Shattered Childhood, Shattered Adulthood: Unveiling Peru's Armed Conflict Orphanhood(s) through Twenty-First Century Non-Fiction Narratives

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August 2024

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The theme of orphanhood is deeply engraved in the identity of Latin America, not excluding the most recent history of Peru. During the internal armed conflict (1980-2000), thousands of children were left parentless due to brutal confrontations between governmental forces and subversive groups, Sendero Luminoso and Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, as well as terrorist attacks and political violence. In the twenty-first century, the issue of orphanhood prominently features in literary texts about this turbulent period. Authors representing the generation born in the 1980s and 1990s have matured and begun publishing their childhood and youth memories as non-fiction first-person narratives that cross traditional literary genre boundaries. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that the motif of orphanhood in these texts can be read both as a literal loss of parents and metaphorically, as an expression of marginalisation, exclusion and abandonment in the national context. These interpretations reflect sociopolitical issues profoundly entrenched in Peruvian reality since colonial times and significantly highlighted during the late-twentieth-century internal armed struggle. By examining accounts of growing up during the time of violence published in recent years by multiple authors, this dissertation highlights the impact of non-fiction texts on the two dominant approaches to the conflict: the salvatory role of the security forces in the war against terrorism and the human rights narrative focusing on violations committed against militants of subversive groups. Finally, I analyse how these literary sources suggest the possibility of rethinking Peruvian national identity after a traumatic event, represented through both literal and metaphorical orphanhood.

Résumé

Le thème de l'orphelinat est profondément ancré dans l'identité de l'Amérique latine, sans exclure l'histoire la plus récente du Pérou. Pendant le conflit armé interne (1980-2000), des milliers d'enfants sont restés sans parents en raison des affrontements brutaux entre les forces gouvernementales et les groupes subversifs, Sendero Luminoso et le Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, ainsi que des attentats terroristes et de la violence politique. Au XXIe siècle, la question de l'orphelinat occupe une place prépondérante dans les textes littéraires consacrés à cette période turbulente. Les auteurs représentant la génération née dans les années 1980 et 1990 ont mûri et ont commencé à publier leurs souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse sous forme de récits non fictionnels à la première personne qui dépassent les frontières traditionnelles des genres littéraires. Tout au long de cette thèse, je soutiens que le motif de l'orphelinat dans ces textes peut être lu à la fois comme une perte littérale de parents et, métaphoriquement, comme l'expression de la marginalisation, de l'exclusion et de l'abandon dans le contexte national. Ces interprétations reflètent des questions sociopolitiques profondément ancrées dans la réalité péruvienne depuis l'époque coloniale et mises en évidence de manière significative pendant la lutte armée interne de la fin du XXe siècle. En examinant les récits de l'enfance pendant la période de violence publiés ces dernières années par de multiples auteurs, cette thèse met en lumière l'impact des textes de non-fiction sur les deux approches dominantes du conflit : le rôle salvateur des forces de sécurité dans la guerre contre le terrorisme et le récit des droits de l'homme, qui se concentre sur les violations commises contre les militants des groupes subversifs. Enfin, j'analyse la manière dont ces sources littéraires suggèrent la possibilité de repenser l'identité nationale péruvienne après un événement traumatisant, représenté par l'orphelinat littéral et métaphorique.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Amanda Holmes, for her constant support. I am extremely grateful for her acceptance of my working style and the fact that I could always count on her help while having the space I needed to develop my research and ideas. Without her understanding and openness, this dissertation would not have been written so efficiently and would definitely not have reached its present form.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Graduate Program Director for Hispanic and Italian Studies, Professor José Jouve-Martín, who has provided invaluable guidance with numerous smaller and larger issues during my time at McGill. His knowledge and commitment are second to none. I am particularly thankful to the Department Chair, Professor Fernanda Macchi. Classes with Professor Macchi were some of the most engaging and brought me what I enjoy most about the academic world – the intellectual challenge. Additionally, I would like to thank all the professors in the Hispanic Unit of the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, who were always open to discussion and provided valuable guidance.

I am grateful for the funding I received throughout the course of writing my dissertation from McGill University, which allowed me to conduct my research, and for the services and facilities provided by the university.

Finally, I want to thank those closest to my heart – Kasia, Marta, Carlos, and River. I will always treasure having you in my life.

Introduction: Orphanhood in Non-Fiction Peruvian Narratives

Ten-year-old Rafael Salgado picks up a newspaper from the seat of a bus in Lima and sees a photograph of his father's lifeless body. Only a few days earlier, his father had been extrajudicially executed by security agents at the capital's police headquarters after enduring hours of torture. Although Rafael tries to distract himself with a colouring book, one picture remains fixed in his mind: "la imagen de mi padre con el torso desnudo, los ojos cerrados y su manito que parecía más chiquita que de costumbre, haciendo puño" (25). Similarly, teenage José Carlos Agüero encounters a photograph of his mother's dead body on a beach in Lima in the pages of a newspaper. She had been shot by state security forces and the photograph was accompanied by a caption with her surname misspelled by a journalist (loc. 217). Both authors, neither of whom were personally involved in subversive activities, lost their parents due to confrontations between the state security apparatus and radical leftist groups during Peru's two-decade-long domestic conflict at the end of the twentieth century.

As shocking as these images of children confronting the graphic deaths of their parents are, they are not exceptions in situations of conflict and state violence, so incredibly common in various parts of Latin America in the latter half of the twentieth century. These anecdotes reflect a broader phenomenon that invariably accompanies such circumstances: war, political violence, dictatorship and internal strife often leave children orphaned in the most gruesome settings. While the orphanhood in these instances is painfully literal, violence also creates orphans in more subtle or metaphorical ways, through forced migration, social exclusion and economic hardship.

Societal sensitivity in conflict situations frequently focuses on orphans as a group requiring special support, practically emblematic as recurring elements of the war imagery. However, while war orphans receive sincere attention from compassionate individuals worldwide, their plight can also be exploited in political manoeuvres and mutual accusations. Meanwhile, slightly older victims, particularly adolescents, often receive less attention. This might be because, as a group, they demonstrate more independence and a greater capacity to cope with adversity on their own. Nevertheless, due to their ongoing emotional maturation, their vulnerability in armed conflict situations deserves recognition.

Given how widespread the presence of children and young people as victims of violence in conflict settings is, strikingly, their voice is often represented not by themselves but by adults: politicians, humanitarian organisations or relatives. Similarly, in the recent history of Peru, in which political violence between 1980 and 2000 played an essential part in shaping social dynamics, children and young people were not spared from victimisation. Kidnappings, forced recruitment into guerrilla units or incorporation into the army, assassinations of parents and relatives belonging to subversive organizations, rape and ethnic discrimination are just a few of the terrors experienced by the generation growing up during the final two decades of the twentieth century in Peru. Moreover, the findings of the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR, 2001-2003) suggest that women and children were among the most frequent victims in situations of indiscriminate violence, such as massacres against rural Andean communities, while youth were a central target of recruitment efforts, both through propaganda and force, by the Peruvian Communist Party–Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL), one of the key actors in the conflict (CVR 166, 171).

Despite the significant impact of Peru's internal conflict on young people, first-person accounts describing the experiences of those who grew up in its shadow have been lacking in literature until recently. In 2012, the publication of Lurgio Gavilán's memoir, *Memorias de un soldado desconocido*, and its subsequent translation into English started a new direction. Over the following years, personal stories of experiences from the time of the conflict by authors such as José Carlos Agüero, Renato Cisneros and, most recently, Rafael Salgado have emerged at the centre of the Peruvian literary scene. These texts have opened up new spaces for anthropological, cultural and sociopolitical analysis, as well as provided irreplaceable material to examine the issues surrounding mechanisms and strategies of memory politics, an area extensively investigated and discussed throughout contemporary Peruvian history.

Being firmly rooted in issues of memory politics, this analysis contributes to the extensive body of research on this topic in Peru, particularly in the growing interest in diversifying the narratives of armed conflict and its enduring consequences. It does so by examining selected autobiographical texts published between 2012 and 2022, assuming the recurrent theme of orphanhood and its literary representation as central to the investigation. Using this theme as a focal point, I first argue that selected first-person accounts, written and published in the second and third decades of the twenty-first century, reveal a diverse spectrum of experiences of growing up during the internal armed conflict. Therefore, they complicate any attempts at forming a monolithic historical narrative, despite being interconnected by shared trauma. Secondly, I demonstrate how the theme of orphanhood in the narratives manifests both as a literal loss of a parent and as a metaphorical experience of abandonment due to circumstances arising from the internal armed struggle and its aftermath, such as disillusionment with institutions and political organisations and internal as well as international migration –

challenges considered particularly arduous for young people. By contextualising the stories within both the era of violence and the post-conflict decades during which they were written and published, I suggest that narratives serve not only as historical records of the past but also as critical commentaries on the remnants of the conflict that continue to impede the formation of a democratic society today.

Historical Background

The internal armed conflict in Peru (1980-2000) constitutes a profoundly traumatic period in the nation's history, particularly for the rural Quechua-speaking population, with the highest proportion of victims. The conflict was inaugurated in May 1980 when representatives of the Partido Comunista del Perú–Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL) burned ballots just prior to the general election, marking the commencement of a protracted people's war against the official government, lasting two decades. This era not only epitomised extreme discontent and a quest for change by radical subversive groups but also laid bare deep-seated sociopolitical issues stemming from a history of systemic violence and marginalisation. According to findings by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR), the conflict's total victim count fluctuates, with a 95% certainty, between 61,000 and 77,000 individuals, with the Ayacucho region bearing the brunt of the armed struggle and its consequences (CVR 162). Noteworthy, analyses of political history of the rural Ayacucho covering the period starting at the beginning of the twentieth century prove that the precursors to the violence existed in the area long before the arrival of Sendero Luminoso (Heilman). Even though none of the predecessors was as effective in escalating their actions as subversive organisations in the 1980s and 1990s, their recurring emergence throughout history signals that social unrest was not highly specific to the short

period of Sendero Luminoso's formation but rather goes back centuries as a reaction to issues of inequality and economic hardship.

Degregori (*El surgimiento*) notes the unexpectedness of the success of Sendero Luminoso in advancing their revolution under the banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-Gonzalo thought, evidenced by the initial minimal response of state security forces to guerrilla activities between 1980 and 1982. However, a closer examination of the group's functioning and growth reveals multiple contributing factors facilitating such development. According to the scholar, both national and regional factors such as centralised capitalism draining resources from rural regions while offering very little back ("Qué difícil" 102) or centuries of exploitation of the Ayacucho's people and land combined with ethnic discrimination (103) played a pivotal role in Sendero's success in the area. Moreover, it was believed, at least in the early phase of the struggle, that dire economic and social conditions among *campesinos* living in less fertile areas, spurred community mobilisation in response to Sendero's call to arms in very specific parts of rural Andes (McClintock 59). More recent research by Ismael Muñoz et al. asserts that a combination of circumstances created a "fertile territory" for Sendero's revolutionary message, with ethnicity, geography and language (specifically Quechua-speaking) acting as key determinants of marginalisation in Peruvian society, thus facilitating the spread of armed struggle (1932). Noteworthy, these distinctly ethnic, geographic and linguistic factors, which according to the authors constituted the basic axes determining the degree of marginalisation in the past, did not disappear from society with the end of the period of violence. Consequently, it is not surprising that issues of inequality and its effects that nourished the roots of Sendero's message continue to play a key part in the Peruvian public debate more than two decades after the end of the conflict.

Such crucial perturbations in the national history from the early stages of the conflict provoked robust research into its actors and the course of events. The 1980s marked the emergence of an extensive scholarly discourse on the origins, motivations, objectives and methods of subversive organisations active in Peru such as Sendero Luminoso and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA), as well as government pacification efforts (McClintock; Palmer; Degregori, "Qué difícil", *El surgimiento*; Lázaro; Starn, "New Literature"). Meanwhile, the conflict garnered significant attention in the national press, as evidenced by the bibliography compiled by librarian Everette E. Larson at the University of Texas in 1985, which features numerous newspaper articles on Sendero Luminoso's pursuits. On the other hand, the careful attention of academics to the later phases of the conflict's development led to key studies by intellectuals such as Gorriti, Stern and Degregori ("Qué difícil"), which opened discussions about the historical roots of social unrest that escalated into a civil war. Simultaneously, the main actors of the armed struggle further enriched the debate providing their own commentary on the events. On the one hand, writings and interviews by the Shining Path's leader, Abimael Guzmán, were published in press as well as, more recently, on the Internet (Centro de Documentación de los Movimientos Armados; Guzmán). On the other, official accounts from the military regarding their participation in the conflict were published, explaining strategies and decisions related to counter-terrorism operations (Comisión Permanente de la Historia del Ejército del Perú). Such a diversity of sources and commentaries testifies not only to the crucial importance of the armed struggle as a defining moment of the current national identity, but also to the variety, often full of internal contradictions, of narratives and interpretations of the 1980s and 1990s events.

One of the issues illustrating the challenges of discussing the time of violence is that of the terminology chosen to describe it. The term "internal armed conflict," a translation of the Spanish "conflicto armado interno" used throughout the CVR's final report, remains debatable as, according to some, it does not reflect the true nature of the events. The terminology in the literature is therefore diverse and clearly political, ranging from the ambiguous "época de violencia," to more blame-assigning terms like "delincuencia terrorista" and "lucha contrasubversiva" (Gurmendi Dunkelberg; Bolo Varela) or, on the other end, "terrorismo del estado" (Ríos Sierra & de las Heras Gonzáles). Regardless of the nomenclature, while most investigators unanimously condemn the uncontrollable escalation of violence, recent scholarship confidently confirms that the legacy of the struggle persists more clandestinely in the way today's institutions, policies and civil society are shaped (Soifer & Vergara). In the face of such debates, the need to find effective methods and tools to discuss the events of the 1980s and 1990s promptly became central with the advent of Valentín Paniagua's transitional government.

In the twenty-first century Peru has endeavoured to reconcile opposing viewpoints that persist from the time of violence through various governmental initiatives. Foremost among these is the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (2001-2003) established during Valentín Paniagua's transitional government to investigate crimes and human rights violations committed between May 1980 and November 2000 by all parties involved in the internal armed conflict. Central to its inquiry was the collection of testimonies, primarily gathered through fieldwork in affected areas, along with public hearings – a pioneering measure in Latin America akin to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Hayner 219). These efforts aimed to amplify the voices of numerous eyewitnesses, particularly Quechua speakers from rural, isolated regions, providing a platform for sharing experiences and facilitating healing. Thousands of accounts and

interviews were gathered for further analysis, forming a platform for a new spectrum of witnesses to share their stories, supported by additional actions of the Commission such as observing exhumations of mass graves and investigating well-known cases of human rights violations committed both in rural areas as well as in Lima. The work was finalised in August 2003 when the president of the Commission, Salomón Lerner Febres, announced the findings by presenting its *Informe Final*, a comprehensive report that included the overview and profiles of violence, case analyses, reflexions about the current state of reconciliation efforts in Peru as well as recommendations for future improvements.

However, the CVR's efforts have not been immune to criticism and debate, prompting the scrutiny of its institutionalised transitional justice initiatives. Over time, scholars have critically evaluated the Commission's findings and the efficacy of its recommendations, reflecting on the state of reconciliation in the more than two decades since the conflict's end (Barreto Henriques; Coffey Kellet). While acknowledging the democratic space created by public hearings for diverse testimonies (Macher), critics have questioned the Commission's overall effectiveness, citing challenges such as political attempts to undermine its findings by the supporters of the ex-president Alberto Fujimori and inadequate public engagement with its conclusions (Milton, "The Thruth"; Coffey Kellet). Moreover, ongoing debates centre on how to translate "truth" into meaningful reparative action in line with the victims' desires for a brighter future (Laplante & Theidon). Such critical appraisal of truth commissions, however, is not unique to Peru, underscoring their evolving nature and the ongoing quest for reconciliation in post-conflict settings (Langer). Undoubtedly, their findings and limitations provide fertile ground for further debate on possibilities and impediments for reconciliation in post-conflict settings.

Autobiographical Writing and Memory Politics

With the historical backdrop of the 1980s and 1990s in Peru, in unity along with the academic and cultural discourse of recent decades, it becomes evident that the twenty-first century dawned as a period of uncertainty yet also presented an opportunity to reassess the trauma endured and transition back to democracy, both through institutional (Bolaños Enríquez & Biel Portero) and alternative avenues (Milton, "At the Edge"). However, the question of the success of this transition remains pertinent, as social unrest continued to significantly trouble the country as recently as 2023. Therefore, it is crucial for the present investigation to underscore two historical periods that contextualise the analysed corpus: one being the two decades of the internal armed conflict itself and the second being the post-conflict endeavours at rebuilding democracy supported by the cultural, intellectual and critical contributions of writers, activists, anthropologists and journalists. Chronologically, the main axis of this investigation follows, therefore, the continuity of mechanisms of marginalisation and discrimination within the Peruvian social structure. These mechanisms flared up during the conflict but originated much earlier and have persisted to this day, being particularly visible during the 2022-2023 protests which deeply shook Peru, reopening old wounds (Velásquez Villalba, *Memory Battles*; Hönsch & Cépeda; Watanabe Farro et al.).

The continuity between conflict and post-conflict scenarios and the way they intersect with the cultural space and national consciousness is difficult to envision without considering the topic of memory, remembering and forgetting. One of the pivotal issues in the transformation process is that of memory politics, which pertains to how the violent past is addressed and how its actors are depicted in national, public and cultural spheres. As per an investigation conducted by Garretón Kreft et al., the politics of memory can be categorised into various domains, ranging

from public policies such as commemorative dates and renaming of spaces, to sites of remembrance including museums and monuments, and through other means such as archives and educational initiatives (12-13). Often, however, in situations of recent state violence, official commemorations may be few in number and limited by the range of people who are officially recognised as victims. In such situations, the need to keep the memory alive often rests with non-governmental organisations bringing together family members of conflict victims and private initiatives to pass on the story from generation to generation (Groppo).

Moreover, cultural politics, as investigated in the Peruvian context by Víctor Vich (*Poéticas del duelo*, *Políticas culturales*), should also be considered a vital force in influencing memory and shaping citizenship. As noted by Patricia Oliart, culture can be perceived as clearly related to politics and government, but it also manifests its relationship with pressing social issues far beyond the interests of classic politics by interacting with questions that are less frequently discussed among those in power but are of great importance to society, especially marginalised groups (5). Víctor Vich indicates that, especially in challenging and unusual times such as the recent COVID pandemic and severe social unrest in Peru, the way politics, memory and art intertwine could "construir y proponer formas que alteren la percepción de lo existente, que muestren posibilidades desconocidas y contribuyan a crear nuevas identidades y nuevos modos de relación entre las personas" (*Políticas culturales* 12). From this perspective, the importance of cultural production during turbulent times, as well as about them, serves as a powerful source of alternative ideas and approaches to established identities.

