit. As affect arises it leads to emotions being released; as a result, existing social order becomes fragile, as emotional spheres are formed and shared by the populace, thus destabilising social order. Habit changes to accommodate this process by integrating shared emotional spheres into a new social order. Habit also contributes to the social memory frameworks but the contribution is coloured by the emotions released at the point of the highest affect during a violent event. Neither emotions nor the “present social milieu” context can be removed without destroying the framework and erasing the event from the collective memory.

How are social memory frameworks formed out of bringing together memories of the past and recent violence? We shall consider this by analysing the way the narrative of Mexico’s violent history is used to tell the story of the Tlatelolco massacre shortly after it had happened.

The first version of José Emilio Pacheco's poem "Lectura de los 'cantares mexicanos'" was published in *La cultura en México* on 30 October 1968, alongside José Carlos Becerra's "El espejo de piedra"; Juan Bañuelos's "No consta en actas" appeared a week later in the same supplement. Pacheco's and Bañuelos's poems quoted from the text titled "Cantares mexicanos," the origins of which are rather complex. In the first edition of Pacheco's 1969 poetry collection *No me preguntes cómo pasa el tiempo* (where the second version of the poem appears), he cites the origin as follows: "Con los textos traducidos del náhuatl por el Padre Ángel María Garibay" (22). We expect these to be direct translations from náhuatl; however, there is no such text. There are two separate texts brought together in the titles of the three poems: *Cantares mexicanos* and *Manuscrito de Tlatelolco* (commonly known as *Manuscrito anónimo de Tlatelolco*).

The most definitive collection of *Cantares mexicanos* was published in 1904 as a folio of copies of the náhuatl manuscripts. The songs included in the volume represent pre-Conquest and Conquest periods and are taken mainly from the *Códice Borgia*, translated and analysed by Padre José Lino Fábrega. These songs were sung for generations before the Spaniards arrived in Mexico. Brinton concludes that they were recorded shortly after the Conquest, although some of them are much older (49-51). González Cosío and Peñafiel support Brinton's findings in the introduction to their edition of *Cantares mexicanos* (16); Ángel María Garibay also confirms that *Cantares mexicanos* is a collection of songs from different periods, both pre- and post-Conquest (ix). The collection was edited later by Garibay, who translated the texts into poems and released them as *Poesía Náhuatl: Cantares mexicanos* in 1965. It would appear that Pacheco relies on this version of the collection. "Cantares mexicanos" were later combined with other texts and released as *Visión de los vencidos* by Miguel León Portilla in 1950.

The texts quoted in "Lectura" are edited in order to achieve a powerful representation of strong emotions associated with the affect of the Conquest and the Tlatelolco massacre and the ensuing habitual view of the two. However, none of the four versions aim for an accurate representation of these events (Carpenter, "Y el olor"). This conclusion supports previous studies of the relationship between an accurate representation of the massacre and the affective nature of the Tlatelolco discourse (see, for example, Carpenter, "You Want the Truth"), which agree that the factual accuracy of the memory of a violent event is secondary to its symbolic value, or a product of affect which contributes to the social memory frameworks through the redistribution of social bodies in new unities, which becomes the

principal characteristic of the Tlatelolco literature. The symbolic value of the Tlatelolco massacre is constructed by re-telling “what happened,” each time within a particular emotional context produced by the initial affect. As a result, the massacre becomes associated with this emotional context and the images associated with the massacre which match this emotional context form a believable and accepted version of “what happened” by recreating the cycle of anger, grief, and shame. The four versions of “Lectura de los ‘Cantares mexicanos’” contain this emotional cycle: the first version emphasises grief, the second and third focus on anger, and the fourth presents the full emotional triangle but without allowing the reader to experience these emotions.

Juan Bañuelos’s poem “No consta en actas” was published in *La Cultura en México* on 6 November 1968 and later included in the collection *No consta en actas* (1971). The poem contains 12 sections and a note after the second section that Section 10 should follow (“continúa en el poema 10,” Campos and Toledo 64). This is reminiscent of Julio Cortázar’s famous advice to the readers of *Rayuela* (1963); however, I would argue that the purpose of instructions in “No consta en actas” is to create a metaphorical ceremonial circle (Sections 1, 2, 10) around the narrative of the massacre (Sections 3-9).

