



MEMORY POLITICS AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

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Intersections of Affect, Memory, and Privilege in Bogota, Colombia

Affected by Conflict

Hendrikje Grunow

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Memory Politics and Transitional Justice

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The interdisciplinary fields of Memory Studies and Transitional Justice have largely developed in parallel to one another despite both focusing on efforts of societies to confront and (re—)appropriate their past. While scholars working on memory have come mostly from historical, literary, sociological, or anthropological traditions, transitional justice has attracted primarily scholarship from political science and the law. This series bridges this divide: it promotes work that combines a deep understanding of the contexts that have allowed for injustice to occur with an analysis of how legacies of such injustice in political and historical memory influence contemporary projects of redress, acknowledgment, or new cycles of denial. The titles in the series are of interest not only to academics and students but also practitioners in the related fields.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Owing to their social position and geographical location, Bogota's upper middle class is among the fortunate Colombians who have few, if any, experiences with the Colombian conflict. Although they seldom witness violent confrontations, nor are frequent targets themselves, as voters, they influence the political responses to the conflict and represent the unmarked norm on which public opinion is modeled. In this book, I investigate how they are nevertheless affected by the conflict, using the ambiguity implicit in the words 'being affected' to address what are sometimes called the physical and psychological ways in which people can be affected by events. I will present these through four different affects: *arraigo*, *dolor de patria*, *empatía*, and *paz*. Contrary to classic approaches in cultural studies, this work is not concerned with questions of the generation, dissemination, and contestation of meaning, or representation. Instead, I offer a close reading of and for affect through a variety of cultural texts united by their affective potential.

Through the notion of *arraigo*, I show how the Colombian conflict is rooted in specific relationships to land. The upper middle-class *arraigo* is felt during a finca vacation and connected to the conflict insofar as not being able to travel to their finca is the most common upper middle-class experience of the conflict. Following this, through *dolor de patria* I show how affect is historic, in the sense of a doubling or re-experiencing of past emotions. Experiences of disappointment and crashed hopes in the context of various peace negotiations are the central experiences nurturing *dolor de patria*. Chapter 4 on *empatía* will outline a specifically upper middle-

class emotional habitus that allows my interlocutors to distance themselves emotionally from the conflict by not connecting with others who are more directly affected by it. Finally, I show how all three affects form the basis for *paz*. As a proposition to answer the question of what peace feels like, *paz* as an upper middle-class affect is imagined as a privilege not everyone deserves.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction: Affected by Conflict	1
2	Arraigo	39
3	Dolor de Patria	81
4	Empatía	119
5	By Way of Conclusion: <i>Paz</i>	159
6	Epilogue	201
	Glossary	205
	Index	207

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD M-19	Alianza Democrática M-19 (Democratic Alliance M-19, the party established by former M-19 members)
AGC	Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (Gaitanist Self-defense Forces of Colombia, a paramilitary/organized crime hybrid)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-defense Forces of Colombia, the umbrella organization of Colombian paramilitaries)
BACRIM	Bandas criminales (Spanish for organized crime)
CD	Centro Democrático (Democratic Center, the political party of ex-president Álvaro Uribe)
COP	Colombian Peso
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Administrative Department of Statistics)
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army, a guerrilla group)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army, a guerrilla group)
FARC	Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (Common Alternative Revolutionary Force, the party of former FARC-EP members)
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército Popular (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, a guerrilla group)
FEDEGAN	Federación Colombiana de Ganaderos (Federation of Colombian Cattle Rearers)
FNG	Fondo Nacional del Ganado (National Cattle Trust)
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute for Family Wellbeing)

IDP	Internally displaced persons
JEP	Justicia Especial para la Paz (Special Justice for Peace)
M-19	Movimiento 19 de Abril (19th of April Movement, a guerrilla group)
MAQL	Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (Armed Movement Quintín Lame, a guerrilla group)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Affected by Conflict



Close-up of “Fragmentos” by Doris SalcedoSalcedo, Doris (03/2023)