In the domain of literary studies, researchers in Peru have long recognised the pivotal role of the politics of memory in writing and the significance of the theme of conflict as a literary motif, particularly in fictional texts. Short stories and novels with the theme of armed struggle

have surfaced both during and after the conflict, as evidenced by histories and anthologies compiled by Miguel Gutiérrez or Mark Cox. As Kent Dickson points out, the abundance of texts about violence in the twenty-first century can be considered, among other factors, a direct outcome of the formation of the CVR, which catalysed "the emergence of trauma into linguistic representation, and indeed into history itself, after a period of latency in which it might best be conceived as a series of inassimilable private wounds" (65). Therefore, the plethora of literary output in this area shows a strong connection to the problematic of the politics of memory, both during the conflict and after, interweaving artistic expression with the social and political reality of the country, often reflecting the hierarchy based on factors such as ethnicity, language and race (Degregori, *How Difficult* 30)

The complexity of the relationship between the politics of memory, cultural production and identity shaping is met with numerous setbacks and barriers to achieving their objectives which mainly include reconstruction, reconciliation and the prevention of future violence. In Peru, the dynamics between these factors is particularly complex because, in contrast to the case of Argentina or Chile, the period of violence started during an elected government not a dictatorship and presented a significant subversive danger to the newly restored democracy (Milton, "Curating Memories" 363). This fact further complicates the character of narratives that have been produced in the twenty-first century. Some obstacles may arise from the fact that, as indicated by Leigh Payne, two contrasting models of approaching the topic of reconciliation are typically promoted in post-conflict scenarios: that of the liberating properties of truth and that of its potentially detrimental effect on the reconciliation process (297). Payne argues that the contradictory nature of both models can be reconciled through the fact that a third space can be found in between, forming a contentious coexistence that "rejects the impractical and therapeutic

official truth in favor of multiple and divergent truths that reflect different political opinions in society" (298).

Similar exhaustion of a binary configuration of narratives has been observed by researchers in the context of Peru (Milton, "Curating Memories"; Miyagusuku; Agüero, "Presentación"). As mentioned among the others by Cynthia Milton, in Peru two main attitudes come to the fore in shaping the narratives of the conflict: "salvation memory" and "human rights memory" ("The Truth" 117). The first discourse focuses on presenting the actions of the government and its military force in the fight against terrorism by the radical left as heroic and necessary. In contrast, the second refers to the overwhelming number of human rights violations by branches of the security apparatus, the perpetrators of which often go unpunished to this day. Concurrently, Milton recognises that it would be overly simplistic to reduce the complexities of historical formation to the opposition of these two perspectives. Instead, the author suggests, in a spirit resembling that of Payne's multiple truths, the "myriads of actors and memories" need to be recognised as part of unravelling the "memory knot" formed by the variety of experiences (Milton, "The Truth" 117).

In recent years, debates rooted in the intricacies of memory and history in political and cultural spaces have been prominent in Peruvian scholarship. Critical questions driving this discussion are sharply articulated by Francesca Uccelli et al. in their work on educating future generations about the violent past:

> ¿Qué historia deben contar? ¿Desde qué punto de vista? ¿Deben relatar lo ya consagrado o deben convocar lo excluido? ¿Deben ser espacios para entregar discursos ya existentes o para compartir las propias experiencias? Un profesor, en Lima o en Ayacucho, ¿debe

> narrar una historia oficial y patriótica, o debe invocar las múltiples memorias que la cuestionan? (13)

Along with Uccelli, scholars such as Carlos Iván Degregori, Ponciano del Pino, Steve J. Stern, Jo-Marie Burt, Orin Starn, and Paulo Drinot have contributed to this academic dialogue. The twenty-first century has thus been a moment to rethink the official history of recent violence and to show growing interest in stories that have been marginalised or have received less attention, particularly testimonies of ex-members of the state security apparatus and the subversive group Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA). Although the MRTA participated in the armed conflict alongside Sendero Luminoso, its members bear responsibility for a lower percentage of victims and the movement itself has not been studied to the same extent. This gap is being addressed by recent publications such as Miguel la Serna's *Con las masas y las armas* (2023), a history of the MRTA and its involvement in the conflict, and *Perros y promos* (2023), a study of testimonies of former members of the Peruvian armed forces, often very young cadets, conducted by Jelke Boesten and Lurgio Gavilán Sánchez. These works highlight a curious discrepancy between the presence of veterans in Peruvian society, described as "comunes y corrientes" (23) and their lack of representation in scholarly discussions and cultural portrayals of the conflict, manifesting yet another potential for diversification of the conflict's recollections.

The following investigation therefore aligns with recent scholarship exploring the variety of memories of the armed conflict, beyond official narratives and governmental propaganda, aimed at filling the exposed gap. I focus on first-person non-fiction narratives published by Peruvian writers in the twenty-first century, offering perspectives on private and social life in Peru during and after the internal armed conflict. These narratives are linked by the continuity of mechanisms of marginalisation and the legacy of the conflict. From a theoretical standpoint, I

draw on Elizabeth Jelin's framework, which distinguishes the following features of memories: 1) their subjectivity, influenced by both experience and cultural markers; 2) the possibility of their being disputed, argued and rejected by others; and 3) the need to historicise them, placing them in a particular context while acknowledging their ability to evolve (xv). Given the fluid, unstable nature of memories, my analysis of texts containing accounts of the past is based on the inextricable link between history and the present. The account of the past, therefore, exists only in relation to the moment in which it is documented, and its reception by the reader further reshapes it according to contemporary conditions and influences.

Additionally, the relativity of accounts over time becomes further complicated by the intricacies of the autobiographical mode of writing. The theoretical framework of this investigation is thus supported by existing scholarship on this genre. The corpus of analysis consists of texts classified as non-fiction first-person narratives, an umbrella term that describes not a particular genre but rather a range of writing that may not fit the classic definition of autobiography as a comprehensive account of one's life, from birth to the moment of writing, focusing on economic, social and political contexts (Panichelli-Batalla 5). Instead, the primary sources analysed here often present fragmented, limited accounts of particular circumstances or periods, mixed with epistolary, essayistic or journalistic forms. Despite these variations, they share a mode of writing which is sensed by the reader by means of an unwritten agreement with the author, described by Roy Pascal:

> There is an autobiographical form, and indeed a convention, which one recognizes and distinguishes from other literary modes; writers know roughly what they expect to do if they write autobiographies, and critics are in no great difficulty to define their subject-matter when they write about autobiographies. (2)

However, this understanding between reader and author does not eliminate the challenges of defining the limitations and nature of "autobiographical" writing.

A particular aspect of this debate develops in the 1960s and 1970s, when Deconstruction accelerated discussions around autobiography, complicating the notions of "truth" and "truthfulness" in literary texts. Paul de Man wrote in 1977 about the uncertain nature of autobiographical writing:

> But just as we seem to assert that all texts are autobiographical, we should say that, by the same token, none of them is or can be. The difficulties of generic definition that affect the study of autobiography repeat an inherent instability that undoes the model as soon as it is established. (922)

An experiment arising from this instability and challenging the seemingly obvious link between autobiography and truth is now known and recognised as autofiction. This concept is often attributed to the French author Serge Dubrovsky, who is closely associated with it, however, it was also used earlier by Paul West (Bloom 4). Theoretical considerations around the subject in the twentieth century have been thus clearly dominated by Eurocentric research, particularly stemming from the French tradition. However, the concept has also started to appear in relation to global literatures, leading to questions about its presence in Latin America (Alberca, "¿Existe la autoficción?"; Klinger). Currently, the answer to whether Latin American autofiction exists can be formulated positively, supported by recent interest in this investigative angle in the works of authors such as Chico Buarque and Juan Gabriel Vásquez (Welge) and by rereading classics of the Boom generation, such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Luis Borges and Carlos Fuentes (Alberca, "¿Existe la autoficción?"). In selected novels of the aforementioned authors, Manuel Alberca identifies similarities they demonstrate to the European concept of autofiction as

described by Serge Dubrovsky (1988), Jacques Lecarme (1994) or Philippe Vilain (2005). According to this approach to autofiction, it can be separated from autobiography based on the priority given to the veracity of the narrative: "no tiene sentido, al menos no es prioritario, comprobar la veracidad autobiográfica, ya que el texto propone ésta simultáneamente como ficticia y real" (Alberca, "¿Existe la autoficción?" 12).

Given the presence of such texts in Latin American literature, I rely on the contractual nature of non-fiction first-person narrative established by the author's declaration. This understanding between the author and the reader about the nature of the subject matter of autobiographical texts was more directly formulated theoretically through the concept of the "autobiographical pact" introduced by Lejeune. The word "pact" indicates an agreement, a declaration that points to the author's intention of deliberately highlighting their text's connection with the referential (Lejeune 17). Following this approach, I do not include as primary material books that are self-described by their authors as "autofictional," which places them in the realm of the "ambiguous pact" (Alberca *El pacto ambiguo*) rather than the "autobiographical" one. This is despite their relevance to this investigation, such as Renato Cisneros' *La distancia que nos separa* (2015) or Gabriela Wiener's *Huaco retrato* (2021). Novels of this sub-type, although showing clear similarities between the facts of the author's life and the literary representation of events that can be classified as autobiographical, leave a wide margin for the inclusion of fictional, implicit and hypothetical elements in their course. I believe that based on these characteristics, autofictional texts deserve a separate study, the scope of which would not fit within this work.

Although the author-narrator-protagonist naturally plays a central role in non-fiction narratives of an autobiographical character, equally significant is the relationship of this figure to

the world in which their experience unfolds. This connection brings the issue of literary analysis of a text back to the topic of the politics of memory. As Sylvia Molloy writes in the introduction to her book on autobiography in Latin America, *At Face Value* (1991), a fascinating approach to these types of texts goes beyond the elusive intention of the author and instead focuses on the implications found within their wider context. Molloy suggests exploring "what are the fabulations to which self-writing resorts within a given space, a given time, and a given language, and what […] those fabulations tell us about the literature and culture to which they belong" (Molloy 2). However, in addition to the literary and cultural characteristics highlighted by Molloy, there is a third element inevitably found in these non-fiction narratives: society, which is at the root of the described experience. In the spirit of harmony and connection between all these aspects, this investigation focuses on analysing narratives that not only serve as a vehicle for the author's personal experience and the manifestation of their linguistic and cultural heritage but also place it in a wider context of society. These narratives respond to and dispute the mechanisms operating within these structures and contribute to a dialogue not only about the past they depict but also about the present and future that emerge from it.

In the past, the autobiographical mode of writing was often closely connected with state causes and could serve as an exemplary life model of famous and admired individuals. Similar trends can be observed in Latin America since the colonial era. However, in the twentieth century, the emergence of *testimonio* shook the way literary critics viewed institutional literature and broke the binary of individual/collective, opening a door for a new way of examining autobiographical accounts. The corpus of this investigation includes texts that could be classified as post-testimonial writing, drawing from various traditions, including classical memoir or autobiography and a more collective form of *testimonio*. As mentioned previously in this chapter,

the present act of creating autobiographical accounts is equally as important as the previous events described. This presents a fascinating implication, as texts of both personal and political nature are now being published in a world of common access to the Internet and a culture of intertwining literature, activism and social media. All these factors contribute to the emergence of a new way of writing that is inevitably situated in a world where the flow of information and interactions between the text, the author and its readers is quicker and more efficient than ever before. This thrilling moment in history, combined with existing work in the realm of memory studies and life writing, generates a space in which the research questions outlined for this investigation can bring valuable insights into the discussion about the image of society depicted in the most recent Peruvian narratives.

Diversifying Narrative Through Literature

In her analysis of memories from Peru's internal armed conflict, Cynthia Milton delves into the process of "curating" the recollections of the involved actors ("The Truth"). While Milton primarily addresses elements of material culture, such as museums and monuments, an intriguing parallel can be drawn to literature as a medium for "curating" memories. The burgeoning number of memoirs and literary texts authored by individuals affected by the conflict attests to a prolific development in this domain. Each narrative, whether from direct participants, those indirectly impacted or the second generation, enriches the diverse mosaic of memories from late twentieth-century Peru. Such perspectives encompass considerations of race, gender, ethnic origin, social status and political convictions. Each factor adds layers of complexity to the narrative landscape, making a singular, universal truth elusive, given the unique circumstances shaping each individual's experience and subsequent account.

Consequently, numerous endeavours have sought to uncover the "truth" through eyewitness testimonies, including those conducted by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, these efforts have frequently concluded that comprehensive representation through such mechanisms is ultimately unattainable. This viewpoint resonates with Elizabeth Jelin's assertion that memories must be understood historically; their meanings evolve over time within broader social and political contexts and, due to their inherent subjectivity, are perpetually open to contestation (xv). Hence, contextualisation is paramount for interpreting memories in the present. This recognition prompts critical questions about the pursuit of universal historical truth, suggesting that such quests may inherently lead to exclusion and discrimination. In this investigation, I analyse texts from six authors to explore the specificity of their recollections of life in Peru during and after the conflict, eschewing generalisations while acknowledging the inevitable commonalities within communities that share a history.

This analysis centres on two pivotal concepts: youth and orphanhood. In Peruvian literature, the perspective of youth frequently serves as a driving theme in narratives of violence, a motif mirrored in non-fiction texts that recount the experiences of childhood and youth affected by the conflict or its sociopolitical aftermath. Memories of youth not only provide valuable testimony of the national past but also highlight the potential for young people to reshape narratives as they reach adulthood. The central objectives of this thesis are twofold: first, to explore the theme of orphanhood as it appears in the analysed texts, both literally and metaphorically. I contend that orphanhood, prevalent among young individuals growing up amidst armed conflict, also assumes a metaphorical dimension, symbolising vulnerability within the sociopolitical landscape of the nation. This metaphorical abandonment reflects the

marginalisation experienced by certain communities in Peru, whether due to affiliation and subsequent abandonment by highly controlling groups like Sendero Luminoso or the Peruvian Armed Forces, or simply as a result of societal discrimination. How does the theme of orphanhood manifest in non-fiction first-person narratives, serving as a bridge between conflict and post-conflict Peru? In what ways does it embody both literal and metaphorical abandonment, shedding light on the marginalisation of certain Peruvian communities? Can this phenomenon be observed equally among child soldiers, underaged ex-military personnel, children of militants, and those seemingly untouched by direct involvement in the armed struggle? These critical questions drive this investigation.

The structure of this thesis takes as a starting point texts reporting on the experience of the protagonists directly affected by the fighting and gradually moves away to the post-conflict perspective that provides a fresh take on the future of reconciliation and alternative national identities. The investigation examines three groups of Peruvian authors, charting their literary journey from the apex of the internal armed conflict, through its pacification phase and into the post-conflict era. Central to this exploration is the perspective of individuals who, having experienced the tumult of their nation during their formative years, later chose to document their recollections and sentiments concerning Peru's condition as the new millennium dawned. The thematic thread binding the narratives together is that of orphanhood, which is depicted both in the literal sense of parental loss and in its metaphorical manifestation as the abandonment experienced by individuals at the hands of institutions that had pledged to protect them or through the act of migration. This thematic progression guides the inquiry through various segments of society: from those directly impacted by the conflict as child soldiers, the offspring of militants executed by state forces, to the urbanisation of Indigenous populations from the

Andean regions and, ultimately, to international migration in pursuit of social and economic advancement. This structural approach accentuates the thematic continuity across seemingly disparate recollections, revealing a shared concern for the social and political realities of contemporary Peru. Additionally, it underscores the present-day efforts of individual authors to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the conflict and its aftermath, fostering a narrative that holds hope for healing and reconciliation.

The inaugural chapter situates the early stages of the internal armed conflict as the backdrop against which orphanhood manifests in two distinct yet interconnected ways among the protagonist-narrators aligned with Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian Army. This chapter focuses on texts authored by Lurgio Gavilán Sánchez and Carlos Serván respectively, who recount the experience of parental loss, which reverberates through their narratives. Simultaneously, they illuminate the role of communities they have found in various organisations for supplanting traditional familial structures, while also acknowledging the precariousness of such surrogate bonds and their potential to engender another form of orphanhood when they prove insufficient to meet existential needs.

The second chapter focuses on the now-adult children of members of subversive groups, Sendero Luminoso and Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, extrajudicially executed by the security apparatus in the 1980s and 1990s. The experience of orphanhood is central in these narratives, as it is not only linked to the conflict chronologically but also directly results from the involvement of the authors' parents in subversive activities. Therefore, texts written by José Carlos Agüero and Rafael Salgado, constitute an important voice for the reconstruction of experiences from the time of the conflict itself, while they also provoke and sustain a far-reaching debate on the heredity of guilt and the deeply rooted prejudices against the children of

militants of the radical left. In this chapter, I argue that the execution of the authors' parents by government agents is the beginning of perpetual orphaning due to deeply rooted social suspicion and fears.

The concluding chapter delves into the intertwined issues of racial identity and social marginalisation, particularly focusing on the concept of *choledad* within Peruvian society. The texts forming the corpus of this part are written by Marco Avilés and Rocío Quillahuaman, both of whom describe migration as a formative event in their early lives. Similar to the previous two chapters, this inquiry extends beyond mere historical analysis, revealing the enduring repercussions of ethnic stereotyping and its intersection with accusations of terrorism, which not only permeated the conflict era but continue to echo through subsequent generations. Further, the chapter explores the question of migration as a form of orphaning due to uprooting from one's motherland, be it internal or international, and its role in shaping the national identity. Related to the question of migration, this examination posits ethnicity as yet another dimension of orphanhood, illustrating how systemic biases and discriminatory practices further exacerbate social exclusion and alienation in Peruvian society.

Therefore, this dissertation focuses on three different perspectives on the same leitmotif, orphaning. The selection and sequence of primary sources help illustrate the central thesis: in the twenty-first century, non-fiction literature has significantly diversified viewpoints related to memories of internal conflict and continues to do so. The experiences of those who lived through this period as children and adolescents are particularly noteworthy, as their creative, political and social activities develop in the present day, contributing to a dynamic debate on the influence of the past on the formation of present-day identities. Furthermore, in this context, the theme of

orphanhood can be read not only as a literal consequence of violence but also as a metaphorical issue concerning how certain social groups were and are treated within a national context.

Chapter 1: Teenage Soldiers

The second half of the twentieth century in Latin America saw the acceptance of *testimonio* into the realm of institutional literature and, therefore, placed life narratives at the centre of attention of literary critics as well as the public. A significant part of autobiographical writing in this part of the world and at that time has its roots in the experience of various instances of political violence. In recent decades, although memories of internal conflicts and sociopolitical turmoil continue to occupy a crucial place in the cultural production of many Latin American countries, autobiographical writing has opened up new themes and forms. From the global perspective, in the last decade, the number of texts of a testimonial nature authored or co-authored by former child soldiers has increased, particularly by those who escaped violent partisan groups in unstable African countries. Some of the standout examples are Ger Duany's *Walk Toward the Rising Sun* (2020), Emmanuel Jal's *War Child* (2009) written with Megan Lloyd Davies, Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone* (2007), Grace Akallo's *Girl Soldier* (2007), China Keitetsi's *Child Soldier* (2002) and Senait Mehari's *Heart of Fire* (2004). Meanwhile, similar stories from other regions of the world have been published, some of which are authored by the protagonists themselves while others constitute collections of testimonies compiled by writer-activists. At times, they use an innovative format for the genre, akin to a graphic novel. One of the most recent such publications is Stéphane Marchetti's *6,000 Miles to Freedom: Two Boys and Their Flight from the Taliban* (2022) illustrated by Cyrille Pomès, a work that presents the story of two teenage Afghan refugees forced to train to become suicide bombers. Concurrently, new voices have also begun to emerge that tell comparable accounts from Latin America, among them, those

of children and youth involved in the internal armed conflict in Peru. Particularly after the final report of the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación from 2003, life stories that expose the perception of the event by marginalised and silenced sectors of Peruvian society gained much-needed recognition. Among them, are autobiographies, memoirs and testimonies that describe the experience of the child narrator-protagonist from the perspective of an adult author. These texts are, therefore, not only captivating from the point of view of literary criticism but also occupy a key place in the reconciliation process, underpin activism and open up a perspective to the world that has hitherto been scarcely accessible.