Sections 1, 2, and 10 are based upon “Cantares mexicanos”: Section 1 paraphrases or directly quotes from the collection and Sections 2 and 10 follow the rhythm and imagery of the original. The poems encircled in the middle are telling about individual victims of the Tlatelolco 1968 massacre – a student from the IPN (Section 5), a seller of songbirds (Section 6), and a young woman, “políglota de 19 años” (Section 9). The latter refers to Ana María Regina Teuscher Kruger, whose name appears handwritten on the Tlatelolco memorial. She is also mentioned in the list of victims in “30 muertos, 53 heridos graves; más de 1,500 presos; actos aislados de violencia” (14A), where her name is listed as “Ana María Regina Touscher Kinger.” The same day, her obituary was published in *Excélsior*, giving her name as “Ana María Teuscher Kruger”; this name is also in the list of victims published in *El Universal* on 3 October 1968. The focus on a single victim of the massacre makes it all the more terrible to comprehend, especially since the victims are either young (and therefore vulnerable) or have nothing to do with the demonstration.

Another victim is “el comerciante en aves cantoras” in Section 6 (Campos and Toledo 67-68), who falls to the ground (probably shot or trampled in the stampede), a bystander caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. The language of this section is different from that of Section 9 – it is less flowery, less passionate, and, as a result, more emotionally

disturbing. The seller's habit is torn apart, like that of other bystanders in the square. The habitual calm of "hay veinte grados a la sombra" is delivered in the same structure and rhythm as the tension of "se oye un fragor de estoperoles / y el centello frío de fusiles / quiebra la tarde" (67). An apparently dispassionate delivery of the affect breaking the habit betrays the narrator's (and the protagonist's) inability to comprehend what is happening. The rhythm of the narrative and the short simple sentences are reminiscent of the language of the article "Recio combate," one of the most detailed accounts of the massacre: for example, in the poem, the line "Corre el pueblo" delivers the same message as the line "la gente corría de un lado a otro" (13A). But the immediacy of the present tense in the poem makes the affect of the massacre all the more palpable. The underlying emotions reflect the triangle firmly associated with the Tlatelolco literature: anger, grief and shame. Fear is also detectable, especially in Section 6 (Volpi 389).

The sections using "Cantares mexicanos" are similar to Pacheco's poem. Section 1 paraphrases a poem from *Manuscrito anónimo de Tlatelolco* (1528), also used by Pacheco, which tells the story of the fall of the Aztec empire. First translated from Náhuatl to German by Ernst Mengin in 1939, *Manuscrito* was then translated into Spanish by Heinrich Berlin and Robert H. Barlow, and published in Mexico in 1948: "asumió con ello la mayoría de las divergencias del texto de Mengin" (Klaus 7). The most enduring lines of the poem present the fallen capital of the Aztec empire is heartbreaking both in Berlin's translation ("En los caminos yacían huesos rotos, cabellos revueltos, los (techos de las) casas están descubiertos, las viviendas están coloradas (de sangre), abundaban los gusanos en las calles. Los muros están manchados de sesos, el agua era como rojiza, como agua teñida. Así la bebimos," Berlin and Barlow 71), in Manuel González Cosío and Antonio Peñafiel's edition of *Cantares en idioma mexicano* ("En los caminos yacen dardos rotos, / los cabellos están esparcidos. / Destechadas están las casas, / enrojecidos tienen sus muros. / Gusanos pululan por calles y plazas, / y en las paredes están salpicados los sesos. / Rojas están las aguas, están como teñidas, / y cuando las bebimos, / es como si bebiéramos agua de salitre," cited in León-Portilla 9-10), and in Suzanne Klaus's 1999 interpretation of Mengin's translation ("Y en el camino había huesos quebrantados, cabezas espaciadas [footnote: "literalmente: cabellos espaciados"], casas destechadas, casas enrojecidas [de sangre]. Gusanos hormigueaban en el camino. Y [las paredes de] las casas estaban embadurnadas de seso. Y el agua era roja, toda colorada. Así bebimos agua de salitre." (145) The image of brain matter splattered across the walls is recreated in *Visión de los vencidos*: "y en los paredes están los sesos" (León-Portilla 143), and "y en los paredes están salpicados los sesos" (152). The shock

value of this image is very high and it is therefore not surprising that it appears in several Tlatelolco texts, along with the image of blood-soaked shoes strewn across the square.