In 2018, Colombian artist Doris Salcedo converted the arms decommissioned by the former combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC-EP¹) into an artwork called *Fragmentos*. As opposed to classical monuments of armed confrontations such as obelisks or arcs of triumph, the work consists of metal floor tiles. The tiles adorn an exhibition space located in the historic city center of Bogota. Salcedo explained that, for her, it was important to create a horizontal artwork, rather than something vertical, phallic even. No arc of triumph, because war wouldn't leave room for triumphs: "We all lost the war, and we are all survivors of the war," Salcedo said (*Así se hizo Fragmentos, el 'contra-monumento' de Doris Salcedo*, 2018, my translation). I am taking up this assertion here, because I think there is more to say about losing a war, and because I am uncomfortable with the leveling power of this statement. Salcedo's work is very sensitive to the perspectives and narrations of the victims of this war, of people who have been displaced, disappeared, tortured, of women who have been raped (all of which are topics of her artwork), and of the weight of these and other experiences with regard to the desire of building peace. That is why I would like to challenge the idea that every Colombian was affected by them *equally*, and I believe it is important to keep the differences in mind. I do not mean to put any less emphasis on the harshness of war. Rather, I want to bring into focus ways of affectation that are not usually the center of attention of research in war-torn societies, precisely because what is most visible are the effects Salcedo handles in her work.

The academic literature surrounding the Colombian conflict has equally focused much more on the lives and perspectives of more marginalized populations (see among many others Espinosa Moreno, 2021; Bouvier, 2009; Sánchez & Peñaranda, 2007; Tate, 2007; Uribe Alarcón, 2004) and should be valued as efforts to give voice to these communities. Given the decade-long conflict and the continuing marginalization of Afro-descendant, peasant, and indigenous voices and their histories, I see both the necessity and the value of giving voice—conscious also of the problematic implications of the practice—to these groups. It seems legitimate not to give further space to those already dominant in public discourse. And yet, I believe that if we want to understand the Colombian conflict, and imagine ways to build a sustainable peace, we will have to understand all

¹In the following, I will use FARC-EP to denominate the guerrilla group, while FARC identifies the political party that was established by the guerrilla during the peace negotiations with the government of Juan Manuel Santos.

of the communities involved, and this includes, for example, the upper middle class, a privileged and oftentimes decision-supporting part of the population that is not usually the center of ethnographic attention.

A danger of Salcedo's statement that everyone lost the war lies in the collective victimization, which, as Valentina Salvi has shown in the case of Argentinian military officials advocating for national reconciliation, levels the suffering of different collectives by eliciting feelings of solidarity and compassion. But "where everyone is a victim, nobody is responsible" (Salvi, 2014, p. 160, my translation). Where there are so many different levels of affectation, there are different levels of responsibility, and the responsibility of the upper middle class, for example, can be fruitfully analyzed through Michael Rothberg's concept of the implicated subject:

Implicated subjects occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes. [...] Although indirect or belated, their actions and inactions help produce and reproduce the positions of victims and perpetrators. In other words, implicated subjects help propagate the legacies of historical violence and prop up the structures of inequality that mar the present. (Rothberg, 2019, p. 1)

This work is concerned with the implications for the present and the potential futures contained in affective encounters of Bogota's upper middle class with the Colombian conflict. The four ways of being affected by conflict I present here—*arraigo*, *dolor de patria*, *empatía*, and *paz*—offer different appreciations of the past, present, and future and I investigate their spatial, temporal, social, and political dimensions in the lives of upper middle-class Bogotanos. They cover affective encounters in the form of a privileged connection to land (*arraigo*), the feeling of history repeating itself (*dolor de patria*), the relationship to others (*empatía*), and expectations for the future (*paz*), offering insights into my interlocutors' implication in the spaces, times, communities, and politics related to the Colombian conflict. All affects treated here are class-specific not in the sense of being exclusively experienced by a given class but in their specific characteristics when felt or expressed by upper middle-class Bogotanos. These four ways of being affected by conflict also do not represent the entirety of possible affective engagements with the conflict, but offer a starting point for the spatial, historical, social, and political implications.