What stands out in the Peruvian case is that the authors reach beyond the perspective of children and youth involved in guerrilla activities. They also present life and involvement (sometimes illegal if under a certain age) in institutions related to the state apparatus, such as the army and the police. Therefore, their texts amplify important and unique voices in a field that still requires more investigation and, despite the great increase in research interest in the subject in the last decade, leaves many questions open. A sense of urgency to keep the fire of discussion burning is further highlighted not only by the fact that the problem of underage militants in twenty-first century Peru remains unresolved, but also because the social, political, and economic factors that push young people to join the ranks of armed organizations continue to exert influence over everyday life in many regions of the country (Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos). As such, using the introspective abilities of adult authors to share their stories has great potential for better understanding the motivations and ways of thinking of teenage fighters.

In keeping with the main theme of this investigation, my analysis focuses on parenthood and orphanhood in the memoirs of two selected authors. The first section of this chapter is

dedicated to the texts of Lurgio Gavilán and follows the representations of parenthood and orphanhood in his two texts, *Memorias de un soldado desconocido* (2012) and *Carta al teniente Shogún* (2019). The second one is centred around the same themes but as represented in the memoirs *Volver a correr* (2017) and *Aprendizaje de la oscuridad* (2023) authored by Carlos Serván who served as a police cadet during the initial years of the internal armed conflict in Peru. The underlying argument of this investigation is that the concept of orphanhood in narratives of youth who grew up during the conflict extends beyond the literal loss of a parent by being relived through experiences such as disappointment with institutions, marginalisation, forced migration and inherited guilt. Both literal and metaphorical orphanhood can, therefore, represent the political and social condition of many young people at the time from various points of view, including child soldiers, children of those killed extrajudicially by state forces, children of the military and children of migrants, as analysed throughout the sections of this investigation. This chapter is limited to the perspective of people who, as teenagers in the early 1980s, were involved on both sides of the conflict as fighters. What does orphanhood signify for the protagonist-narrator-authors? What is the role of biological, extended and chosen family in the involvement of young people in the conflict? In this chapter, I argue that the analysed texts highlight the importance of both intra-family dynamics and key events such as the loss of a parent for political decision-making and worldview formation among youth. To this end, I contextualise both stories in terms of the authors' backgrounds, their lifestyles and the family model in which they grew up as crucial factors that shape their attitude towards the conflict very differently. Moreover, I show that the examined texts constitute examples of how political groups and governmental institutions partially assume the function of a surrogate family for the

young people recruited into them, thus moulding a large part of the generation who grew up as teenagers during the initial phase of the conflict.

1.1. Lurgio Gavilán Sánchez

Lurgio Gavilán, an ex-member of the subversive group Sendero Luminoso, an army soldier and anthropologist from rural Ayacucho region, entered the literary stage in Peru with the publication of *Memorias de un soldado desconocido* in 2012, a text that contains recollections of his involvement in the internal armed conflict as a child soldier. Given the small number of similar accounts available in Peru in the form of published books, Gavilán's memoir has attracted the attention of researchers in various contexts through the years, including the politics of memory (Salazar Jiménez, "Escritura del yo"), post-conflict reconciliation efforts (de Vivanco, "Tres veces muertos"; Gamio Gehri), representations of political violence (de Vivanco, "Camino de morir"; Artigas), as well as gender, post-colonial and subaltern studies (Muñoz-Díaz). In the years since its publication, *Memorias* has been supplemented as well with additional commentary by the author in subsequent editions, and in 2019 Gavilán published a new perspective on the conflict period under the title of *Carta al teniente Shogún*. Both texts opened a key thread in the discussion on the role of victims, perpetrators, responsibility and memory in the post-conflict period.

A predominant theme, especially in the second text, *Carta al teniente Shogún*, becomes that of the complex dynamics between care and abandonment in times of internal armed conflict. Losing his mother at a young age, Gavilán explores the implications of this event in his life as a child and later as a young adult. However, in the broader picture of his story, suffering the loss of a parent represents only the beginning of a series of experiences that make orphanhood a recurring theme in his memoir. Consequently, in this section of the chapter, I will show that both

literal and metaphorical abandonment can be identified in Gavilán's texts, resulting from the family model in which he was raised as well as disillusionment with institutions that should have, in theory, provided the author with security and care. To do so, I will establish how the state of orphanhood the author perceives and how, based on the texts, it contributes to his life decisions and choices. Lastly, I will demonstrate the role of Gavilán's recollection of the personal trauma of a partially orphaned child soldier as a representation of the wider trauma of a marginalised group of particularly vulnerable young people involved in the internal armed conflict.

One of the most controversial issues related to the place of the family in contemporary Peruvian politics was the exposure of violations committed under the Reproductive Health and Family Planning Program between the years 1996 and 2000 which led to widespread abuse and violation of rights of thousands of women through forced sterilisations (Chaparro-Buitrago 139). However, the structure and functioning of various family models and the internal family dynamics during the period of the armed conflict remains a less-explored topic, despite the extreme importance that the theme has in literary texts referring to the period (Morales Muñoz) and non-fiction *testimonios* (Johansson). Although works of authors such as Kimberly Theidon (2004, 2022) or Joelke Boesten (2014) provide indispensable insight into the complex relations of kinship during and after the conflict, especially from the perspective of gender studies, much remains to be discovered from the point of view of literary criticism of non-fictional written narratives rather than oral testimonies produced in the twentieth and twenty-first century. In the case of Gavilán Sánchez's memoirs, Javier Muñoz-Díaz initiates a significant discussion on the familial dimension of the author's recollection, which in his texts manifests itself at the level of both the rural family in which he grew up as well as the symbolic surrogate families in the form

of Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian army (121). Building on this premise, I aim to prove that the author's experience described in the memoirs, although presented in an intimate and sentimental way, constitutes a statement concerning a larger group of children and adolescents, who, during the armed conflict, found and quickly lost symbolic surrogate families in various forms, including political and governmental organisations in which they had pinned their hopes. These organisations on both sides of the conflict, be it Sendero Luminoso or the state security forces (military and police), function for their members as an embodiment of a new family structure. At the same time, the author-narrator's departure from their ranks serves as a metaphorical return to the experience of the orphanhood.

1.1.1. Family and Kinship in the Andes

Although in the Western tradition, the process of family formation usually centres around a nuclear unit traditionally oriented towards providing security and stability based on formal and legal marriage (Kinnear 3), such a narrow definition cannot be applied to every social context and is constantly modified by the dynamic changes in the perception of families by new generations. As research shows, various culturally based factors impact them on multiple levels, both individually as well as through collective parameters such as ethnicity, nationality and regional specificities (Nuck 44). As listed by Zhukova and quoted in Bozhkova et al., criteria that mark family typology are numerous and include "composition, number of children, characteristics of role distribution and nature of interaction, social homogeneity, value orientations of the family, age, place and type of residence, professional employment of spouses, and the nature of sexual relations" (223), to mention just one set of classifiers. In view of such a variety of relationship models and given the strong influence that bonds with relatives have on

growing children, in this subsection I examine the characteristics of the ever-changing dynamics in the household of the first author, Lurgio Gavilán Sánchez, and I argue that it substantially impacts his decision for joining Sendero Luminoso.

A significant part of my analysis in this subsection relies on the text *Carta al teniente Shogún* which reveals much more about the author's family life and early orphanhood than his other writings. The fact that Lurgio Gavilán Sánchez, who currently works as an activist, anthropologist and academic, has authored not one but two autobiographical texts of a distinctively different nature is noteworthy from the point of view of various objectives the two writings could potentially fulfil. Based on this fact and taking into consideration additional commentaries and epilogues added by the author in the later editions of his books, Muñoz-Díaz suggests distinguishing two stages in his writing, dividing them chronologically (125). In the first stage, the scholar places *Memorias de un soldado desconocido*, the author's account of his involvement in the internal armed conflict. A later stage comprises an epilogue to the second edition of *Memorias* as well as a separate text, *Carta al teniente Shogún*, in which similar events are described in a non-linear manner, assuming a more sentimental tone. Although such a division is reasonable, I argue that on top of publication dates, the classification should be completed with an awareness of the differences resulting from the genre characteristics of each book and the author's purpose for each of them which are far from similar.

I suggest that at the root of this distinction lies the central concept of the classical theory of autobiography proposed by Lejeune, namely that of the autobiographical pact (22), conditions which inevitably influence all first-person writing. This type of narrative is constructed on an agreement between the author-narrator-protagonist and the reader that claims that the events depicted on the pages of the literary work are a representation of facts that took place outside the

text itself (Lejeune 22). At the same time, the pact leaves no doubt about the subjectivity and selectivity of recorded memories. Moreover, a literary product circulating in public space is undoubtedly subject to social and political mechanisms that lead to silences and concealments that result from internal or external censorship, especially if it recounts traumatic experiences (Stroińska & Cecchetto 178). Therefore, the distinctive character of Gavilán's two texts reaches beyond the chronological order in which they emerged as principally indicated by Muñoz-Díaz. From the point of view of literary criticism, *Memorias de un soldado desconocido* reveals some features of what traditionally would be classified as a *testimonio* following Beverly's widely recognised definition[1]. At the same time, the limits of the genre do not seem sufficient for the text due to its distance from the ambiguous oral-written tension present in the early testimonies that placed them on the margins of institutional literature. Gavilán, an anthropologist himself, serves as both the witness of the story and the intellectual recording it. Thematically, however, *Memorias* represents a collective account from the point of view of an individual faced with an abrupt tragedy and escalation of violence. Therefore, it possesses some traits of a testimonio while, simultaneously, remaining close to the form of a memoir following the classification of autobiographical writing by Ben Yagoda (2009). The distinction proposed by the scholar reflects the fact that a "memoir" (singular) focuses on a portion of the author's life while "memoirs" (plural) or "autobiography" covers its entirety (1). According to such a classification, *Memorias* is a memoir, focusing mainly on the period of violence in Peru. The story presented in the first text authored by Gavilán, thus, is of an ambiguous testimonial nature focused on particular roles he fulfilled during the internal armed conflict and as such develops

[1] "By testimonio I mean a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration if usually a 'life' or a significant life experience" (Beverly 43).

around the events of the conflict itself in a linear way, starting from the moment the author joins Sendero Luminoso.

On the other hand, what Muñoz-Díaz classifies as the second stage of Gavilán's writing is thematically and generically oriented towards more personal forms and contents. *Carta al teniente Shogún* follows up to a point epistolary convention, suggested first and foremost by the title itself, and includes direct references to the addressees. Although some scholars claim that *Carta* reiterates the same events as *Memorias* (Reátegui Carrillo 1), or functions as a rewriting of it (Muñoz-Díaz 121), it clearly serves as much more than that, providing insight into incidents not described before or revealing new emotions and reflections related to those already known. This is relevant from the perspective of the discussion that I undertake in this study as the duality of points of view of the same author allows for an analysis of the individual, personal experiences of parenthood and orphanhood as well as their placement in the deeper sociopolitical context of the era, in its representation of a condition of the marginalised group of young fighters.

To better understand the recurring theme of orphanhood in Gavilán's writing, I will base this part of my study on one of the chapters of the *Carta*, "Camino río abajo," in particular on the sections dedicated to the author's mother, Evarista. The text itself fits into the convention of an autobiographical letter-essay addressed to a soldier who, during one of the confrontations between Sendero Luminoso and the army, saved the author's life. The form allows the author to convey selective impressions from his childhood and youth combined with political commentary on the internal conflict. The chapter "Camino río abajo" focuses on Gavilán's early life in the agricultural community and his family relations with the selection of topics being influenced by the figure of the titular addressee. The descriptions of the everyday practices and work in the

rural area of the Ayacucho region are directed to an army *teniente* who, Gavilán assumes, is not familiar with this way of life. At the same time, the account can be viewed as a series of anecdotes that illustrate the anthropological profile of the community represented through a memoir. Between the memories of exciting moments, like finding jaguar cubs or seeing his brother leave for school in town, the author weaves in indications of technological and economic changes reaching his region and the problems they entail (*Carta* 41). Although this subject does not remain the main theme of the text, Gavilán alludes to the issue of drug trafficking linked to the construction of the airport and other negative aspects of modernity (60-61). These are valuable details as they allow the main addressee, Shogún, as well as the readers as secondary addressees insight into the conditions that led to the arrival of Shining Path in the area.

However, the prevailing theme of the initial part of the text is family life in which Gavilán's relatives are introduced as a typical rural household with parents and children working together to secure each other's well-being. His mother, Evarista, the main carer of the children, plays a crucial role in their lives as they spend most of their time together. This relationship is, nevertheless, abruptly broken by their mother's sudden illness which in a short time leads to her death. As a deeply traumatic event for the narrator, it shatters the stability of his reality and sense of security as it also marks the beginning of a life that needs to be rebuilt through a different family model. The process of death in the author's recollection becomes embedded into the cosmology of the community in which little Lurgio lives, even if he cannot immediately grasp the meaning of its various elements. The time preceding the death of the mother is filled with folkloric signs announcing the event, above all the voice of the *waqtaway* bird, which according to the *communeros* predicts death by crying "mátame, mátame" (*Carta* 43; see also Gavilán "Los mensajeros" 72). Immersed in such omens and rituals, the narrator-protagonist's recollection

conveys more than anything a helplessness resulting from his inability to grasp the concept of dying. Moreover, the adults around him also seem powerless, unable to diagnose the illness which rapidly takes his mother away through fever and increasing weakness. Although they eventually conclude that the disease must be one located in the soul, "*pacha* y *alcanzo*" (*Carta* 43), the attempts they make at curing the woman have no effect. Gavilán is actively involved in this process by saying prayers and preparing sacrifices following the example of the adults around him as the process of diagnosis and healing bears the marks of a collective one and involves neighbours and extended family.

Ultimately, they must make peace with the worst possible turn of events when the mother quietly dies. The predominant feeling experienced by the author in the face of this event is one of devastating emptiness. In an emotional description, he explains the loss that filled his heart so violently: "En ese mismo instante sentí un vacío inmenso en mi corazón, como si me arrancaran de repente los brazos, como si me lanzaran al espacio infinito" (42). One of the older brothers, Rubén, who understands the situation more consciously, becomes physically sick hearing the news: "le dio *quyqa*, un cólico fuerte en el estómago; esto sucede por alguna falta de la madre que tuvo antes" (44-45). Overall, though, younger siblings including Lurgio are not fully aware of the implications that their mother's death holds for their future. The situation is, therefore, perceived by them mostly through the filter of intuition without full comprehension more typical for mature people with longer life experience: "Papá lloraba, nosotros también, sin comprenderlo por completo" (43). By crying, they mirror the behaviour of the others, at the same time, not fully accepting or understanding the reality of being orphaned. It is the community's worldview and beliefs that secure them with tools to rationalise and accept the loss: "Pero la vida es así, todo acaba para empezar otra vez. Todos marcharemos a la tumba algún día como mamá" (43).

Equipped with such philosophy, although feeling abandoned and worried about the future within the confines of a still childish world ("¿Quién nos cantaría en las noches antes de dormir…?"), Gavilán can come to terms with the loss of his mother, make sense of it, and even see it as a learning experience that helps him appreciate the value of life (42).

However, the mother's death is not the only tragedy that touches the family but rather the beginning of rapid changes with negative consequences. Immediately afterwards, it leads to a partial loss of the father, who, out of sadness, flees into alcoholism and shows no interest in looking after the children (49). As a result, a number of caregivers, related and unrelated, emerge in the children's lives to symbolically take over the role of the mother and extend the boundaries of the nuclear family. This family model is consistent with the key findings from the research of Jessaca Leinaweaver who in the book *The Circulation of Children* (2008) describes the specific mechanisms of non-formal adoption and care that have been present in Andean communities for centuries. As the author points out, it is not unusual for children in rural *aldeas* to be brought up by various family units, and to live in multiple households, not necessarily through a legal adoption but rather based on social customs that could potentially be traced back historically to pre-Columbian times (5). According to Leinaweaver, the practice of informal foster care was in recent years particularly pronounced during the internal conflict when thousands of people were killed or displaced, resulting in a disproportional number of children being orphaned or abandoned (26). However, the act of taking care of children without a formal adoption process, only based on "ties of affection, residence, responsibility, and kinship" (Leinaweaver 2) is deeply embedded in the social reality of the Andes and, as the scholar further asserts, "many impoverished Peruvians rely on such connections both for sheer survival and as they strive for social and economic mobility" (2). In the case of young Lurgio's partially orphaned family,

firstly, it is his older brother who takes over the responsibilities of the mother. However, as this does not prove sufficient for survival in the harsh reality of the agricultural community, the father seeks a woman, a widow, to take over the typical mother duties in the household. In line with Leinaweaver's observations about the connections being established for the reason of "sheer survival," the arrival of the stepmother is not presented as a means to provide for the children's emotional needs, but rather necessary to carry on with farming: "Las mujeres ponían la semilla en la tierra, mientras el varón araba, y si no era de ese modo a veces la cosecha se perdía con la helada o la sequía que azotaba aquellos lares" (*Carta* 49). By bringing the widow and her offspring into his home, the father builds a patchwork family through an immediate process. From one day to the next, two groups that are strangers to each other are merged into a new unit that performs the same functions as the biological family. In this form, however, the newly formed household does not last long which leads to yet another reorganisation of the relations. Gavilán reports that due to never-ending arguments and domestic violence the stepmother and her children leave them. In the following months, Lurgio is taken care of by other relatives including older siblings and a sister-in-law until finally he is accepted in the house of yet another relative, his uncle, on whose farm he starts working.

A pattern emerges which further illustrates the mechanism of circulation of children between family members who alternate in caring for them in more than one household based on current economic and social needs, seen as both an opportunity and investment (Leinaweaver 83). At the same time, some relationships are stronger than others in terms of affect as in the case of Lurgio and his older brother, Rubén, whom he calls "nuestra madre" (*Carta* 51, 57). These affective ties play a central role in the boy's decision to join Sendero Luminoso at the age of twelve. Rubén, while he lives in the family home, takes care of daily chores such as laundry and

cooking, but also pays attention to his younger siblings. Although "ya no estaba mamá para quemar *champas* y tostar la papa," young Gavilán considers Rubén to be the one capable of filling this gap to some extent: "Rubén comenzó a reemplazarla" (49). At this point of the narrative, nothing is known directly about the political views of the older brother or his influence on his younger siblings in that matter apart from the fact that in the past he studied in Ayacucho and therefore was able to experience a reality that seemed for Lurgio radically different from that of his own *aldea* (56). Equally unclear is how he was recruited into the party as Gavilán's report on the subject boils down to a brief statement: "Y se fue" (57). This event, however laconically it may be described, has powerful consequences for the narrator's subsequent fate as from that moment on he begins a relentless search for his brother.