In Sections 2 and 10 of “No consta en actas,” the language is similar to that of *Cantares mexicanos* and *Manuscrito anónimo de Tlatelolco*: structural and phonetic repetitions (“que son los desollados / que buscan su piel”; “todo anda, reptá, vuela,” Campos and Toledo 63), the use of lamenting “ah,” “oh,” and “ay,” and similarities in vocabulary choices. For example, the word “estruendo” in Section 2 (“al borde de estruendo en las manos rapaces,” 64) appears in Pacheco’s poem (“entonces se oyó el estruendo, / entonces se alzaron los gritos,” Pacheco vi), and a quotation from Song III, one of the five poems grouped under the title “Cantos de primavera” (“donde hacen estruendo los variados Águilas y Tigres,” Garibay 107). This song is included in the section “Poemas de carácter lírico” of Garibay’s collection *Poesía indígena de la altiplanicie*, mainly because it expresses more emotions than the poems in the “Poemas de carácter heroico” (narratives of historical or mythical events) or “Himnos rituales” (written for religious celebrations). It is very likely that Song III describes a pre-Conquest battle, even though a reference to Oquitzin, king of Azcapotzalco, who ruled when the Spaniards arrived (160), suggests that “Cantos de primavera” were written during or shortly after the Conquest. Volpi sees the narrator of these two sections as “el cantor de la miseria colectiva” (389); I would add that this role is archetypal for all ritual songs, before and during the Conquest, as can be seen from all the collections contributing to *Cantares mexicanos*.

Another example of the similarities in vocabulary between “No consta en actas,” “Lectura de los ‘Cantares mexicanos’,” *Cantares mexicanos*, and *Manuscrito anónimo de Tlatelolco*, is the line “Cuando los escorpiones / cerraron las puertas por dentro de la patria” (Campos and Toledo 71). The first line is reminiscent of the opening line of the second version of “Lectura de los ‘Cantares mexicanos’” (“Cuando todos se hubieron reunido, / los hombres en armas de guerra / fueron a cerrar las salidas,” Pacheco 21), which in turn is paraphrased from “La matanza del Templo Mayor” from the *Códice Aubin* (the 1902 edition by Antonio Peñafiel, adapted by Ángel María Garibay): “Luego vienen hacia acá, todos vienen en armas de guerra. Vienen a cerrar las salidas, los pasos, las entradas” (León Portilla 81) and “La matanza de Cholula” from *Historia de Tlaxcala* (Muñoz Camargo): “Pues cuando todos se hubieron reunido, luego se cerraron las entradas: por todos los sitios donde había entrada” (León Portilla 52). Both sources relate stories of extreme violence against unarmed people. The combination of the images of physical violence, and sorrowful or

mourning sounds and rhythms evokes anger, grief, and a sense of doom and inevitability of violence. The circular nature of “No consta en actas,” then, imprisons the victims of the 1968 massacre, just like the Spaniards closing all the exits imprisoned worshippers at the Templo Mayor and the population of Cholula.

In short, the history of violence repeating itself is echoed in “Lectura de los ‘Cantares mexicanos’” and “No consta en actas.” Bañuelos and Pacheco use “Cantares mexicanos” for the affective value of its description of the Cholula massacre (1519) and *La noche triste* (1520). The social memory framework preserves the initial affect of all the events, and the emotional packaging is once again anger, grief, and shame.

However, in “El espejo de piedra” by José Carlos Becerra, the affect of the Conquest is not as prominent; the past is represented here by traditions and symbols of the pre-Columbian time that have been used so much and so often they have lost their original meaning and are now empty symbols of the long-forgotten rituals (“jade y plumas”). More layers of history are added, starting with Porfirio Díaz’s ruling of the country (represented by the palaces of Adamo Boari),⁷ and then in 30-year increments to 1908, as the *porfiriato* was crumbling under pressure from the anti-re-election campaigners, workers, and *peones* working on haciendas (Meyer, Sherman and Deeds 426-31); and to the nationalisation of the oil industry by the government of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938 (528-33). Continuous lists of the images referring to these events are mocking the country’s apparent grandeur, which has now become habit. The affect of the 1968 massacre intrudes upon this habit, as did other massacres before it. We shall explore the way “El espejo de piedra” negotiates the relationship between affect and habit in the representation of a violent event.