I am using the ambiguity implicit in the words ‘being affected’ without wanting to reiterate a dichotomous, Cartesian understanding of mind and body as separate entities. Instead, very much in line with Sara Ahmed’s dictum regarding the impressions left by others (Ahmed, 2014, p. 6), I prefer the synonymous use of ‘touch,’ as it retains the bodily qualities of being touched by someone or something. I can be touched by someone, and I can be touched by someone’s story, for example. Both have bodily dimensions and bodily expressions, in the sense that, in the first case, I can feel a hand on my shoulder, or the warmth of an embrace, or the force of someone pushing past me. In the second, I can feel sad about the misfortune of someone, or elated by their success, to mention just two of an endless number of possibilities. Neither sadness and elation, nor force or warmth, are limited to either dimension, hence my preference to keep both connotations intact. Being affected by conflict thus entails all of these dimensions and coming into contact with it can be sensed and expressed through sensations and feelings, movements and actions, as well as their absences, their (im)possibilities, and the potentials released by and through them.

Asking what it means to be affected by conflict is not the same as asking about the meaning of affect, but rather about its very potentials. My investigation into the social dimensions of affectedness aspires to retain subjectivity and allow for a phenomenological shift from constructed views of reality to realities of immediateness and experience. The focus of this work is not on semiotic interpretation, not on the decoding of what affects might mean, but on what they do and which effects they have. Thus, it is not a problem of the construction of reality, but of its immediateness and experience.

Neither the conflict nor the affective responses to it can be posited as ontological singularities, as this universalizes experiences that are diverse and attach unequally to subjects. Divya Tolia-Kelly (2006) has emphasized the necessity to understand affects within the context of power structures, underlining the political implications of the erasure, and pointing to the ultimately ethnocentric bias in affect theorist’s universalist imperative. As Yael Navaro-Yashin explained, an effort to diversify affect would have to go beyond characterizing local varieties and emphasize the historical and political circumstances that give shape to them (Navaro-Yashin, 2017, p. 211). A truly intersectional approach to affect should thus include research on the affects of elite populations, or even white supremacists, as Tamar Blickstein (2019) has underscored. Paying attention specifically to

the historic foundations of privileged affects can help to diversify affect by demonstrating how *all* affects are contextual.

The position of Bogota's upper middle class offers one example of privileged affects because their experiences of the conflict are class-specific. They are influenced by time and place, and thus, the different phases of the conflict, as well as geographic locations with respect to these phases. Older generations' experiences differ from younger ones not only because of the individual trajectories chosen by people, but also through the different intensities and opportunities the conflict made possible or impossible. Apart from class and age, gender and race can play into these dynamics. Salcedo's assertion of losing a war poses further questions. First of all, which war is it, that was fought here? Who was fighting, and what for? And if 'the war' stands for the Colombian conflict, can it be considered past? If the answer to the last question is no, then what does surviving the war even mean? *Fragmentos* points, if not to the diversity, to the fragmentary character of what Colombians remember about the war: "It is called 'Fragmentos' because we all have fragments of memory of what the war was, and these fragments will form the narrative of our recent past" (*Así se hizo Fragmentos, el 'contramonumento' de Doris Salcedo, 2018*, my translation). Some of these fragments will be the center of this work.

MÓNICA

Mónica² is an artist in her 30s and has worked with Doris Salcedo on several of her projects treating the Colombian conflict. The conflict isn't much of an inspiration to her, however, and in her own work, she prefers to engage with different topics. She likes to go on bird-watching tours to paint birds, and on her Instagram account I can frequently find more abstract paintings in light colors. Mónica is also my husband's best friend from school; they both attended the Anglo-American school. She was born in Bogota, but her grandparents are from the department of Boyacá on the maternal side and from Tumaco, department of Nariño, on the paternal side. Her aunt in Tumaco owns a gas station, among other family

² Most of my interlocutors preferred to stick with their actual first names, albeit some use a pseudonym. Whenever they refer to other people, I changed the names to assure anonymity, as they did not have an opportunity to decide for themselves.

members, doctors, pilots, and lawyers abound. Until 2019, Mónica lived at her parents' place with her younger sister in an upper-class neighborhood of brick-walled apartment buildings and well-kept green areas, just north of the oldest shopping mall in Bogota. Mónica studied Art at Los Andes University and has left Bogota in 2019 to pursue a degree at an Art school in New York.