The decisive and formative incident in the boy's life at the time, therefore, involves another loss of a close relative. It is characterised, above all, by its suddenness and unexpectedness, which once again disturbs the otherwise cyclical rural life. Although Rubén's visits to the town were no surprise to Lurgio, his failure to return causes prolonged suffering due to the impossibility of finding out about his brother's fate:

> Esperamos un día, una semana, un año. Y no volvió. Preguntaba a la gente en el camino: "¿Han visto a mi hermano? ¿Conocen a Rubén, el que se fue a la guerra?" "No, joven, no conocemos." Un día me dijeron "allá está," y caminé montañas y valles para encontrarlo. Allí estaba entre el abra de la cordillera en una vida miserable, metido en una lucha utópica de la justicia social. Era muy joven. (57)

This feeling is so strong that it not only spurs Lurgio to inquire about him at every possible opportunity, but also ultimately leads him to follow in his footsteps and, consequently, join Sendero Luminoso. Based on the relentless search for his brother and Lurgio's attachment to

him, the reasons of this decision can be found in the strong bond between the two brothers, as well as Rubén's nurturing role in the lives of his younger siblings.

All things considered, the view of the author-narrator on parenthood, rooted in his early childhood, exhibits more dimensions than just the conventional relationship between biological parents and offspring. It manifests itself in the vocabulary he employs to describe the range of carers who nurture and protect him and his younger siblings after his mother's death. In the short period directly after being orphaned, he refers to multiple different people, related and unrelated by blood, as "nuestra madre." The list includes a widow who lived with the family for some time (49), an older brother (51) and a sister-in-law (57). These changes largely confirm the existence of a family model in Gavilán's life story in which it is natural for children to circulate informally between households according to economic conditions and unwritten agreements. On close analysis, the boundaries of a nuclear family appear as blurred in the case of Gavilán's community and, as a result, this phenomenon allows him to form alternative definitions of parenthood. This outlook, originating in the author's orphanhood, leads to the family model which is dynamic and can be reconfigured based on immediate needs to include relatives and non-relatives who cooperate for survival. The experience of orphanhood becomes therefore central to the author's understanding of the limits and liminal spaces of kinship and shapes the way he forms relationships with others.

1.1.2. Kinship and Relationships in Sendero Luminoso

After the death of his mother, the arrival of Sendero Luminoso in the area constitutes another in a series of events that divide the young man's life into "before" and "after." The narrative of *Carta al teniente Shogún* provides some insight into the events that led to Gavilán's decision to join the

party in the armed fight which has been signalled initially in the previous subsection of this chapter. On the other hand, *Memorias de un soldado desconocido* develops a fascinating tale of the time the adolescent spent in the ranks of Sendero. In the next paragraphs, I will focus on the way the author presents the influence of the organisation on his adolescent years and his vivid description of everyday life in the Shining Path. Analysis of this material will allow me to demonstrate that members of Sendero Luminoso initially assumed, in the author's eyes, the function of his surrogate family. I will also show that, in the subsequent years of his membership in the organisation, Gavilán experienced a gradual increase in the feeling of abandonment, which can be described as a metaphorical orphaning by the group in which he had placed his hopes, linking his experience with a wider phenomenon of marginalisation within the structures of Sendero Luminoso. These hierarchical relations of power proposed by Degregori (1991) indicate that the illusory promise of equality and fraternity presented by Sendero became quickly verified as false due to the pyramid scheme of the ranks.

First and foremost, it is important to highlight that Gavilán's joining Sendero Luminoso, as indicated before, is not strictly directed by the political message of the group. Scholar Fritz Stefan Culp calls the author's decision to walk to a Sendero camp with an older friend, Raúl, ambiguous based on the information available in *Memorias*, classifying the entire text as a "construcción de censuras propias" (62). This interpretation is in line with the unavoidable mechanism of selective representation of events in autobiographical writing mentioned earlier in this investigation. Conversely, what Culp refers to as "las páginas más nublosas" (63), the first pages of *Memorias*, becomes elaborated more plainly in Gavilán's later text, *Carta al teniente Shogún*. While the former provides an evasive statement instead of a description of the author-narrator's decision-making process (*Memorias* 40), the latter elaborates on it in relation to the

love and bond that unites Lurgio and his older brother Rubén: “Nunca como ese día quise tanto a mi hermano. Tal vez por eso siempre estuve tras las huellas de él, hasta que desapareció una tarde, fulminando por una granada de guerra” (*Carta* 56). A twelve-year-old boy, consequently, shows interest not as much in Sendero itself as he does in taking on the task of finding his brother. This is consistent with the research of Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos (2010) which points out that a significant group of child soldiers in Peru were either orphans or brought to receive military training in the regions under Sendero Luminoso’s control by their family members (17). It would be, therefore, a mistake to overestimate the power of the call for social justice without taking into consideration the bond between the boy and his older brother and his intention to reunite with him in the ranks of Sendero.

Unlike the experiences of children forcefully recruited to be soldiers, Gavilán’s initial encounters with the members of the subversive group are not yet as traumatic as they become with time. He recounts in *Memorias* the first lessons that he learns from Rubén’s friend on the way to the meeting with other guerrillas. Raúl’s advice is focused not on the party’s ideology per se, but rather on customs and commendable attitudes within the group. The boy hears about the right behaviour towards *campesinos*, sleeping and eating habits of the unit and chooses his *nom de guerre* – an act which marks symbolically and linguistically the change from civil life to becoming a guerrilla (*Memorias* 43). Everyday practices, eating, sleeping and patrolling the area together, are aimed at the creation of a collective out of teenage soldiers. The main principle that guides the group, at least theoretically, is that of equality which does not recognise sex or age differences as long as a person is physically able to fight for the cause: “Formar parte del ejército rojo era como la frase popular: no hay edad para el amor, no había impedimento de edad y sexo para luchar por la justicia social” (45). This quote encapsulates the essence of the position and

treatment that underaged soldiers receive in the guerrilla and it also contrasts sharply with the commonly accepted view of the duty of society to care for children. It might be also read as a promise of brotherhood, an assurance especially enticing for a child who has been orphaned and then left behind by his own brother whom he considered his guardian. Of course, the idea of an army in which neither age nor gender constitute limits to participation in the social justice fight reveals itself to be a complete fabrication and Gavilán's narrative indicates how emotionally and politically ill-equipped child soldiers are to participate in the struggle. They do not know how to provide for themselves, especially in harsh circumstances of war, and do not receive much help from their superiors. As a result, they patrol the mountainous area constantly hungry and cold. Equally predictable is the reaction of the *campesinos* when they come across child soldiers who try to represent the interests of the party. Gavilán recollects their resistance and even ridicule which comes as a harsh blow to the narrator when he visits the community of Tinka. While trying to negotiate supplies, he is met with backbiting and complaints: "Cómo era posible que envíen a un niño, deben enviar a personas más grandes" (75). Despite the party's declarations of equality for all, regardless of age, this view is not shared or understood by local communities who notice the absurdity of similar treatment of children.

Taking common sense into account, child soldiers in Sendero's service not only lack the life experience to assume the role of fighters for social justice, but they also do not receive a chance for an adequate political education. Although attempts are made in the base to read Marx's or Mao's texts aloud, they have practically no effect on young people, who do not understand a word of them. The education should theoretically strengthen the ideological bond between members and help them sustain the common goal. However, as Gavilán explains, the lack of understanding prevents children from learning the very principles they are meant to

defend: “Yo y otros niños ni entendíamos lo que leían, solo veíamos letras rojas con dibujos del presidente Gonzalo” (49). Thus all the education they receive amounts to learning common slogans and communist songs by heart in support of the struggle “por ese ideal futuro sin explotados ni explotadores, donde podríamos caminar convencidos de que la lucha era el primer paso para obtener un mundo de justicia social sin colores de banderas ni fronteras” (*Carta* 20). However, as Gavilán continues to report, when faced with potential death, the utopia collapses leading him to a surprising epiphany that puts into perspective all the absorbed propaganda: “Pero luego fue mejor la respuesta del silencio: saber que vivo en un mundo de mierda y existo para regar la sangre de la revolución” (20). This realisation shows that, despite indoctrination, the author-narrator can perceive, if only for a moment, the futility of his sacrifice which shatters any the previous vision of Sendero as an organisation with noble intentions.

What the text does, then, is open a wider perspective on the specific position of those who joined, especially the youngest ones, and the fact that many of them were inexperienced and deprived of guidance and proper preparation for political decision-making or even the legal right to participate in such process from the point of view of the state laws. As Gavilán points out, Sendero’s recruiters were targeting schoolchildren who, under any other circumstances, could not engage in any type of fight, political or armed, because of their age. According to the final report of Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, documents such as *Protocolo Facultativo II a los Convenios de Ginebra de 1977* or article 38 of *Convención sobre los Derechos del niño* require that every individual younger than fifteen should be particularly protected from the consequences of an armed conflict (CVR 588). This did not stop organisations like Sendero Luminoso from recruiting, forcefully or voluntarily, even younger children (CVR 593). A practical reason for this practice exists and, although it might seem counterintuitive at first,

research shows that children as soldiers demonstrate exceptional potential in the eyes of some radical organisations. Such value might be linked, among others, to a child's willingness to follow orders without hesitation and inability to fully understand the difference between right and wrong, hence, their tendency to be more easily persuaded to perform tasks that an adult would find morally questionable (Becker 188). Certainly, an instance of such control over children and youth behaviour can be found in Gavilán's *Carta* when he describes the rituals of criticism and self-criticism within the party.

Although, as already established, child soldiers do not fully understand the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology and do not have a chance to really learn it, they are not excused from participating in rituals of criticism and self-criticism meant to eradicate behaviours that go against the PCP's expectations (*Memorias* 83). Young Sendero members, like adults, are subject to a cruel system of punishments, which is largely fuelled by denunciation and slander. It rather lightly sentences anyone to death for a variety of offenses: from appropriating parts of the provisions due to constant hunger to falling asleep on duty, following the cardinal rule that "Para el partido no existía perdón" (65). Gavilán dedicates some blood-curdling paragraphs to the way *compañeros* considered traitors were executed by party members during communal sentencings (64-69), supported by an equally horrifying illustration by Edilberto Jiménez (67). Gavilán admits his own participation in these events, showing the distancing and mental separation necessary to engage to complete such tasks: "Ajenos al dolor humano de los compañeros presos, jalábamos de la soga cuando inútilmente intentaban escapar" (*Carta* 66). Although, as Artigas points out, the language used by the author in this passage distances him from responsibility for the acts concerning the executions and presents the story as a collective rather than a personal experience (105), there is no doubt that he admits his participation in them.

The attitude of both the narrator and others and their lack of protest against the atrocities taking place show the effectiveness of Sendero's intimidation methods – submit or die like them. The heartless violence that the author observes among his comrades, even if it takes place as a part of "cleansing" show trials, leads to a cognitive dissonance between the noble cause based on the utopia of brotherhood he is told to be defending, and the ruthless practices that Sendero considers necessary to achieve promised justice. Despite this, fear and a sense of entrapment cause Gavilán, like other teenage soldiers, to devote himself completely to revolutionary activities, ready to die shouting Marxist slogans.

In the end, the author not only does not find the promised brotherhood and the surrogate family within the Sendero but also sees for himself how revolution devours its children. The phrase coined by Mallet du Pan concerning the French Revolution has, however, an even more sinister dimension in the case of Sendero Luminoso's practices as literal children are being sacrificed in the name of the people's war. It is clear from the narrative of *Memorias* that the supposed fight for justice and equality is marked by discrimination and maltreatment of rural youth. Gavilán's observations are consistent with Carlos Iván Degregori's theory that the party structure duplicated the oppressive colonial logic in which provincial Quechua-speaking young people are mere statistics while the better-educated, Spanish-speaking low-level leaders are enticed by the power that gives them the position of their superiors. At the same time, however, they still hold a barely subaltern place against the organisation's higher-ups, with Abimael Guzmán at the top (Degregori, "Ayacucho 1980-1983" 21). Consequently, Gavilán says, the life of Andean teenagers and children in the ranks of Sendero inevitably intertwines with images of death, destruction and mistreatment, both experienced and caused:

> Nosotros éramos chicos aún y ya observamos los primeros incendios de las casas, vimos las primeras cabezas decapitadas y el río de sangre que quería ver el presidente Gonzalo mientras esparcía su revolución (…) Se nos fue corriente la presencia de muertos, de heridos, de piernas buscando su brazo, de cabezas buscando su antebrazo, de tórax reuniendo las costillas. (*Carta* 16)

This statement, which under everyday circumstances should be considered highly disturbing, serves as just one of many illustrations of the fact that the proximity of death and the bloodbath of the armed conflict became normalised among children and teenagers. An organisation that was supposed to deliver them justice ultimately showed no interest in fighting for their well-being, education, health or even survival supported by "the political discourse of Shining Path, whose classist vision is rationally absolutist, [which] constructed the militants and the 'masses' as fighters joined together in the service of the revolution, whose only will was to kill or to die for the party" (Del Pino 159). Part of this discourse and one of the great failures of the party turns out to be the attempt to break down the normal family and peer relationships and replace them with seemingly egalitarian camaraderie. As Del Pino states further in his analysis of family within the group, Sendero ultimately was not able to provide the most basic social needs and find a sufficient replacement for the regular affective ties (160). This results, as Gavilán's memoir illustrates, not only in the separation from biological or surrogate family and carers but also in the eventual abandonment of the young people by Sendero, a metaphorical orphanhood resulting from the lack of guidance, education, basic needs and affect.

The stark contrast between the promises of the egalitarian world made by the senior members of Sendero and the discrimination, abandonment and violence that the young recruits suffer becomes clear as Gavilán's story unfolds. As a result of this imbalance and the clear

marginalisation of child soldiers, despite initial assurances of equality, they undeniably serve mainly as cannon fodder in the conflict. With the loss of hopes initially related to Sendero, the author experiences orphanhood again by losing the illusion of protection from older comrades until he falls under the wing of the Peruvian army. In the ranks of the guerrilla, he loses his beloved brother, who served as his carer before going to war, as well as his best friend and first love, Rosaura. These disappearances bring him a feeling of emptiness and loneliness similar to that endured after the death of his mother (*Memorias* 98-99). As every armed conflict involves losses, it also entails the construction of substitute affective relationships to replace those destroyed. In the case of Sendero Luminoso, for the author, this process ends in disillusionment, as he does not find in its ranks the satisfaction of his needs, either physical or emotional.

1.1.3. Parenthood and Orphanhood in the Peruvian Army

The image of the family facing the need to survive in difficult conditions not only illustrates the specific functions of this group in the mountainous Ayacucho region but also blurs the boundaries between immediate, extended and patchwork families. As a result, the dynamics between relatives, in-laws and step-relatives cannot be encapsulated within the conventional definition of a nuclear family unit. This background is an important factor in the author's decision to join Sendero Luminoso. On the other hand, I argue that it continues to influence the protagonist further when he is conscripted into the army. In contrast to joining Sendero, changing sides in the conflict is not voluntary in Gavilán's case but rather he perceives it as the only way to survive a little longer in the cruel reality of the internal conflict. Nevertheless, I propose that the author's familial background and his early orphanhood are principal factors that determine the way he forms new relationships in the military. In this subsection, I will focus on the father

figure role assumed by the soldier who saved Lurgio, and the other officers who helped him adapt to the military life, as well as his new "brothers," other young soldiers. Moreover, I argue that the publication of Gavilán's story constitutes a landmark step in the process of voicing the stories of the youngest soldiers which, due to their traumatic dimension, are rarely mentioned even within their own families and communities. Therefore, Gavilán's memoirs represent an individual as well as a collective experience of a generation affected by symbolic orphanhood.

Due to this part being centred around memories from the point of view of a soldier, to begin with, it is necessary to review the sources claiming to be comprehensive representations of the army's involvement in the internal armed conflict. Most notably, a report *En honor a la verdad* (2010) compiled by Comisión Permanente de Historia del Ejército de Perú, gained recognition as the official voice of the security forces in the debate about their participation, role and responsibility in the countersubversive fight. The authors of this work set themselves the ambitious goal to "abarcar la totalidad de sus actores, el largo período de conflicto, los ámbitos territoriales y a los dos enemigos del país [Sendero Luminoso y MRTA]" (Comisión Permanente de Historia del Ejército de Perú 8). However, such a total approach has proved insufficient and far from definitive, as indicated, among others, by Cynthia Milton (*Conflicted Memory*). The scholar draws attention to the lack of uniformity in the military narrative and the oversimplification of the complex mechanisms of violence and discrimination experienced by some young, low-ranking soldiers (Milton, *Conflicted Memory* 21)[2]. This issue is further complicated by reports of possible threats and blackmail that may have stopped some servicemen from publicly recounting human rights violations which they witnessed (Milton, *Conflicted*

[2] According to the University of Victoria's biographical info, Cynthia Milton's newest book about the military memory of the conflict titled *How the Military Remembers: Countermemories and Challenges to Human Rights in Latin America* is currently under consideration by the University of Wisconsin Press. The text aims at further closing the gap in the understanding of the soldiers' perspective on the history of Peru in the 1980s and 1990s.

Memory 21-22). Such recollections stand in direct opposition to the narrative proclaiming that the wrongdoings of security institutions such as the military and the police have their roots in individual cases of corruption and misconduct of a few of the highest leaders. They also lead to the conclusion that alternative points of view, provided by the low-rank soldiers themselves, are deeply needed to complete the picture of the conflict from the perspective of the government.

The situation of Gavilán's survival, his absorption into a military base and his incorporation into the army are crucial to understanding the subsequent dilemmas that would not only shake his emotional state as a teenager but, according to the text, persist for years to come, including the moment in which he writes his memoirs. The unexpected survival of the narrator in the middle of the armed confrontation happens at the same time as the death of his closest companion, Rosaura, who is shot by soldiers of the unit that saves Gavilán. In *Carta*, the problem presented by this circumstance is repeatedly the subject of the author's reflections, as he seeks to resolve the internal conflict between gratitude towards the *teniente* and hatred towards him as contributing to Rosaura's death. "¿Cómo puedo quererte, como te quiero, mi teniente, si mataste mi amor?" (*Carta* 25), he asks a seemingly rhetorical question. However, the answer becomes clear in the next paragraph with an explanation of how he came to terms with such paradoxical emotions: "Y ya ni sé si importa quién mató a mi Rosaura, si el hecho es que todos sabemos que fue el Ejército el que sembró el rencor hecho fuego sobre ese cuerpo de vida femenina" (25). It can be, therefore, concluded that Gavilán copes with the trauma he has experienced by rationalising the situation by separating the institution and the individuals. The army as a faceless organisation is responsible for the death of his companion and thousands of others; at the same time, his rescue is the responsibility of an individual decision of a single man who, although belongs to the same institution, makes an independent call possibly based on

universal human emotions such as compassion. In this way, the author creates a vision in which Shogún personifies the good, protective soldier/father while omitting or censoring all the circumstances that could suggest that the reader should perceive him differently. This way of thinking allows Gavilán to survive his time in the army, but also to enjoy the rest of his life with gratitude (68).