Becerra’s poem consists of three parts, discernible by their tone. We shall consider each section separately to explore the way history is narrated vis-à-vis the story of a much more recent event.

The first part (the first three stanzas starting with “Detrás de la iglesia de Santiago-Tlatelolco,” Becerra, 214-15) refers to Mexico’s colonial past, in particular its first *audiencia*.⁸ Nuño de Guzmán presided over it in 1528-30 and “ruled with such cruelty as to arouse the wrath of honest citizens and to stir the clergy... to denounce [the *audiencia*’s]

⁷ Adamo Boari (1863-1928), was an Italian architect who worked in Mexico in 1898-1916, and designed the Templo Expiatorio in Guadalajara, Parroquia de Matehuala in San Luis Potosí, and many famous buildings in Mexico City, including Palacio de Bellas Artes and Palacio de Correos (see Condello).

⁸ *Audiencia* was a court representing the king. It was designed “to curb the *adelantados* and their turbulent henchmen” (Herring 159), threatening the viceroyalty and ensure that royal authority is upheld in the colonies.

members to the King” (Herring 162). Cruelty against the Indians during Guzmán’s rule was widespread, as they were losing their land, being abused and sold to slavery. It was after the interference by Juan de Zumárraga, first Bishop of Mexico, who wrote a letter to the Spanish king about Guzmán’s misdeeds, that Guzmán was dismissed and a new *audiencia* was set up under Vasco de Quiroga and Bishop Fuenleal (174-75; see also Báez-Jorge and Zárate Vázquez). Guzmán praying to Huitzilopochtli (the Aztec god of war) betrays the violent nature of both. However, while Guzmán’s violence is gratuitous, Huitzilopochtli’s is explainable, as he was also believed to grant good weather for a successful harvest. The two areas of his responsibility go together, since there is a “connection in the Nahuatl consciousness between the pantheon, war, and the food-supply. If war was not waged annually the gods must go without flesh food and perish, and if the gods succumbed the crops would fail, and famine would destroy the race” (Spence 74).

From the Colonial period to 1968, Mexico appears to have made good progress, adorning itself with fashionable architecture and modernising itself with “acero y cemento empleados en construir la escenografía para las fiestas del fantasmagórico país” (Becerra 214), presumably referring to the construction frenzy preceding the 1968 Olympic Games (Castañeda). The discord between the grandeur of Mexico’s façade and the misery often hidden behind it translates into a different tone in Becerra’s poem: “sin la grandilocuencia de Pacheco, Becerra usa el humor negro para revertir la impotencia y la tristeza” (Volpi 385).

The second part consists of the next five stanzas, starting with “Lava extiéndose para borrar” and ending with “vinieron en ayuda de ellos” (Becerra 215). The images of the massacre interspersed with references to the city’s grandeur reveal the conflict between the capital’s apparently peaceful daily routine and the distressing narrative of the massacre and its consequences which will not go away quickly or painlessly. The image of destructive lava wiping out everything it touches (“Lava extendiéndose para borrar lo que iba tocando, lo que iba haciendo suyo”) is followed by rather stark, unemotional statements “se llevaron los muertos quién sabe adónde. / Llenaron de estudiantes las cárceles de la ciudad” (215). The emotions are subdued, but they are still there, bubbling under the surface of the lines like lava under the crust. These lines are much shorter than the rest of the poem and the repetition of “lle” is reminiscent of the sound of bullets whizzing through the air. The rest of the stanza varies between long lists of the country’s habit (apparent glory of its past and present) and short, staccato lines referring to the massacre:

Pero al jade y a las plumas y al estofado de los estípites y a los nuevos palacios que ya
no construyó Boari, y a los desayunos en Sanborn's,
Se les rompió por fin el discurso.
Y cuando intenten recoger estos fragmentos de ruido para contemplarse,
Encontrarán en ellos solamente
A los muertos hablándoles. (215)