Her love for nature was cultivated at the family's two fincas, one of which was inherited from her maternal grandparents. This finca, located in the department of Boyacá, is dedicated more to subsistence and crop cultivation than leisure, even if, as Mónica herself admits, at the moment of our interviews it did not actually produce income. The place is still great to have extended walks and observe nature, which is why Mónica enjoys spending time there, even if the finca is not as comfortable as the vacationing home in Chinauta her parents own, a common weekend getaway for many Bogotanos. Many happy childhood memories of Mónica and her sister take place at this finca with a swimming pool.

Other than through her work with Salcedo, Mónica's contact with the more troublesome aspects of living in a country at war with itself has developed through visits to family in Tumaco on the Pacific coast. Tumaco is still a rather complicated area within the dynamics of the war, and it has not always been possible for Mónica to visit her relatives there because of the presence of armed actors. She described the atmosphere as very much influenced by drug trafficking, which permeated every aspect of everyday (vacationing) life. To her bewilderment, at the club, people would throw around dollar bills for the fun of it. She also noticed the difficulty of getting spare change for the smaller bills of Colombian pesos when buying at corner shops, which she attributes to people not needing the change. According to Mónica, particularly at the beach it was 'very obvious' who was a *traqueto*, as people would display their wealth through expensive jewelry, surrounded by bodyguards.

FRAGMENTS, IMPRESSIONS, MEMORY

Fragments like thrown around dollar bills, big gold chains on the necks of men at the beach, and in general the presence of heavily armed men with dark sunglasses, offer glimpses of life in Colombia that are not directly related to the military confrontations of a war. But they refer to them, and what I am interested in here are these referents, of another life and a different story, and what they do to people who, like Mónica, have led a

rather peaceful, or less complicated, life in Colombia. These experiences tend to be short and ephemeral, and thus a search for the effects they have is best pursued in the language of affect.

Fragments of memory leave impressions, just as impressions leave fragmented memories. The language of impression is instructive here. As Sara Ahmed has argued, “[W]e need to remember the ‘press’ in an impression” (emphasis in original), so that the coming-into-contact of things and people can be understood as an affective encounter (Ahmed, 2014). Through the notion of impression, Ahmed avoids a distinction between the sensing body and the thinking mind, pointing to the oft-repeated formula of affecting and being affected, and underscoring the forces or intensities capable of moving bodies. In this book, I use the terms affect and emotion interchangeably, in accordance with Ahmed, for whom this use developed from the way emotion is used in ordinary language, while describing ways of being affected. In using both terms interchangeably, like Catherine Lutz, I wish to avoid the problematic implications of a strong separation between supposedly pre-social affects and scripted emotions, which does not abandon a body/mind dualism because it assumes one to be rationalized while the other is not (Lutz, 2017). A strict differentiation of affect and emotion furthermore conceives of the social too deterministically. The contingency of affect does not lie in its supposed pre-sociality, but its unfolding in it. In the words of Solana, “[A]ffects are not unpredictable because they have no connection to the past, but because they do not follow logically from it” (Solana, 2022, pp. 157–158, my translation).

The notoriety of references to ‘refrains’ (Stewart, 2007), or ‘ongoing present’ (Berlant, 2008), in affect theory speaks to a common understanding and consciousness of the historicity of affects, but nevertheless has not been sufficiently considered with regard to memory studies scholarship, that is, the connections between affect theory and memory studies have rarely been made fruitful for a consideration of the ways in which affects work through, as and with memory. Of course, the indexical character of memories makes for a different reading depending on the locus of enunciation. This is why the main point made by memory research has for quite some time not been its truth value, but its effects. As Bond, Craps, and Vermeulen have noted, “[I]f memory is inevitably mediated, [...] indexicality and authenticity are always an effect—or indeed, an affect—never an achieved ontological certainty” (Bond et al., 2017, p. 13). Cultural Memory Studies in particular have tended to describe, explain, and critique the symbolic media involved in processes and dynamics of