Despite these efforts, the role of *teniente* Shogún as a father figure inevitably presents multiple issues for the author-narrator as well as for the reader, provoking cognitive dissonance. By sparing his life and providing further support to young Lurgio, Shogún is presented in the text, in Muñoz-Díaz's words, as a "modelo de masculinidad, paternidad y principio guía para el objetivo del memorialista de recuperar la dimensión familiar" and as an "emblema de una práctica humanitaria y democratizadora" (111). It is therefore impossible to ignore the role of Shogún as not only a physical protector who saves the boy from death and prevents him from being abused by other soldiers, but also yet another solution to his recurring position of orphanhood. The scholar indicates, however, that the character of Shogún in Gavilán's recollection is a model of masculinity that reproduces colonial logic through the author's racialised, subaltern position in relation to the officer (Muñoz-Díaz 115). However, noteworthy is the fact that the dynamic between children and those who care for them, whether biological parents or not, is inherently endowed with a dimension of obedience and control. Therefore, factors like race, ethnicity, language spoken or gender, although not without a meaning, coexist in those relationships with the power imbalance arising from factors such as age difference or life experience and resulting in parental authority. This feature of a father-son relationship, even if the one between teenage Lurgio and *teniente* Shogún is not a conventional instance of such a bond, cannot be dismissed when describing Gavilán's position of subalternity, additionally

highlighted by the army's structure within which the boy holds a much lower rank than his mentor.

The care that Shogún provides for the boy can be contrasted with the abandonment and neglect he experienced earlier in the ranks of Sendero Luminoso. The protection goes beyond the obligatory minimum, which an anecdote quoted by Gavilán illustrates:

> Las veces que me llevaste a la escuela en la pequeña ciudad en San Miguel, ese mágico pueblo que reposa al fondo de una fresca quebrada bañada por un río que canta por las tardes cuando las hojas de los nogales besan sus aguas. ¿Recuerdas cuando caminábamos por el mercado buscando calcetines? La señora comerciante nos dijo: "Estos le quedan a su hijo, son de buena calidad." Abriste la billetera y pagaste por los calcetines blancos; después tomamos jugo de papaya y regresamos a la base militar instalada en la escuela de varones. Toda aquella convivencia está grabada en mi ser y me sostiene para vivir tu ausencia. Y sin embargo nunca he dejado de pensar, ni aun hoy, viendo dormir a mi hija, en dónde estarás, mi teniente. (*Carta* 13)

Being taken to school, receiving good-quality socks, and drinking papaya juice together are clear indications in the narrative that point towards the parental nature of the relationship between the two. Moreover, Gavilán does not ignore the moment of being recognised by the seller as Shogún's son, an outside perspective that confirms that he could have indeed been seen as his biological offspring. Continuing this narrative into the current time, the author draws attention to the link between Shogún and the fact that he himself is a father at the time of writing, suggesting the influence of *teniente*'s care on his approach to fatherhood. This should not come as a surprise if we consider the rather weak presence of earlier father figures that appeared in Lurgio's life, particularly after his mother's death. He always introduces them in the context of absence or

disappearance – the biological father does not seem to play a key role in his upbringing, the older brother disappears one day without a word despite the love they have for each other and Sendero leaders leave child soldiers to themselves, without even providing for their basic daily needs. Meanwhile, Shogún occupies a glorified position in the narrative. This is particularly compelling, given the fact that he too eventually abandons Lurgio when he leaves the troop without any information about his further plans.

The reason for the glorification of Shogún despite his disappearance remains unresolved in the text. I propose one possible explanation linked to the feeling of gratitude for saving him, Gavilán mentions multiple times that he owes the life he lives now to the anonymous soldier, calling it "la vida que me regalaste" (116). At the same time, Shogún's attitude is not unique. The author mentions that many child soldiers of Sendero were conscripted into the army, some of them receiving an education, like Gavilán, and some even being adopted by officers. These occurences were, according to the author, so widespread that "dejar de vivir a los supuestos monstruos se convirtió en una política de vida para la mayoría de los jefes militares que me tocó conocer mientras estuve en la base militar" (88). The author's recollections of his time at the military base are thus characterised by a certain contradiction. On the one hand, he presents a highly positive attitude of some superiors caring for young ex-partisans, including their adoption. On the other hand, however, he mentions that immediately after his capture he expected to be tortured and killed by soldiers and did not hope to survive long in the camp. Even after his incorporation into the army, he faced insults, discrimination and death threats because of his past and his ethnic background. In the end, Gavilán does not paint a black-and-white vision of the soldiers, neither as crystal clear heroes nor as monsters, but rather a spectrum of attitudes based on individual personalities and external pressures.

Although *Carta al teniente Shogún* is addressed to his army "father" and mentor in an attempt to find him, its purpose should be regarded as much wider than that. Gavilán recognises the two-fold goal of the written recollection when he directs the following words to the anonymous *teniente*: "Tal vez nunca podrás leer esta carta, pero la escribo igual para contarte sobre mi familia y mi comunidad, para que los conozcas. Quizá, al contarte, también yo pueda conocerme mejor" (29). The letter is, therefore, both an attempt to reestablish the lost connection with "el padre que nació en guerra" (93) and an exercise in self-reflection. However, it becomes more than an individual perspective, as it transmits the condition of other teenage soldiers, whom the author calls his "hermanos de guerra" (103). In this context, the phrases "tus soldados" and "tus hijos" (103) used to describe Shogún's subordinates take on a synonymous meaning. The boundaries between the unit and family are blurred to the point where, in the eyes of the author and his companions, they become intertwined. United by common experience, their relationship appears as equal to blood ties. Such a strong connection between the members of a military unit is explained in the recent study by Boesten and Gavilán about the lived experience that becomes inexpressible outside the trusted group:

> (…) el afecto entre "promos" es esencial para reconstruir la vida afectiva y familiar en el periodo posconflicto. Proporciona apoyo emocional y económico, y redes para desarrollar proyectos comunales e incluso políticos. Este afecto se basa en lo vivido en los años de violencia, incluyendo la tensión inherente a los mensajes sobre su papel como soldados y hombres, los sentimientos de culpa y/o heroísmo, las memorias traumáticas relacionadas con los abusos cometidos y/o recibidos, y la imposibilidad de compartir la mayoría de estas experiencias con sus familias, con sus comunidades y con el conjunto de la Sociedad. (23)

In the same study, the authors provide examples of such silence towards the families and communities as well as the interviewers compiling the testimonies of ex-soldiers (Boesten & Gavilán 44). The impossibility of sharing the memories with outsiders and the limitations of the language itself is compensated by the development of a deep, brotherly-like bond between soldiers. However, even in this environment, the relationships between young boys are not homogeneous and often are marked by racial or linguistic prejudice. Gavilán mentions a situation when his life was threatened because of a fight with another soldier who repeatedly insulted him by calling him "terruquito" (*Carta* 14). The brotherly character of some relationships in the army is, therefore, marked on the other hand by the mechanisms of discrimination and violence.

Gavilán, who as an anthropologist is also a co-author of the study *Perros y promos* (2022), admits to struggling with the idea of sharing his experience with others as recorded on the last pages of *Carta al teniente Shogún*. However, in his own words, it is the entrance into the academic world that helps him decipher the way to break the silence and go forward with publishing his stories. He recalls a vast list of intellectuals who read the manuscript and with whom, he says, "empecé a dejar el mundo de silencio" (*Carta* 89). By joining the discussion on the conflict and post-conflict reality of Peru the author assumes the role of the one who gives a voice to others in a similar position, breaking the silence by attempting to articulate memories that seem to be outside the capabilities of language's power to represent lived events (98).

Having established that for Gavilán Sánchez the definition of family, especially after the loss of his mother, assumes flexible forms depending on circumstances, it can be summarised that the experience of orphanhood is central in the boy's upbringing. He seeks family relationships not only with his relatives but also by building connections not based on blood ties,

in Sendero Luminoso and the army. In both cases, these efforts end in abandonment – in Sendero it is the attitude of the leaders towards child soldiers who are left on their own without even their basic needs covered, while in the army the re-orphaning results from the disappearance of his "teniente-padre," Shogún. Radically different, however, is the author's attitude when narrating both positions. While he remains critical of his experience in Sendero, he does not shy away from glorifying Shogún as the father who not only provided him with all the necessities and education but also saved his life. At the same time, the individual life story of Lurgio Gavilán becomes the voice of a collective when he identifies other child soldiers as having followed a similar path, a testimony to the cruelty of Sendero's leaders and the military officers' grace. However, this dichotomy is not free of internal contradictions and anecdotes that disrupt any attempts at limiting its nature to a binary case, showing both violence and humanity as present on both sides of the internal armed conflict.

1.2.Carlos Serván

The diversity of the experience of the conflict results, among other things, from the great contrast between the inhabitants of Lima, who in its initial phase were not affected to the same extent by the direct attacks of Sendero Luminoso and the *comuneros* living in the rural areas which became the early target of terror by guerrilla units as described in the writing of Lurgio Gavilán. The author whose texts are analysed in this section, Carlos Serván, despite his migrant background, describes his involvement in the conflict from the point of view of a teenager raised in Lima, living in a nuclear family and with a distinct education and political background to that of Gavilán. Despite all the differences between the two authors, I argue that the familial environment, including being orphaned, as well as social and economic circumstances related to

the family dynamics, play a fundamental role in the writings of both authors and as key factors in their participation in the armed conflict and creation of a surrogate family within the institution to which they belonged.

First and foremost, it is important to contextualise Serván's writing as the author, lawyer and activist currently lives in the United States and he writes primarily in Spanish. Nevertheless, his first autobiographical text *Volver a correr* (2017) was published in both Spanish and English. It needs to be recognised therefore that his recollection is impacted by different cultural influences than Gavilán's. The main focus of Carlos Serván's narratives builds around his disability and emigration from Peru to the United States after losing his sight and right arm in an accident during training at the Escuela de la Policía de Investigaciones del Perú (EO-PIP) in Lima at the beginning of 1980s, in the climax of the government's war on terrorism (*Aprendizaje* 87). The author himself in the presentation of his book highlights not its political dimension but the message of hope that it brings and the possibility for everyone to identify with the positive outcome of his struggle as a disabled immigrant in the United States ("Carlos nos habla de su autobiografía *Volver a correr*"). This declaration is in line with Serván's activism. It also can be placed in a trend, seen in recent years, especially in the USA, of the increasing popularity of writing motivational texts by authors with a military background. In 2014 the famous commencement address for the University of Texas at Austin delivered by Admiral McRaven went viral, reaching tens of millions of views on YouTube ("Admiral McRaven Leaves the Audience Speechless"), later published in an extended version as *Make Your Bed* (2017). Other ex-military members publish their stories in a similarly syncretic form that mixes the autobiographical and the motivational, advising on personal development and leadership, often combined with other forms of media presence like online interviews, podcasts

or YouTube channels. What these positions have in common is their purposeful usage of autobiographical context and elements of memoir to promote content that is usually related to the author's extratextual activities as trainers or personal development and leadership coaches with a grain of political commentary. To an extent, Serván aligns with this type of narrative, while simultaneously remaining part of the memory boom in Peruvian literature.

Although much has been written on the topic of military memoirs worldwide, Peruvian literary studies experience a lack of critical analysis dedicated to the genre in the context of the internal armed conflict, as well as the scarcity of primary material. Texts of this kind exist, mainly authored by the higher-up leaders of the military, an example of which could be *Ayacucho: testimonio de un soldado* (1989) by General Roberto C. Noel Moral, however, their objective is usually based on the self-serving defence of the authors' good name (Starn 213). Therefore, *Volver a correr* (2017) and *Aprendizaje de la oscuridad* (2023) are not only fascinating for their insight into the daily lives of the students of EO-PIP, but also for the view of the conflict from the perspective of a ranking cadet rather than a military leader who, moreover, represents the urban youth. In his groundbreaking study, *La ciudad acorralada* (2017), Dynnik Asencios analyses the reasons why Lima's young population, especially that of migrant background, was persuaded by Sendero Luminoso's message to join the organisation in the second phase of the conflict in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, to complete the picture of urban youth, it is also worth analysing why some of them decided to fight in the armed conflict as a part of the state apparatus. To achieve this goal, a reading of a first-person non-fiction narrative from the first phase of the conflict proves to be beneficial. Serván is one of the representatives of this period and, as a police cadet, he includes in his account information about his own motivations and socio-economic situation as well as those of his colleagues. Despite his

migrant background, he represents an attitude that contrasts with that of the young people recruited by Sendero Luminoso and examined by Asencios, as he expresses a deep conviction for the correctness of governmental intervention and the need to quickly neutralise subversive organisations with a concurrent investment of high hopes in the opportunities for social advancement afforded by joining a prestigious police unit. The importance of Asencios's study of Sendero lies in the empirical material, interviews with the interested parties themselves and oral history, which, as the author himself emphasises, are missing as basic sources in multiple other investigations of the topic (16). We encounter a similar problem in the case of the few first-person accounts of young soldiers, policemen and cadets. Therefore, Serván's text has the potential to be a valuable source of knowledge about the 1980s students of military and police academies who were trained directly for counterterrorism.

However, apart from its informative function, I claim that Serván's memoirs transmit details about the influence of the environment on a young person's worldview. Two incarnations of the family deserve special attention in his case, as they lead to two distinct positions of orphanhood. The first one, literal, is that of a nuclear migrant family living in Lima. The second, metaphorical, is confined within the walls of the institution of Policía de Investigaciones del Perú. I claim that in it the author gains new relationships of kinship through armed brotherhood and this process coincides with his state of youth, an intermediate phase between childhood and adulthood, crucial for character development. As in the case of the previous author, Serván also experiences the loss of a parent, although it occurs at a different point in his life and has a distinct impact on him. It is his relationship with the institution to which he devotes his life that once again becomes the key topic of the memoirs, at the same time leading to tragedy in the form

of a serious accident suffered by the author-narrator and disillusion resulting from the lack of support from the state which can be compared to metaphorical orphanhood.

1.2.1. Nuclear Family

Serván describes his early childhood in the memoir *Aprendizaje de la oscuridad* (2023) which serves as the background for his later education in the detective school. Contrary to Gavilán's, Serván's early life is closer to modern Western stereotypes, in a family consisting of parents and siblings. Serván begins his story by explaining that his parents came from a rural area and emigrated to Lima where he, his brothers and sisters were brought up. Additionally, he points out that his family members, including a brother and an uncle, were involved in Peruvian security forces before him so he already possesses some degree of understanding of military life as a child. I suggest that these circumstances, along with encouragement from his parents, are crucial in his decision to choose a military career as they help him develop trust and admiration for the state security forces. As family storytelling has been proven to serve as a successful method of building a shared identity with relatives and dealing with trauma (Kiser 243), I argue that through the story of his origins, the author explains to the reader, as well as in a form of an auto-reflexive exercise, the values he considers essential, his world view, and he paints the background to his success despite adversity.

Internal migration in Peru, as an important and intense process that occurred throughout the twentieth century, for decades has attracted the interest of scholars analysing urbanisation processes in the country (Alers et al.; Matos Mar) and remains the subject of studies at the current time (Yamada). Apart from its crucial role in the formation of socio-economic and political phenomena unique to the country, the movement from rural areas to cities is also of great significance in literary and cultural studies, including the works of such renowned Peruvian

authors as César Vallejo, José María Arguedas or Mario Vargas Llosa (García Liendo). The theme of migration, although not central to Serván's story and analysed with more details in the third chapter of this dissertation, serves as a starting point in charting the trajectory of his family's development and social progress. About this initial part of his life the reader learns that by the time he was born, his parents lived in a modest house in one of the multiple migrant neighbourhoods in Lima described as a "pueblo joven, lleno de polvo y sin agua potable" (*Aprendizaje* 5). Despite a modest upbringing, the author, according to his account, grows up as a happy child, playing with his siblings on the surrounding construction sites. At the same time, he begins to characterise his personality in the spirit that will accompany both memoirs – as a child who is determined, intelligent, observant and unusually mature for his age. These recollections about himself at times assume form and depth that can be doubted as belonging to a preschooler, for instance, when he draws a reflection from looking at builders' work:

> De esta forma, comprendí que tener una buena base, con rocas atadas a fuertes columnas para sujetar una edificación por muchos años, es indispensable. Como lo dice San Agustín en su libro *La ciudad de Dios*: "Mientras más alta tu estructura, más profundo y fuerte deberá de ser tu cimiento." (7)

The voices that can be distinguished from this passage are a combination of childlike curiosity and the adult's ability to draw complex conclusions, with the child's voice dominated by the didactic function of the reflection. This effect links to the issue of the problematic identity of a narrator within the recollection of their childhood which was pointed out by Lejeune as quoted in Baena: "¿Quién habla? ¿Es la voz de un niño, la de un adulto? ¿la de un adulto imitando la voz de un niño?" (484). It becomes quite clear, therefore, that faced with the impossibility of a factual recollection of childhood, the author builds on his later reflections as an adult and lets the

adult voice dominate the narrative. As a result, at times the text resembles in its form an exemplary tale of a childhood in a loving family. If any negative memories exist at that point of his life, they are self-censored which leads to an almost idealised vision of the past, possibly attributed to experiencing nostalgia understood as "la tristeza, desde la perspectiva de un presente insatisfactorio, por el recuerdo de un pasado que se percibe como irrecuperable" (Prendes Guardiola 12).

However, the family is not only further represented in the text nostalgically but also significantly helps to shape the author's character. What stands out is the presentation of the parents as hard-working, honest people. Such an image consequently becomes a generalisation of the entire community living in modest neighbourhoods of Lima because, as Serván states, "Este trabajo fuerte era bastante común en las familias humildes" (*Aprendizaje* 17). Unlike the way of writing about childhood adopted by some authors, especially of the Romantic era, who point to a particular perception of the child resulting from a distance from adult pragmatic problems (Baena 480), Serván allows the voice of adult pragmatism to assume a key position in his memories. He is, therefore, sure to confirm that a humble background is not an obstacle to a life full of dignity and integrity, which is another key lesson he receives in the family home: "Recordé que mis padres repetían: 'Nunca hay que tener vergüenza de ser pobres'. Lo importante es ser limpios, trabajadores y honrados, por eso teníamos que caminar erguidos y con la frente en alto" (30). From the author's view of his own family, an image of life emerges that is lived in a difficult regime, guided by a particular work ethic and with specific goals, starting from as far back as before the school years. This is further confirmed by the information on the author's website, where, in the description of *Aprendizaje de la oscuridad*, he is presented as "a runner, disciplined in his efforts to secure the opportunity a military career would provide: a

chance to escape the poverty and struggle of his childhood" (Serván, *About Carlos*). Themes of poverty and deprivation take on the character of motivating elements in the narrative rather than obstacles to success, thanks in large part to the rational attitude to these problems held by the narrator's parents.