Repetitions in the poem are similar in structure to “Cantares mexicanos.” Yet, in “El espejo de piedra” these repetitions do not evoke grief (like “Cantares” do), but cynicism – there is too much repetitive “llanto” that turns into lists in the style of “A House that Jack Built”: “bajo el jade y las plumas y los estípites y los palacios de Adamo Boari y los desayunos en Sanborn's (214) is later expanded to “al jade y a las plumas y al estofado de los estípites y a los nuevos palacios que ya no construyó Boari, y a los desayunos en Sanborn's” (215). All these items are attributes of a particular Mexico – the one created (or amplified) for the Olympic Games, “fiestas del fantasmagórico país” (214). Sanborns, appearing repeatedly through the poem, has an additional historical significance. In 1914, Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa and the supporters of Victoriano Huerta were at the Casa de los Azulejos in Mexico City (across from the Palacio de Bellas Artes, designed by Adamo Boari), celebrating Huerta's victory over Francisco Madero. The Casa now hosts the most famous Sanborns restaurant in the city, its walls covered in photographs of the triumphant revolutionaries.

But all these symbols of prosperity and apparent stability – Adamo Boari's palaces, Sanborns, exquisite columns – are transitory. Underneath the thin veil of the capital's opulence, there is violence, pure and terrible; once the veil is torn down, there is little left. This is why this discovery makes “them” feel “aterrados,” as they realise that under all that sheen of jade and feathers, there are the dead talking (215). “They” are presumably those responsible for the massacre and its aftermath, since the third person plural verbs appear in the poem in reference to arrests and deaths of students (“se llevaron los muertos quién sabe adónde. / Llenaron de estudiantes las cárceles de la ciudad” [215]).

The discourse finally breaks (“se les rompió por fin el discurso”) because it is unsustainable despite years of effort by different political and social orders. However, in the same affective section of the poem, there is another version of this line: “se les rompió, de pronto, el espejo” (215). Why does the mirror break suddenly? A mirror is a reflective surface – we look in the mirror to see how we look. In the poem, the mirror would reflect progress, business growth, plans, modernisation (“acero y cemento”) – this is what the

government/society wants to be seen/noted for – and then the mirror breaks because society is not that reflection, it is the custom of gathering behind a church/temple/place of celebration (e.g. Cholula) and killing unarmed people. In the last stanza of this section, history repeats itself by replaying previous violence of the Noche Triste and other massacres.

The final section of the poem (the two remaining stanzas, starting with “En la Plaza de las Tres Culturas” and ending with “el vals *Dios nunca muere*” [215-16]), seems almost disconnected from the rest of the poem, making no mention of the massacre or its aftermath. Instead, it creates a grotesque image of Chief Xicomecóatl,⁹ don Nuño de Guzmán and (apparently) Pancho Villa¹⁰ spending time together at Sanborns. The person that Xicomecóatl, Guzmán and Villa are vying to resemble is José Yves Limantour, Secretary of Finance during Porfirio Díaz’s presidency. Limantour led the way to Mexico’s economic regeneration by lowering or eliminating duties on imports and allowing “special tariff exemptions for economically depressed areas of the country” (Meyer, Sherman and Deeds 383). He also restructured the country’s administration to ensure that economic reforms were actually implemented. As a result of his activities, in 1890 Mexico finished paying off its debt to the United States and in 1894 the country’s budget was balanced for the first time in its history, with revenues being slightly higher than expenses. All in all, Limantour’s reforms benefitted the upper classes, with little or no difference made to the lives of the *campesinos* away from Mexico City. In short, Limantour’s progressive façade hides reactionary views, just like the facades of Mexico City’s glamorous palaces overshadow the country’s social inequalities.

The pretence persists, as Xicomecóatl, Guzmán, and Villa are listening to another symbol of apparent national unity and pride – the waltz “Dios nunca muere.” The waltz, written by Marcelino Alcalá Prieto (Hernández Navarro 77; Miranda 96), is also about the persistence of good will, triumph of the generous side of humanity, hope in face of doom. In other words, it is the exact opposite of the cynical tone of “El espejo de piedra”: the three representatives of the most violent events in Mexico’s past have a leisurely breakfast at Sanborns, a symbol of middle-class prosperity (Gilbert 140), and then listen to the anthem of

⁹ Xicomecóatl was the chief of Zempoala, the first town that Cortés arrived at. He became Cortés’s ally in the fight against the local chiefs. He was said to be cowardly and untrustworthy (Báez-Jorge and Vázquez Zárate).

