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Las escaleras son ríos de sangre
y el olor inflama las narices.[20]

y en las paredes están salpicados los sesos[21]

tanta piedra que le brota de los labios los dientes
la boca la garganta las manos[22]

The dehumanization of the dead and wounded reflects human aversion to associating violent death with themselves: it is difficult to believe that a mutilated body used to be a living human being because it means that the living could suffer a similar fate. The randomness of violence connotes the loss of control and leads the narrator to disassociate him/herself from the image of physical harm, while attempting to retain control by paralleling the flesh and blood of the wound with symbols of the mundane 'como la carne que le doy al gato'.

The prevailing emotion in collage poems is fear, often revealed in the juxtaposition of 'nosotros' and 'ellos'. In Isabel Fraire's poem '2 de octubre en un departamento del edificio Chihuahua'[23], the dialogue between the people hiding in the building while being shot at and wounded is interrupted by a woman's pleas 'No se asomen, por Dios', 'Dios mío, Santa Virgen, que paren, ya no sigan', and incredulous '¿Por qué siguen, por qué siguen tirando?'[24], indicating the victims' inability to communicate with the shooters because the actions of the latter are beyond human control and therefore terrifying, like a natural disaster. The epitome of the witnesses' helplessness is best presented in the image of a woman with a crying child although he relies on his mother for protection, she is rendered equally helpless

20 'Staircases are rivers of blood / and the smell inflames the nostrils' (Del-Río 1985: 278).
21 'and on the walls there are splattered brains' (Bañuelos, 62).
22 'so much stone that it flows from the lips, teeth / mouth, throat, hands' (Montemayor, 108).
23 'October 2 in an Apartment in the Chihuahua Building' (Fraire, 78–9).
24 'Don't put your heads out, for God's sake', 'My God, Saint Virgin, make them stop, don't let them go on', 'Why are they going on, why are they still shooting?' (Fraire, 79).



by the outside force. The image of mothers and children as victims of the shooting is recurrent in many Tlatelolco poems:

eran mujeres y niños, estudiantes,
jovencitos de quince años,
una muchacha que iba al cine,
una criatura en el vientre de su madre[25]

los tanques de hierro a luchar contra los niños,
las mujeres, los vecinos,
la anciana que salió a comprar leche no los burló[26]

'¡Cuidado, señora!' (tiene un niño en brazos)
'Métase al baño, ahí está más segura.'[27]

Notwithstanding the testimonial factor, the image of a mother and a child is a powerful metaphor for protection and safety woven into the fabric of society. The murder of children is seen by many authors as the ultimate crime: Del-Río evokes the reference to Herod, asking '¿Qué nombre se le da a quien mata a sus hijos?'[28] While religious allusions convey the victims' and narrators' need for protection in the face of overwhelming danger, they also denote a connection between the massacre and religious rituals, assigning mythical characteristics to the event.

The incomprehensibility of the shooting is also suggestive of the event being perceived as a dream or a fantasy. This interpretation builds upon the narrator's inability to understand either the event or the reasons for it, and upon the lack of media coverage of the massacre in an attempt to deny the event taking place. The dream narration combines the total separation of the event from objective reality and the realization that the event is a part of Mexican history and, there-

25 'they were women and children, students / fifteen–year–old youngsters / a girl going to the cinema / a baby in her mother's womb' (Sabines 1997: 229).
26 'iron tanks to fight children / women, neighbours, / an old woman going to buy milk did not mock them' (Del-Río 1985: 276).
27 '"Careful, ma'm!" (she has a child in her arms) / "Hide in the bathroom, you'll be safer there"' (Fraire, 78).
28 'What do you call someone who murders his children?' (Del-Río 1985: 280).