Lessons learned at home are reinforced and complimented by those received at school which is another locus of character-shaping for the narrator-protagonist. When recollecting this time of life, he again draws highly didactic conclusions from everyday events and words of teachers, once more allowing the adult voice to come to the fore of the narrative. One of the most notable is the one that summarises the perfect environment for a child's correct development:

> Nuestro maestro aprovechaba para darnos lecciones de la vida, mientras cuidábamos el jardín. En ese momento, nuestras actividades consistían en limpiar, podar, regar y fertilizar la tierra. Él nos explicaba que el ser humano era como un jardín. Si dejas que se rodee de hierba mala, lo más probable es que esta planta no dure mucho y se muera todavía siendo tierna. Por eso, a los humanos hay que rodearlos de cosas positivas para que crezcan bien y sanos mentalmente. Cuando se deja que los niños tengan malas juntas y no se les corrige, crecen convencidos de que es la manera correcta de comportarse. Si un árbol comienza a crecer doblado, es necesario enderezarlo, amarrando una estaca a lo largo del tallo para que crezca fuerte y derecho. De lo contrario, crecerá torcido. En los humanos es igual, desde pequeños hay que corregirlos. De lo contrario, es casi imposible enderezarlos cuando crecen. A las plantas hay que regarlas de manera uniforme, ponerles fertilizantes y podarlas cada que sea necesario. A los seres humanos hay que darles de comer lo necesario, ni más ni menos, de forma balanceada, para que crezcan sanos y fuertes. (*Aprendizaje* 21-22)

A strong suggestion arises from the text that the author identifies himself with this type of upbringing and is grateful to both parents and teachers for the life lessons he received from them to his companions for the positive influence, and to both family and Policía Nacional for looking after his needs in a balanced way.

To develop a complete picture of the factors that led the author-narrator to choose a military career, it is important to contextualise these various impacts of the closest environment on the canvas of the political history of Peru in the early 1980s as they are not insignificant in shaping the attitude of the teenager during the initial stages of the armed conflict. At the time when this subject began to occupy a real place in Serván's life, around the year 1982, Lima was not yet affected by the direct attacks of Sendero Luminoso, which does not alter the fact that the inhabitants of the city were starting to be gradually aware of its seriousness (CVR 59). Serván cites two main channels through which knowledge about the unfolding events circulates: the official government narrative that appears in public and private spaces through the media; and unofficial reports of soldiers and police officers sent to the emergency zone (*Aprendizaje* 101). Notably, a discrepancy can be pointed out between the two sources of information. On the one hand, the government is predicting to solve the problem of terrorism in a few weeks (102). On the other, stories of soldiers suggest improper training in anti-subversive actions, a lack of understanding on the part of commanders on how to fight in the difficult terrain of the province and the overall overwhelming unpreparedness of the army. Serván quotes a friend from the neighbourhood deployed to the emergency zone who offers a brief analysis of the situation:

> Carlos, el problema —me dijo— es que a nosotros los soldados nos han entrenado para luchar contra otros soldados. Sin embargo, en Ayacucho, luchar contra los terrucos es como pelear contra un fantasma que ataca cuando menos te imaginas. (102)

In the soldier's eyes, the problem stems from the partisan nature of the adversary for which the army is not adequately prepared. Based on this opinion confirmed by the personal experience of an acquaintance, Serván receives a clear message of the consequences of joining the army in the political climate of the time. In addition, in an earlier chapter of the memoirs relating to the 1975 police general strike, the author points out the cracks in the image of the army as an institution based on honour. On the contrary, when faced with a social crisis, the highest leaders respond with violence: "Los generales militares solo querían atemorizar con violencia, disparos y terror" (41). The author acknowledges that some researchers have identified a link between the outbreaks of violence in the 1970s and its subsequent escalation during internal armed conflict, concluding that "Para algunos politólogos, estos abusos y vejaciones, sobre todo en provincias, fue una de las principales causas que originó el nacimiento del terrorismo subversivo. La violencia genera más violencia" (41). The facts related to the internal problems of the state apparatus are, therefore, present in the narrative. At the same time, the author's own opinion on the matter remains ambiguous as he refrains from directly expressing his agreement or disagreement with the quoted political scientists' assessments. In his case, what overshadows any serious criticism of the army and police is his willingness to sacrifice for the country which in his eyes constitutes the essence of military life (134). He observes similar attitude in other family members who serve but is also reinforced by the approval and pride of his parents (122, 135, 164).

In summary, given the historical context of Serván's memoir, the role of the family as he represents it is central to his decision to choose a military career. Despite being aware of the dangers and even expressing some doubts as to the soundness of the choice (103), the author stays motivated to join the military for social progress as he considers it an honourable career.

Additionally, he observes the example of his older brother who put a significant effort into successfully passing multiple stages of recruitment for the Escuela de Oficiales de la Guardia Republicana (124), an event that caused happiness and pride within the immediate family. In contrast to Gavilán's story, Serván presents himself as part of a united nuclear family where his siblings contribute to the financial and emotional well-being (97) and parents play the key role in supporting the ambitions of their children by making investments and advising them on their career, going to great lengths to help them secure a better future by managing the family budget to accommodate children's education (74, 119). The family unit is, therefore, centred not around survival but rather on progress and social mobility. Taking into consideration the narrative representation of the trajectory of the author's childhood before joining PIP, it is clear that through storytelling he purposely and carefully draws a continuous path of determination, extraordinary insight and maturity that led him to join an elite branch of the force. In this sense, the representation of experience of childhood and youth in Serván's autobiographical text remains in stark contrast to that of Gavilán who did not receive similar support from his biological father and very limited education prior to the transition to the army. However, as in the case of the previous author, it is the closest relatives who provide the motivation, and serve as role models and the points of reference when picking sides during the armed conflict.

1.2.2. Policía Nacional as the Second Family

As the ideological training and dedication reach their heights when Serván joins the EO-PIP, I argue that the institution becomes for him a second family. Part of this adoption by the branch begins very early, at the exam phase of the recruitment process, therefore, I aim to prove that a seamless conversion occurs between two types of care, from parental to institutional.

Additionally, the time when the author is trained to be a detective is marked by two crucial losses: 1) the death of his father; and 2) his abrupt departure from a career in the security forces due to permanent disability. Therefore, I identify two states of orphanhood as crucial for his formation and argue that due to the transition from civil to military life, the metaphorical abandonment experienced after the author's life-changing accident affects him far more than the literal loss of his father. In that sense, Serván's story represents a conflict between the hero narrative built around the military and police by the institutions themselves and a lack of willingness and resources to support veterans who gave their health and lives for them.

As a sixteen-year-old, Serván starts preparation for the rigorous entrance examinations for military schools. This includes physical tests, general knowledge exams and mental resilience in the face of tough competition, often with candidates older and better prepared than the protagonist. Young Serván is aware of the importance of choosing the right premilitary training: "Fue una decisión importante, la base para perfilar mi futuro y las herramientas para construir mi porvenir" (*Aprendizaje* 91). Although parents are still strongly involved in ensuring the narrator's success, simultaneously they allow him to make his own decisions about the school, so he starts to feel "el peso de la responsabilidad" but at the same time seems to become in his own eyes "más maduro y adulto" (91). Such transition constitutes one of the key features of youth, the ephemeral period between childhood and adulthood, or "semi-dependence that falls between the full dependency that characterizes childhood and the independence of adulthood" (Furlong 3). At this point, he is still under the supervision and care of his parents but gradually receives more freedom. Preparing for the exams requires following a tight schedule which includes attending regular lessons in a *colegio*, a few hours of "cursos de conocimiento" in the afternoon, another

few hours of running and calisthenics, late night homework, revisions and practising on past exams during weekends (*Aprendizaje* 92-93).

This regime leaves little to no free time for leisure activities which is yet another indication that the boy's determination is unshakable, and it is not only because of the satisfaction which he clearly derives from superior performance in physical exercises. Above all, he is aware of the investment that his parents made in funding his education (8) and the potential shame that he thinks he would cause to his relatives and himself by not getting into his chosen school (118). Even as a teenager, Serván realises that gaining a stable job would benefit the entire family. He knows this from the example of his older siblings. In his recollection of one Christmas, there is a clear connection between his older sisters working for Congress, the abundance of presents under the Christmas tree and even the development of their family home (97). Therefore, a stable job contributes essentially to his and his family's well-being. This is particularly significant given that in the past the narrator has lent to the parents in need his hard-earned money which he saved guided by the always present in the family home proverb: "Hay que guardar pan para mayo" (76-77). He, thus, understands entirely the weight of his contribution in economic terms as a son, even if still barely a teenager. This attitude, combined with the author-narrator's earlier decisions, testifies to the need for early maturity which, according to a case study of several Latin-American countries by Ramírez et al., is common among high-achieving students from poor backgrounds (669).

Parallel to the pressures arising from his family situation, Serván becomes subjected to the first mechanisms that attach him to the Policía de Investigaciones and, already at the recruitment stage, aims to develop its image as an institution particularly worthy of admiration and respect. During the process, he meets other candidates who not only set the bar high for the

physical and knowledge tests but also represent a patriotic attitude which the author admires. He mentions students at other universities, including San Marcos and Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, who gave up their education because of constant strikes and decided to join the security forces: "Estos estudiantes están tratando de cambiar sus destinos para servir a la patria de otra forma" (*Aprendizaje* 112). There are two pieces of information in this statement that point to a very current problem and its possible solution. First of all, the author notes that "desde que yo tengo uso de razón hay huelgas" (111), indicating socioeconomic and political distress that have tormented the country for years. But more importantly, he suggests that a group of young people exist who are ready to sacrifice their initial career plans and ambitions to join the first echelon of the anti-subversive fight. The author regards such attitude as patriotic and beneficial for the country which inextricably links back to his frame of mind towards the police and army in their entirety as the only ones capable of solving the issue of terrorism, as the saviours of the nation. The recruitment process itself sustains this narrative by instilling in the selected candidates a belief in their uniqueness. In stages they see the others drop out, subjected to uninterrupted physical and mental exertion, led through puzzling stages of oral examinations, until a select group, "no solo los mejores o más, sino también quienes acumulaban más puntaje," receives the privilege of entering the school (104). Preparation and recruitment are, therefore, a prelude to the integration of cadets into the institution and building relationships within its walls characterised by a particular strength based on the assumption that they are among the best.

The change from civil to military life takes place simultaneously with developing a new, unique kind of bond between the cadets, indicated already during the very first classes. As Serván recollects: "La primera lección fue que, como promoción, era indispensable entender que somos compañeros por el resto de nuestras vidas" (127). These initial moments in the EO-PIP

mark a crucial change in the teenage cadets' lives. Their previous affective relationships with family members and friends are gradually to be replaced by a new kind of ties, that between the future detectives. The learning therefore begins with a promise based on lifelong loyalty and trust between peers. Henceforth, the author does not shy away from words such as "unión" and "hermandad" (127) to describe the dynamics within the group which, in consequence, leads to the sense of power and strength as a unit.

The vision of the force that arises from Serván's text is that of an elite, well-organised and well-prepared group, sensitive to political nuances and conflict specificities. However, such an image does not apply to every branch of the military and police but rather to Policía de Investigaciones del Perú as an independent body with particular technical and strategic counterterrorist training. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, the author does signal problems in the internal organisation and inability to fight against Sendero Luminoso and MRTA that were regularly occurring within other military branches. Noteworthy, issues of such fragmentation and lack of proper coordination of actions between the institutions of security are still present in the scholarship related to the problem of citizen security even nowadays, especially against the background of recent social unrest in many parts of the country (Contreras Gallegos). However, from the author–narrator's report, it appears that the divisions within the security forces in the early 1980s appeared not only due to conflicts at the level of senior leadership, especially the disregard for the police generals that characterised some army higher-ups mentioned by him in the 1970s context (*Aprendizaje* 40), but were also reinforced systemically through education of the cadets:

> Los oficiales ponían especial énfasis en hacernos sentir identificados con la institución a la que pertenecíamos. Nos decían que las otras dos instituciones, la Guardia Civil y la

> Guardia Republicana, eran guardias y no detectives como nosotros. Nosotros éramos la policía científica y técnica, utilizábamos laboratorios criminalísticos, éramos peritos grafotécnicos, dactiloscópicos, contables, balísticos, entre otras especialidades que nos diferenciaban de las otras instituciones. (143)

Such an approach, on the one hand, introduces a clear separation from the others and a sense of superiority among the cadets of "la gloriosa Policía de Investigaciones del Perú" (124), while simultaneously contributing to creating an organisation built on very tight bonds between its members. Above all, the aura of "mística institucional" is developed, further reinforced by a series of rules that cadets must follow both inside and outside the school, a complex hierarchy in which each year has its place, and the rituals to which newcomers are subjected (144).

In parallel with the numerous methods of transitioning from civil to military life, self-regulatory mechanisms of censorship develop among the students that prevent the reader from accessing a full image of the incidents that take place at the school. Serván indicates this fact through a direct statement that leaves little doubt as to omissions inevitably existing within his recollection:

> Dentro de las aventuras y la rigurosidad de la vida de cadete, existían hechos que a uno se le quedaban grabados para siempre y que son anécdotas para rememorar en los encuentros de promoción. Lo que sucede en la escuela, se queda en la escuela. "Todo lo que sucede en la escuela, ¿comprendido?", era lo que nos repetían durante el primer año. (139)

Being faithful to this rule indicates the loyalty that the cadets and graduates feel towards the institution. Because in the case of youth "the survival of collective politics is dependent on the existence of group identities" (Furlong 218), the establishment of such a strong group identity

serves to achieve common goals. Alongside the principles of brotherhood and respect for authority, the relationships of power resemble that of an authoritative family with strict rules and a conservative upbringing that may lead to covering up some dysfunctional behaviours in the name of mutual trust. Simultaneously, the officers responsible for forming cadets to fit into their new roles assume the parental role in this environment. The superiors not only work as teachers of military strategy and technical subjects or enforcers of discipline, but they also provide their subalterns with advice that goes far beyond these areas. Serván recollects, among other similar situations, a lecture given by one of the majors on choosing a suitable life partner (*Volver* 55). The police cover also their physical needs, including proper nutrition: "cada plato estaba constituido de alimentos balanceados" (*Aprendizaje* 126). The leaders therefore assume the duties of father figures and providers, which is particularly justified given the boys' temporary separation from their families. Some of them, especially those from the province, do not receive regular visits from relatives and also have limited opportunities to travel home in their free time. Consequently, the school lecturers become the natural educators and guardians of the cadets, taking on the role of shaping their worldview and regulating their behaviour.

In leadership theory, placed in this case in a military context, the way the author presents the superiors whom he encounters across in the school can be classified using Burns' model and described in Norena-Chavez et al., as "influencia idealizada" in which "los líderes son admirados, respetados y se les tiene mucha confianza; su comportamiento es destacadamente ético" (32). Notably, the author approaches this topic using a strategy of selectively representing good examples while simultaneously minimising the importance of unfair or aggressive leaders who pour their frustrations on students. Therefore, he recognises in the first place the officers who are characterised by strong work ethics and features traditionally assigned to a good soldier

like courage, moderation and ability to successfully complete missions. This is particularly clear in the way he describes Captain Benedicto Jiménez Bacca as "un tipo que inspiraba respeto, nunca se le vio abusando del poder o cargo, más bien, enseñaba, animaba y daba el ejemplo" (*Aprendizaje* 162). Although he mentions cases of corruption and serious misconduct among the officers, even calling some of them "extremadamente abusivos" (139), depictions of this type are secondary to positive examples. Whereas some studies highlight the crucial role of leadership in the military in creating the vision as well as motivating and giving purpose to the institution, especially given changing circumstances or instability (Horn & Walker 35; Graaf et al. 64), recent analysis renders the key significance of the dynamic between leaders and followers as a social group that shares social identity (Haslam et al.). In this paradigm, followers and the relationships between them are essential for the effective operation of an organisation as much as is effective leadership. This theory is reflected in the way Serván describes his experience at the EO-PIP where the combination of the two stands out: on the one hand the strong awareness of shared identity ("somos compañeros por el resto de nuestras vidas", *Aprendizaje* 127); on the other, the role of leadership which fuels the cadets' sense of mission, prestige and uniqueness ("Nos alimenta la mística institucional", 144).

On close analysis, it can be observed that the moment of entrance into military life marks a turn in the author-narrator's affective bonds. His loyalty shifts as the locus of his primary identity becomes his service as a cadet which leads to the formation of a new family-like structure in which fellow students play the role of his new brothers, and officers become father figures responsible for instilling and reinforcing moral values and expected attitudes into their cadet-sons. Similar mentorship occurs in Gavilán's memoirs and, as in his text, not all of the officers' attitudes are described as positive. Nevertheless, Serván uses narrative devices in order

to build a positive rather than negative image of the state apparatus and, in particular, of the PIP as an elite, highly qualified and honourable organisation. The principles that he puts forward as characterising the ethos of the detectives are in line with those learnt by him at home, that of loyalty, determination and moderation. In a way, both families, the literal and the chosen, are reflections of each other's values and moral standards.

1.2.3. Literal and Metaphorical Orphanhood

Based on the previous analysis of the importance of the family, both the nuclear one and the newly found one in the ranks of Policía de Investigaciones, it is reasonable to predict that any kind of changes or serious interventions in the configuration of these units will have a significant impact on the author. In the memoirs *Aprendizaje de la oscuridad* and *Volver a correr,* Serván describes two such intrusions, which I will refer to as literal and metaphorical orphanhood in this subsection of the chapter. I argue that the experience of a violent separation from the institution of PIP, which for years had forged bonds of attachment similar to those in a family in the young cadet, leaves him stranded and in a condition that can be compared to the literal loss of parental support. His struggles with disability, treatment and the need to reorganise his entire life as a result of an accident suffered while on duty further point to the broader issue of the lack of assistance provided for veterans. Therefore, I state that both memoirs serve at the same time as a motivational message of overcoming adversities as well as identify a gap in the discussion about the post-conflict treatment and support for ex-members of the security forces personnel, many of whom can relate to the experienced by Serván post-service abandonment.

While in school, still as a teenager, Serván receives a telephone call that turns out to be news of his father's heart attack that later results in his death. The event has a significant impact

on the narrator, who recalls the physical reaction to the news as profoundly shocking: "se me estremeció el cuerpo (…) me quedé paralizado, sin saber qué hacer por unos segundos" (*Aprendizaje* 174). Notably, the initial shock is dismissed by the narrator to be replaced by a reaction that is more suitable for a cadet and which distinguishes him from the civilian family members:

> Al llegar a mi casa, mi madre estaba destrozada, mis hermanos lloraban sin consuelo, las vecinas ayudaban. Parecía que la experiencia de tantos colegas muertos, así como ver llegar féretros a la EOPIP para velar cuerpos casi todas las semanas, hizo que mostrase fuerza ante tal pérdida. (175)

Unquestionably, the narrative contributes here to the creation of the protagonist's identity defined by his non-civil background which provides him a certain level of immunity to events that others may find disturbing. Nevertheless, in these words, he does not express the lack of emotions but rather the ability to maintain composure which serves as a further testimony to the strength of character. Thus, Serván's account transmits the tension between the depth of the trauma experienced at first at the news of his father's death, manifested in physical symptoms, and the desensitisation, the sources of which he seeks in constant exposure to the bodies of fallen servicemen. Despite this contradiction contained in the two attitudes, however, he recognises the significance of his father's death for the future of the whole family. Above all, he understands his father's special role in his life and that of his siblings, his irreplaceability as well as his remaining presence in the characteristics of the other family members. Although, in contrast to Gavilán, he experiences orphanhood while still a relatively independent young man, the event marks Serván's life with its gravity. Most of all, it creates pressure linked to the necessity of taking over the father's responsibilities, a duty which seems to be accepted gladly by Serván and

his brothers (174). Surprisingly, even though the event clearly shocks the family and serves as a turning point in the life of the protagonist, its impact is not fully reflected in the texts. Even if the author mentions “el vacío de su partida” (175), he does not dedicate any further attention to the topic. On the contrary, he swiftly redirects the reader’s attention to daily life back in school. Thus, a picture emerges of the author-narrator, still intimately connected to his family by affective ties, but at the same time distancing himself from them by complete immersion in his role as a cadet, to which he subordinates the other aspects of his life. This leads to another type of orphanhood that affects Serván much more strongly and occupies a central position in the entire story contained in *Volver a correr*. The second abandonment links to a tragic accident in which the author not only becomes physically disabled but also has to irreversibly end his military career, leading to an identity crisis and disillusionment with the lack of support from the institution to which he devoted his youth.