¹⁰ “El anciano general perfectamente empolvado” is very likely Pancho Villa, since he was supposed to be wearing makeup and have his face powdered to lighten his skin tone when appearing in a movie about his fight in the Revolution: “Make-up artists supposedly powdered Villa’s face to lighten it for certain scenes, his hair was trimmed and combed” (Greenhalgh; also see Rocha; Quintana x).

national pride, while the country is mourning the unnamed victims of Tlatelolco. History absorbs or erases the affect of events, especially when it comes to violent events: “history is often cast as a narrative that emphasizes regularity and predictability” (Beasley-Murray 131), so history repeating itself is almost expected and the initial affect of the events it narrates is converted to emotions that the public would be able to relate to.

The poem suggests that everything appears to be fake except violence, which remains at the core of Mexican society. I would posit, however, that this applies to structured/ordered aspects of society (e.g. governmental structure), because the poem references aspects of social order, class division, rituals, and politics. This is not indicative of affect or habit, but order and ideology. And this is the point of hegemony’s failure—beneath it there is affect, primacy, excess of posthegemony, unleashed on the readers, shocking them out of their habitual apathy and low-level anxiety (175-76) into unifying anger. But—and here is one of the paradoxes of the Tlatelolco discourse—the public does not unite against the perpetrators of the massacre. Initial emotions subside, low-level anxiety returns and apathy sets in again. In short, posthegemony also fails to run its full course.

Becerra’s poem combines the representation of the massacre and the critique of the country’s appearances overshadowing its internal problems. The emotional triangle of anger, grief and shame does appear in this poem, but the grief factor is downplayed here, with anger and shame dominating the narrative. The affect of the massacre appears to be overshadowed by the habit of glorifying the country’s past – or so it seems. The events and people being remembered carry affective qualities: they break the established order and release emotions. But at the same time, they represent habit as they cause social change: “The gap between habit and event allows for an awakening that can self-reflexively transform even the most settled habits. Equally, the development of new habits can open up a gap between subject and field that precipitates a transformative event” (218).

The history that Becerra’s poem mocks is all about appearances, but the events involved are far from being glamorous or progressive – the history behind them is driven by and imbued with affect. After all, “history is no more or less than the recomposition or movement of bodies, a series of modulations in and through affect. Anything else is mere tableau” (Beasley-Murray 132). The habit of history in Becerra’s poem is focused upon appearances, leaving out the mundane, the uncomfortable, and the negative. However, with every affective change of the social order, habit changes to accommodate it and to establish new common sense, which is then engrained in the collective memory and absorbed into

society's customs and routine. Affect and habit are intertwined and both contribute to the formation and protection of social memory frameworks (Carpenter, "Y el olor"). A similar approach is taken in the poems by Pacheco and Bañuelos, although grief is more prominent in these two work. However, all three poems contain the emotional cycle of anger, grief, and shame and therefore contribute to the social memory framework associated with the Tlatelolco massacre.

In conclusion, we have considered the way Mexico's violent past is represented in the poems about the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre which compare it to other violent events in the country's history. I would argue that Becerra's poem, more than those of Pacheco and Bañuelos, treats Tlatelolco as habit, even a religious ritual designed to help the country prosper (sacrifices to Huitzilopochtli, who dies and comes back to life and so never dies, as the title of the waltz "Dios nunca muere" indicates). Here, we should consider the relationship between cynicism and ideology. Based upon the hegemonic distribution of knowledge across social hierarchies, ideology is ineffective when faced with the lack of belief and trust in ideology (Beasley-Murray 175). What is left, then, to rely on when we try to understand the world around us, especially under extreme conditions of internal violence (such as the Tlatelolco massacre)? Beasley-Murray proposes following Bourdieu's view of habit "as a better model with which to understand social order and control, and as both correlative and corrective to Deleuze's tendency to valorize an immanent affect as opposed to a transcendent state" (177). In short, ideology is replaced by habit, so that the focus of social order falls on "embodied common sense" rather than structured knowledge distribution (ibid.), and the link between the past and the future is inextricable: "habit is both reminder of the past and the kernel of what is to come" (178). So, the habit of Mexico's violent history is both a memory and a warning for the future – if it happened before, it may (or will) happen again.

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