Although a detailed insight into the area of disability studies in literature lays beyond the scope of this investigation, the author’s contribution deserves recognition as a part of the boom of memoirs and autobiographic accounts of disability, especially in the light of his activism. In the words of Alice Hall, the recent increase in the number of such life stories works as “a key example of the ways in which texts and print media can raise the public profile of disability and, crucially, offers the opportunity for self-representation through new narrative and linguistic forms” (130). In the case of Serván, his text stands out as crucial due to the scarcity of published non-fictional accounts of Peruvian veterans and their struggles, both mental and physical, even though the theme, especially its psychological aspects, has been strongly present in the post-conflict novel (Chauca).

In 1986, during one of the patrols in EO-PIP, as a cadet of the fourth year, Serván catches a grenade that explodes in his hands, leaving him partially blind and without a part of the right arm. At this point, his life changes not only by a physical disability but, above all, by the need to find a new path. What clearly arises from the part of the narrative covering the period between joining the EO-PIP and the accident is the self-creation of the author's identity in the context of his belonging to the institution, binding him for life to its ideals and goals. The accident does not initially hit the author as a permanent obstacle to achieving his goals and ambitions. On the contrary, he describes his first thoughts after learning that he lost his hand as directed at finding a way of being able to continue his education and enter the force as a detective. Especially moving is his admission that one of the first reflections that he had right after discovering the lack of hand was related to the ability to perform the military salute: "se me ocurrió la estúpida idea de que no podría saludar militarmente a los superiores" (*Volver* 18). Despite such a serious condition, the train of thought that follows these first questions indicates how strongly the author's identity is embedded in his role as a cadet. Even in the face of an issue as serious as the amputation of a hand, he treats it as "un gran reto, un desafío" (18) rather than the ultimate obstacle. That is why, at least at the beginning, hope dominates the mood of the hospital room. The change in this attitude comes with the confirmation that Serván will not regain sight in any of his blast-damaged eyes which puts a definitive end to his career. Along with this verdict, he instantly loses his mental strength and optimism (20). The way in which he constructs his identity is thus dominated by the narrator's conviction for the equivalence of his own self and being a policeman. Even when admitted to the hospital, his immediate words identify him as "Cadete de cuarto año, Serván Triveño, Carlos Rigoberto" (12). In years after the accident, Serván refers to himself as "policía" in order to establish a particular bond between

himself and the father of his future wife who also belonged to the force (105). The tragic incident not only additionally exposes this identity by highlighting all the ways in which Carlos views himself as an inseparable part of the force but ultimately also contributes to its rupture due to the inability of the author to continue his existence in the established, predictable way, according to his perception of his own essence.

Serván's new physical state entails a number of consequences that affect all aspects of daily life. He introduces this new position through the point of view of his mother, who not only cries in the hospital while he tries to stay positive but is also having trouble coming to terms with the fact that "su hijo, que era alto, fuerte y que había sido cadete en una Escuela de Oficiales, ahora era parte de un grupo de la sociedad que debe superar obstáculos para reinventar una vida normal" (38). Linguistically, not without meaning is the fact that the author talks about this change in the third person. Immediately, this literary device introduces a level of distance between the protagonist affected by the disability and the feelings experienced by his mother due to his state. A similar way of narrating could be noticed in his description of his father's funeral. In this instance, the author also describes the sorrow accompanying the event not by focusing as much on his own emotions but rather through the trauma of his mother who "tardó mucho en lidiar con su ausencia" and the pain of siblings who "lloraban sin consuelo" (*Aprendizaje* 175). The author's own suffering associated with disability, therefore, remains secondary to the necessity of reinventing his life. He treats it as a challenge, one that he is willing to approach according to the principles of non-surrender and strategic thinking learned as a cadet. Even though he cannot continue to graduate from the school, the mindset developed throughout the years in the institution is still guiding his approach to the new situation. All these elements signal the dedication to the lifestyle learnt in the security forces, even after being discharged.

Such a strong attachment, however, entails an equally strong disillusionment when the author realises that he cannot count on additional help from the state despite his dedication in the ranks of the cadets. This particular moment in the initial part of the chronologically earlier memoir *Volver a correr* is linked to the graduation ceremony of his class and represents the culmination of grief over the loss of health while simultaneously marking the author's realisation that the transition back to civil life is needed if he wants to continue functioning as a part of society. In this recollection he does not shy away from expressing strong emotions of disappointment and sorrow: "me sentía triste, desconsolado y abatido por no estar en formación con mis compañeros y por no recibirme de Alférez" and "No dijeron mi nombre. Se me hizo un nudo en la garganta e hice hasta lo imposible por contener las lágrimas" (*Volver* 36). Simultaneously, the moment contributes to a breakthrough as he decides to accept the symbolic closed door to be able to open another one: "Esta experiencia fue bastante dolorosa pero necesaria, se cerraba una puerta para abrirse otra" (37). However, what follows the optimistic reflection is a rather disappointing realisation that arises from a brief conversation with President Alan García and Interior Minister Abel Salinas. Serván takes the opportunity to find out about funding opportunities for his further treatment. The President's response is disappointing as he refers the young cadet to the Minister. He indifferently sends him further away to yet another institution. The author-protagonist underlines not only the lack of real help from the men in charge of the country, the metaphorical fathers of the nation, but even points out their negative attitude towards his request. The President seems to him "incómodo e impaciente," while the Minister addresses the cadet "con voz indiferente y casi gélida" (37). The author's final conclusion is that police officials have little value in the eyes of the highest representatives of the country, a moment of deep disillusion. In the initial part of his life story, referring to the pre-

accident events, Serván mentions scarcely some alarming irregularities in the way politicians treat members of security forces, indicates tensions among various branches of the security forces, suggests that the animosity between the army and the police generals as well as criticizes García's decisions of restructuration of the security forces (*Aprendizaje* 175). However, the attitude that dominates the narrative of this period relates to the special vocation, skills and character traits of detectives that contribute to the institution's atmosphere of exceptionality. On the other hand, the meeting with the president and minister serves as a turning point helping the author realise that there is no exceptional treatment, not even a shadow of gratitude coming from the officials but rather the opposite, indifference and awkwardness. Serván is thus left in a state of metaphorical orphanhood where instead of receiving the care and support of the state, for which he has repeatedly declared his willingness to sacrifice his life (121, 135, 146, 167), he must begin the struggle for recovery on his own. As a result, the shock of separation from the police and the disillusionment rooted in the lack of adequate recognition and support turn into an event more traumatic than the literal orphaning after his father's death.

In conclusion, although Serván loses his father later in life being quite independent as a cadet in a police school and still able to count on his mother's parental support, he experiences orphanhood in both literal and metaphorical ways as a teenager. As he grows up in Lima, even though he is a son of migrants from rural territories, thus he does not face the same familial culture, military hazing practices or prior exposition to the Sendero Luminoso's ideology as Gavilán Sánchez and other cadets from the Ayacucho region. What cannot be ignored, though, is the importance that belonging to the institution of the Policía de Investigaciones has for the young man and how the accident that causes his inability to continue his service changes his life brutally and unexpectedly. Therefore, what can be seen from this section of my investigation, is

that the violent separation from PIP in the case of Serván provokes a feeling of metaphorical orphanhood that is even stronger than the literal one after the death of his father. Moreover, I argue that similar to Gavilán's case, this abandonment relates to a deep feeling of disappointment and disillusion with an institution for which he sacrificed his health and was ready to give his life. I argue that this allows Serván's story to represent a wider systemic problem that originates from deeper discrimination practices based on relationships of power arising from factors like race, age and military rank and which manifests itself in the lack of appropriate help for veterans of the internal armed conflict and their families.

1.3. Conclusion

Lurgio Gavilán and Carlos Serván both join in the discussion on the subjectivity of lived experience of the internal armed conflict as teenagers in Peru. They do it from a not-so-often-examined perspective of teenage fighters, adding a point of view that contributes to the spectrum of attitudes and angles rather than the binary opposition between the state and subversive groups which assign the role of victims to one side and that of perpetrators to the other. As the analysis of their familiar background shows, both authors were highly influenced by their relatives when making decisions about participating in the fight. Nevertheless, what is equally important to their worldview formation is the influence of the groups that they consider their second family – be it Sendero Luminoso or the state apparatus – through which positive and negative impacts are affecting author-protagonists in different proportions. At the same time, a parallel analysis of both texts reveals the dichotomy of memories and collective experience between Lima and the *sierra*, the urban and the rural.

The objective of this chapter has been to investigate the theme of parenthood and orphanhood in the autobiographical writings of the two authors engaged in the internal armed conflict as fighters. Crucial to this task has been identifying not only the significance of the literal loss of a parent as a formative event in a young person's life but, even more importantly, the metaphorical dimension of orphanhood. Through the life stories of the two authors, it is possible to identify an experience common to many representatives of the generation that grew up as a part of one of the armed organisations on both sides of the conflict, mainly, the surrogate familial relationship formed within those institutions and their effect on individuals, while highlighting the highly personal motivations of each actor and the singularity of each experience. Therefore, literal orphanhood, the loss of a parent, becomes repeated in their stories on a metaphorical level when they experience abandonment and disappointment in the ranks of the aforementioned groups, be it Sendero Luminoso or the security forces. At the same time, the loss is not adequately addressed in the public space due to the limits of language to express lived experience as in the case of young cadets or the self-regulatory mechanisms of censorship common among the students of PIP. What this phenomenon tells about the recollections of the time of conflict, is that they remain fragmented and at times contradictory, questioning the possibility of writing an objective history while bringing to the fore the importance of individual and collective memory.

Chapter 2: Children of Militants

The manifestation of orphanhood in twenty-first-century Peruvian non-fiction literature becomes particularly evident in autobiographical texts authored by the children of individuals who perished during the internal armed conflict. The abrupt demise, often preceded by instances of torture and followed by the public dissemination of postmortem photographs in the media, undeniably constitutes a pivotal and transformative juncture in the lives of those who, years later, elect to share their recollections related to their radicalised parents affiliated with groups like Sendero Luminoso and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaro (MRTA). As obvious as this assumption may sound, the circumstances surrounding orphanhood, the events leading up to it and its aftermath are intricately complex in the context of these narratives and require thorough contextualisation. This chapter aims to present a focused examination of the theme of orphanhood in non-fiction works by two authors, José Carlos Agüero and Rafael Salgado Olivera. These authors epitomise a trend of introspective writing within the generation of *hijos* in Peru, a trend that has become increasingly conspicuous in the literary landscape in the past two decades. Both Agüero and Salgado offer invaluable insights into the everyday lives of family members of militants of Sendero Luminoso and MRTA, respectively. However, as asserted in this chapter, their prose delves most significantly into the dilemmas arising from their ambiguous positions in the post-conflict reality as a result of their involuntary inheritance of their parents' militant actions.

The family history places the authors within a particular generation, known among literary scholars and historians of Latin America as *hijos*. The term distinctly conveys

connotations with a specific group of writers and activists whose coming of age coincided with a time of significant political violence in their respective countries. Notably, literature addresses Argentine "hijos" or capitalised "Hijos" to denote individuals growing up in the shadow of the dictatorship (Drucaroff; Arenes & Pikielny; Arfuch; Basile *Infancias*; Aguilar). This terminology is similarly employed in Chile (Johansson & Vergara; Montanaro). While testimonial and literary materials in the Southern Cone countries extensively elaborate on the second generation, individuals who can be classified as part of this group also emerge as crucial actors in post-dictatorship or post-conflict societies in other regions of Latin America.

In the context of Peru, undergoing a crisis of violence at the end of the twentieth century, there was, until recently, a limited corpus of literary texts from those who grew up during the internal armed conflict. However, in the second and third decades of the twenty-first century, an increasing number of such texts have become available. As Margarita Saona assumes, the passage of time, during which the internal war in Peru began to be viewed with a certain distance, facilitated the emergence of such voices:

> Esos años en los que la guerra interna del Perú empezaba a verse con una cierta distancia dieron lugar al surgimiento de las voces de quienes habían sido marcades por las acciones públicas de sus padres en un momento en que la expansión mediática dominaba el país. (179)

Perspectives from the standpoint of the second generation, those marked by their parents' actions, have been expressed by the children of left-wing radical activists but also by the representatives of the other side of memory, as children of security forces notables. One well-known text is by Renato Cisneros, who in a self-proclaimed autofictional novel *La distancia que nos separa* (2015) refers to the figure of his father, Luis "Gaucho" Cisneros, a former army

general involved in planning the first anti-subversion strategies against guerrillas in Peru in the 1980s. Although the textual material of the generation's experience is still scarce, the acts of expression available to readers in the current decade demonstrate a new willingness to take a stand for themselves in the ongoing political dispute about the conflict in a post-conflict setting.

At the same time, valuable insight into the condition of the generation can be drawn from the nomenclature applied to them as it delineates their being, characterised by a logic of "hijos y hijas de" and their childhood contact with the revolutionary militancy, linking them to a preceding generation as the predominant identity mark (Ostrom 337). Similarly, various organizations, such as the Asociación Nacional de Familiares de Secuestrados, Detenidos y Desaparecidos del Perú (ANFASEP) or Hijos de Perú, which bring together individuals who have lost loved ones, orient them in relation to their disappeared, detained or assassinated family members rather than portraying them independently. However, when contemplating the *hijos* generation, an aspect often overlooked is that, besides being someone's children, many of them are also orphans. The state of orphanhood can manifest itself in the most literal sense, resulting from death, as seen in the cases of the authors discussed in this chapter. Others have lost parents serving long sentences in prison convicted of terrorism, exemplified by Abel Gilvonio, leader of the Hijos de Perú collective (Paucar Albino). Consequently, in a seemingly paradoxical way, the identity of this generation is defined simultaneously by the strong presence of their parents, their actions and political identity, and by the experience of their loss, as orphans.

The loss of a loved one in violent circumstances constitutes a traumatic event. Despite facing similar circumstances, psychiatrists and psychologists no longer unanimously agree on the most healing aspect in expressing these experiences, as Pennebaker notes (27). Does writing about trauma aid in "achieving catharsis by getting the person to express pent-up emotions" or

rather “attain insight into the causes and cures”? (Pennebaker 27). As I argue, both Agüero and Salgado are keenly aware of both these benefits of writing. Simultaneously, they do not lose sight of the danger highlighted by Beatriz Sarlo, namely that:

> In narratives of memory, testimonies and writings with a strong autobiographical emphasis, there looms the danger of an imagination that firmly establishes itself “at home,” and claims it as one of the achievements of the memory enterprise: to recover what was lost through the violence of power, a desire whose entire moral and psychological legitimacy is not sufficient to establish an equally undisputed intellectual legitimacy. (55)

Departing from the utopian task of recovering what is lost, Agüero and Salgado engage in an exercise of self-reflection, leaning towards the second of the benefits Pennebaker discusses. It is directed towards “formas de recuperar el yo y su lugar dentro de las narrativas nacionales de la memoria” (Saona 180), firmly grounded in the present, constructing identities not only as “hijos” or “orphans” but independently of the preceding generation. However, they do not abandon the socio-political reality that frames and constrains the issues they describe.

In my analysis, I will concentrate on the authors’ literary portrayal of two distinct phases in their lives: the period preceding the loss of a parent or parents and the period that ensues. Regarding the initial phase, I will demonstrate that both authors incorporate elements of “orfandad suspendida,” a term employed by Teresa Basile in the Argentine context to characterise an interim stage of orphanhood. This stage, experienced by the children of *desaparecidos*, is characterised by the absence of information about the fate of their parents, making proper mourning impossible and inhibiting closure for the loss caused by political violence (Basile, “La orfandad” 142). I will illustrate how this term can be modified to be

applied in the Peruvian context and how it manifests in the texts of Agüero and Salgado. To achieve this goal, I posit that the state of suspended orphanhood begins in the narratives even before the separation from their parents, manifesting as a series of ominous premonitions or an awareness of an impending state security apparatus attack due to their parents' open political activities. In alignment with prior scholarship, I recognise the significant role played in the narratives of *hijos* by subjectivity, emotions and affects (De Vivanco, "Tres veces muertos" 135) which dominate a child's perception over a factual understanding of the events.

The subsequent phase of their childhood or adolescent memories is marked by the ramifications ensuing from both the parents' association with the radical left and their violent deaths. I contend that the responses of the orphaned authors extend beyond emotional pain and grief, typically accompanying the loss of a relative, as the political affiliations of their loved ones bring a cascade of life-long consequences to their future position in the world. The events themselves inevitably involve the children as actors in the conflict and post-conflict reality, compelling them to assume new and intricate roles. Their status as victims, especially concerning self-classification as members of this group and societal responses to their position in transitional justice, becomes particularly complex. In this context, I will examine notions such as "herencia" and "responsabilidad," previously linked by scholars to the writing of the *hijos* generation (De la Paz Amaro; Saona), contextualising them within the authors' aspiration to construct a distinct self, detached from a definition of their generation in relation to the previous one.

2.1. José Carlos Agüero

José Carlos Agüero debuted in the literary realm in 2015 with his memoir *Los rendidos. Sobre el don de perdonar,* reflecting on Peru's internal conflict from the perspective of a son of Sendero

Luminoso militants, a terrorist group responsible for approximately 54% of the deaths and disappearances during that period (CVR 181). While his literary career began with this publication, Agüero had already been involved in academia, collaborating with the CVR and engaging in projects like Taller de Estudios de Memoria – Yuyachkanchik and Grupo Memoria affiliated with the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. Additionally, he contributed to the establishment of Lugar de Memoria in Lima, outlining its principles in the co-authored book with Ponciano del Pino, titled *Cada uno un lugar de memoria* (2014).

Clearly, memory holds a pivotal position in Agüero's writing, evident not only in his academic pursuits but also in his prose and poetry, encompassing works such as the memoir *Los rendidos*, the poetry book *Enemigo* (2016) and the essayistic and experimental project *Persona* (2017). These writings exhibit autobiographical-testimonial characteristics, highlighting the intertwining of Agüero's private life and professional career. The connection between the personal and public realms aligns with current trends in Peruvian literary production, as noted by Margareta Saona, emphasising a new voice focused on self-reclamation rather than solely denouncing human rights violations (180). Similarly, Claudia Salazar Jiménez places Agüero at a crossroad between "las escrituras del yo, la espectacularización de la imagen autorial, las políticas de memoria y los discursos de postmemoria" (197), focusing her analyses mainly on a problem closely related to the reclaiming of the authorial self, namely "el proceso de construcción autorial" (197). The approach that Salazar Jiménez takes in her studies on Agüero's work ("Construcciones del yo"; "Constelación Agüero") differs from the research undertaken by those who read his autobiographical texts with a focus on their participation in the creation of the politics of memory (De La Paz Amaro; Ramírez Treviño; De Vivanco, "Tres veces muertos"). In this analysis, I contend that Agüero's narrative is representative of a multifaceted approach, as

suggested by Salazar Jiménez. Simultaneously, I argue that Agüero's status as an orphan, often subsumed under the label "hijo" within the generation, serves as the narrative's starting point and the focal point of his literary and socio-political engagements in Peru.

The central features of Agüero's narrative, as per my analysis, are characterised by ambiguity and contradictions, manifesting themselves in diverse ways. They emerge as inseparable elements of memory and as a clash between the affective ties and the brutality of the armed struggle. Rather than attempting to resolve these contradictions and ambiguities, I propose that the text serves as a means to discover and understand their source through the therapeutic role of writing. In examining the central state of orphanhood, I will be guided by two notions that contribute to the complexity of affective relationships in Agüero's writing, bridging his past experiences with contemporary dilemmas.

The first guiding notion is that of "orfandad suspendida," introduced by Teresa Basile in the context of the generation of HIJOS in Argentina, drawing on the example of Félix Bruzzone ("La orfandad" 142). In the Argentine context, suspended orphanhood pertains to the inability to mourn due to the ambiguous status of parents who have been forcibly disappeared. While distinct in its specifics, this concept resonates with Agüero's situation, where issues related to impediments to mourning and the undefined state between life and death of a parent–victim of political violence are evident. This aspect is explored in the initial section of this analysis. The second recurring notion, "vergüenza", is drawn directly from Agüero's text (*Los rendidos* loc. 157), in which he introduces it as intricately linked with memories of his parents. In my analysis, I sustain that the amalgamation of positive and negative feelings that the author experiences towards his parents and their actions reinforces his perspective on ambiguity as a predominant feature in post-conflict reconciliation.

2.1.1. Suspended Orphanhood

The scholarly discourse on José Carlos Agüero's literary works predominantly centres around the motif of memory and post-conflict considerations, particularly with regard to their political and social implications (Ramírez Treviño; De Vivanco, "Tres veces muertos"). This analytical focus is facilitated by the unique genre-blurring nature of *Los rendidos*, which combines essay and memoir. Agüero's active involvement in memory projects and academic initiatives related to reconciliation further reinforces the autobiographical elements as contextual background for the ongoing political discourse in Peru, rather than as a personal story. While recognising the importance of this aspect, the ensuing analysis aims, primarily, to examine the narrative's depiction of the genesis of Agüero's orphanhood. This pivotal period spans approximately six years during which Agüero suffered the loss of his parents. The fragmented recollections of the events leading up to and following this tragic juncture will be examined in detail.

Reading Agüero's individual experience as an autonomous participant in history, rather than merely in relation to his parents, sheds light on his distinct position as a victim at various points in his life. Initially, as a child of Sendero Luminoso militants, subsequently, during the extrajudicial killings of his parents by security forces and later in the aftermath marked by stigmatisation, Agüero confronts episodes of revictimization and intimate anguish, both of which are poignantly expressed in the text. This profound affective dimension has been underscored as a fundamental feature of Agüero's narrative (De Vivanco, "Tres veces muertos" 142). In line with this observation, an analysis of Agüero's experiences, first as a child of Sendero Luminoso members and later as an orphan, is indispensable for comprehending affect as a strategic narrative device. Affect, previously analysed within the context of twenty-first-century Peruvian fiction addressing the conflict, as described by Oswaldo Estrada, serves as a powerful tool in this

line of investigation: “éste [el afecto] nos permite ingresar no sólo a lo real sino también a lo simbólico e imaginario sin desligarnos de lo ético y político, gracias a una fuerza interior que es a la vez cohesiva y dispersante, constructora y deconstructora” (243). This wide range of aspects of violence reflected in affect proves beneficial for discussing the horrors of Peruvian violence, as Estrada suggests (243). Even more significantly, Mabel Moraña indicates that its role has grown stronger since the political polarity of the Cold War period globally weakened at the end of the twentieth century (314). Therefore, it becomes noteworthy to include the affective dimension in the analysis focused on complex, non-binary domains such as the memory of violence in Peru at the end of the century and its repercussions that continue to be present in the current political climate.

The strong role of emotional response in childhood memories associated with the loss of Agüero’s parents, dispersed throughout various chapters of *Los rendidos* reflects the narrative’s shredded structure. These fragments, intertwined with broader reflections on the conflict and its aftermath, create a narrative suspended between past, present and future. The non-linear presentation challenges chronological reconstruction, urging a closer examination of additional biographical sources for a comprehensive understanding. Moreover, the narrative’s fragmentation symbolically signifies a protracted anticipation of Agüero’s parents’ violent demise which assumes the form of a process rather than an isolated event. Notably, the deaths occurred six years apart and the reader, aware of the imminent tragedy from the text’s outset, witness the extended anticipation of Agüero’s orphanhood, accentuating the narrative’s temporal suspension (*Los rendidos* loc. 330).

In the author’s recollections, a departure from chronological order is evident, with the mother’s abduction discussed first in greater detail. The encounter with a newspaper featuring

her assassinated body on a beach “en una página interior, en color” (loc. 214), staged to implicate the Sendero Luminoso militants despite evidence of security agents’ involvement, elicits a shocking response. Paradoxically, the author expresses “alivio por la muerte de mi madre,” following years of anticipation fuelled by the family and friends’ concerns. The years preceding her death serve as a preparation for or the initiation of a process of dying, marked by the mother’s repeated instances of going into hiding, house searches by the police and numerous threats against her life made by security forces.

This situation draws parallels with Achille Mbembe’s “status of living dead” (40) in postcolonial necropolitics and the similar notion of “stuckness” (Le Marcis 77). Although these terms are typically associated with theories on prisons and, more recently, asylum seekers (Mayblin et al.), the ambiguous, state-controlled condition of the protagonist’s mother who is subject to constant surveillance and reliant on state decisions regarding her life and death, resembles both a “living dead” and a person “stuck” in between. The distinction lies in the fact that the state’s control becomes executed in the intimate sphere of a family home through raids and investigations among relatives rather than within the walls of a formal detention centre. Understanding this background elucidates the reason for the narrator’s expression of relief: “Por fin. Por fin luego de tantos años, mi madre había terminado de morir” (loc. 317), as if she had been terminally ill for years. This anticipation is further evident in the poetic reconstruction of his mother’s final moments, where the author portrays the bullets as long-awaited friends: “Miró hacia abajo, vio la arena, la espuma que llegaba y se iba, sus pies. Sintió los disparos, los tres en la espalda, como las palmadas de un amigo que te ha esperado mucho” (loc. 823).

This unique familial position places considerable strain on affective relationships, a phenomenon acknowledged by the author himself. Extensive research from various regions

around the world on individuals impacted by political violence within the family indicates that enduring such events causes long-term intergenerational psychological consequences for natural affection (Weingarten; Lupu & Peisakhin; Khamis). Regular bonds, in the case of Agüero between a child and their mother, are disrupted due to the fear and tension arising from the latter's "living dead" status. The author articulates this challenging predicament as a "signo del fracaso del afecto ante la bárbara razón" (loc. 348) in a situation in which death seems to be a more logical solution than staying alive.

Within these intimate and seemingly unconventional emotions, Agüero does not perceive himself as unique but rather identifies an experience shared not only with other children in similar situations within his own country and generation but also with relatives of Holocaust victims. This becomes evident when he quotes Elie Wiesel orphaned in Buchenwald concentration camp, who describes his father's death as personal liberation despite, or perhaps because of, the love he feels towards him (loc. 341). As controversial as a similar comparison may sound from a European point of view, the perception of the Holocaust in the context of the Latin American Cold War was recently examined by Estelle Tarica in the book *Holocaust Consciousness and Cold War Violence in Latin America* (2022) that uncovers the unexpected workings of the subject in Latin America. According to the author, a clear tendency exists among Latin American intellectuals and actors to use Holocaust terms to describe atrocities experienced in their continent, especially during the Cold War period (Tarica 9). In this context, Agüero's reference to Wiesel aims not necessarily to equate his own experience with Shoah but to underscore the universality of emotions resulting from the inversion of ordinary affective relations due to inhumane violence that should not be normalised but becomes an everyday constant in certain circumstances such as war or dictatorship (Tarica 9). The death of a parent, in

such circumstances, becomes a relief compared to the emotional terror induced by prolonged anticipation. While the reasons for such feelings, termed by the author as “un dilema del amor” (loc. 348), may differ, be it the Holocaust, dictatorship or domestic conflict, the impact on relatives, in Agüero’s perception, is “compartido por cientos de miles de familias en el mundo” (loc. 348), suggesting a collective experience. This phenomenon points to a potential universality in human reactions and shared affects across time, place or cultural backgrounds or at least, a shared connection among humans facing political violence. Agüero, therefore, does not diminish the weight of his individual experience or that of others but rather extrapolates it by appealing to a broader collective, making his own story relatable to those who may share similar experiences.

This notion of the universality of emotional responses is helpful in one more task carried out by the author which is that of keeping an open mind and refraining from locking into unequivocal judgments and opinions (loc. 43). A comparable approach necessitates compassion, a topic extensively discussed by the author in Chapter 8 (loc. 259) as a challenging aspect of memory recovery. He deliberately opts for “compassion” over the term “solidaridad” commonly favoured in the discourse of the radical left. This term serves a reconciliatory function in the text and enables an understanding of the feelings of the opposing side. For instance, the author acknowledges the parallels between his own family and the family of the policeman who died while apprehending his father. Rather than viewing the two men as representatives of opposing sides of the conflict, he perceives them as two victims who left two widows and two orphaned families (loc. 426). Without presuming the universal nature of specific experiences, the efficacy of compassion would be constrained, if not unattainable.

The familial reality before the mother’s death, coupled with the repercussions of the earlier demise of the father, creates a situation akin to what Teresa Basile terms “orfandad

suspendida" in her study of children of desaparecidos during the dictatorship in Argentina (*Infancias*). Basile examines the specificity of a situation where the absence of a body and access to information hinder the mourning process. Crucially for this investigation, Basile notes the ambiguous state of victims of political violence as "tensada entre la ausencia y la presencia en tanto se trata de un sujeto que no se halla ni vivo ni muerto y parecería situarse en una suerte de limbo" (142). This description aptly captures Agüero's family situation, although within a context distinct from that of victims in Argentina, particularly when considering the nature of "limbo" in which the author's relatives find themselves faced with the ambiguous situation of the mother before her death. However, the suspended orphanhood in Agüero's narrative takes yet another form, aligning more directly with Basile's use of the term, through the impossibility of locating his father's remains.

Teresa Basile identifies two pivotal facets of "orfandad suspendida" as "la espera" and "la búsqueda" (142). The first element, "la espera," unfolds with the sudden and often violent disappearance of a parent, prompting the children to anticipate the outcome of the abduction and nurture hope for their survival. However, as the protracted waiting period and the depletion of hope ensue, a space for "la búsqueda" emerges, a concerted effort not only to locate the physical remains of the parent but also to reconstruct their final moments. In Agüero's case, "la espera" is evident not through the author himself but the figure of his paternal grandmother, who, while examining a newspaper photo featuring a handful of battered and muddy survivors of the prison massacre in El Frontón, endeavours to identify her son (loc. 601). Grandmother chooses to believe that she sees him among the group, fostering dreams of his escape from the carnage (loc. 601). Agüero, however, realises that this conviction is delusional. Instead, he embarks on the long-term quest for his father's remains. This marks the second phase of suspended orphanhood,

"la búsqueda," where, even after hope diminishes, the mourning process necessitates completion through the retrieval of the loved one's body and the acquisition of details about their final moments.

The process of looking for the remains of deceased family members, as discussed by Basile, serves a dual purpose. Primarily, it is seen as a necessary step to navigate the grieving process, concluding one phase and commencing another, ultimately ending the suspended state of mourning (Basile, "La orfandad" 143). Additionally, this quest plays a crucial role in reclaiming the authentic history of the deceased parent, a history that may have been distorted or overlooked by mainstream media or official narratives:

> Por el otro la búsqueda que, con posterioridad, los jóvenes emprenden para encontrar los restos de sus padres y para averiguar y reconstruir ese tramo de la historia que ha quedado borrado e ignorado. Si el desaparecido se constituye como un fantasma, los hijos perseguirán esa figura fantasmática para procurar devolverle lo que se le ha sustraído. (Basile, "La orfandad" 143)

This purpose gains prominence when the author contemplates the potential dignity in the death of a terrorist. The larger debate on dignified death can be situated within a broader discourse, as articulated by Judith Butler in *Frames of War*, addressing the acknowledgement of "grievable lives" (Butler 15). Agüero poses a series of questions regarding the circumstances of his father's death that allude to the possibility of justifying grief with the support of certain conditions:

> ¿Puede morir dignamente un terrorista miembro de Sendero Luminoso? ¿Puede morir preocupándose por sus compañeros heridos, intentando salvarlos? ¿Puede morir en silencio, sin rogar a sus asesinos, de pie frente a quienes lo fusilaron? ¿Hay dignidad,

aunque sea la más ínfima, la que sobra, en este país de tanto sufrimiento, en la agonía de este hombre que vivió aún por buen rato sintiendo una pared que lo sepultaba? (loc. 563)

These questions appear unanswerable, given that the last hours of his father's life can only be reconstructed from fragments of narratives related to the events leading to prison massacres in June 1986 and scarce eyewitnesses burdened with ideological baggage and bias. The potential role of recovering his father's remains in "averiguar y reconstruir ese tramo de historia" remains theoretical (Basile, "La orfandad" 143). However, from the author's perspective, achieving closure seems unattainable without this element.

Based on the questions Agüero asks in relation to his father's death, the reader might be under the impression that they are aimed at excusing the criminal acts as a form of redemption through a noble death. The narrative therefore seems to be shifting away from the private task of a child seeking information about a parent into the territory of the larger problem known as "apología del terrorismo" (Pastrana Sánchez). The delineation between this concept and the freedom of expression, notably in the contemporary context of social media and its exploitation in political discourse, holds contemporary relevance, as evidenced by recent journalistic inquiries (Villena; Cevallos), although its genesis can be traced back to the conflict itself, particularly during the Fujimori administration (Burt). Indeed, voices justifying violent acts as the only way to fight for social justice were heard among both Sendero Luminoso (Degregori 217) and the MRTA (La Serna 8). However, Agüero distances himself from an apologetic stance by recurrently acknowledging the potential adversities inflicted by his parents' actions. Moreover, he explicitly disapproves of narratives that might propagate new myths and glorification of armed insurgency (loc. 55, 127). These indicators, coupled with Agüero's omission of detailed accounts of the search process from the primary narrative, signify a predilection for preserving

the private facets of this undertaking, while concurrently directing reflections on the moral dimensions of inheriting culpability and navigating personal emotions within the wider context of the post-conflict milieu.

Within the narrative's treatment of the search for his father's remains, Agüero accentuates the challenges of achieving closure with a portrayal of the government's resistance to providing families with reliable information. His depiction of the notification regarding the discovery of his father's remains and those of thirty others amid the aftermath of the prison massacre becomes emblematic of a farcical turn of events (loc. 1752). Rather than constituting a cathartic moment, the episode transmutes into an endeavour to silence grieving families, achieving success in certain instances. Agüero astutely recognises the poignant desire for closure among families, even if attained through the acceptance of a spurious resolution. He reports what he observes during a meeting when the supposed remains are presented:

> Pero fue triste ver que algunos familiares, pese a que obvio de la farsa, igual se llevaron las cajas, sin importarles si realmente estaban allí sus deudos. Lo necesitaban. Ahora en algún lugar tienen enterrados, visitan y llevan flores, por fin, a su desaparecido de tantos años, solo que no es el suyo, son solo restos, restos de gente como cualquiera. (loc. 1774)

The author discerns a sad reality where the authenticity of reuniting with the remains of the loved ones becomes a staged farse, while concurrently he refrains from casting judgment on those families opting for such ostensibly falsified gestures. Notwithstanding this, Agüero elects to dismiss the box supposedly containing his father as a fabrication, thereby conceding to the postponement of attaining an unequivocal truth. Thus, a state of suspended orphanhood is reinforced, potentially persisting indefinitely at the juncture of "la búsqueda."

Within the pages of *Los rendidos*, José Carlos Agüero delineates an experience of orphanhood susceptible to interpretation through the lens of disrupted affect and the resultant suspension. The narrative roots of this condition can be traced, firstly, to the protracted period of waiting preceding the mother's anticipated arrest, placing her in a liminal state between life and death. Additionally, the narrative underscores the impossibility of recovering the father's remains, thereby hindering the completion of the mourning process. The author remains cognisant of the potential pitfalls of mythologising and justifying the violent actions of his parents, recognising the nuanced challenges inherent in navigating the rhetoric surrounding their involvement. As can be seen from the themes raised in Agüero's prose, he presents his experiences in the context of conflicting affects and unresolvable dilemmas. One of these is the tension between love for his parents and the recognition of the inevitability of their death as a result of their own decisions. Similarly, an unfulfilled bereavement puts the author in a position of suspense and provokes rebellion against acceptance of fabrications with the sole purpose of finding peace which he observes among other families in a similar situation. However, the constant search for and consideration of the past in the narrative also have a positive aspect, as they open up space for compassion, which Agüero sees as essential for attempts at reconciliation. In the next subsection of this chapter, I will examine the notion of "vergüenza" which is one more factor inherently connected by the author with his state of orphanhood and, simultaneously, contributing to the ability to develop compassion.

2.1.2. "Vergüenza" and "vulnerabilidad"

As can be clearly seen from the analysis of the narrative so far, the author's upbringing is influenced by his parents' involvement in Sendero Luminoso, even though he himself was never

a member of the organization. This influence is evident in his relationships, friendships and family ties. Agüero reveals how the family, due to their ties to the terrorist group, becomes the focal point of a known yet unspoken secret within their community. In *Los rendidos*, the author reflects on the different levels of awareness among their neighbours and friends in El Augustino, describing it as "círculos concéntricos donde todos saben, pero a diferente nivel" (loc. 193). Living at the core of a phenomenon involving complicity in a dangerous secret, the author, even as a child, observes two distinct attitudes towards himself and his family: silent support and respect on one hand and hostility, alienation or even "terror" on the other (loc. 181). In the subsequent paragraphs, I will explore how the political affiliations of the parents become a source of shame for the author as a young boy, evolving into a different type of feeling over time. I will also analyse the cognitive dissonance related to the author's place among the other actors of the post-conflict scene which he does not resolve in the narrative. This examination arises from and leads to a potential revaluation of concepts such as "herencia" and "responsabilidad de los hijos" (De La Paz Amaro; Kabusch) in the context of literary studies. Consequently, the author-narrator finds himself in a paradoxical position in twenty-first-century society, unable to escape the weight of his parents' political past while simultaneously redefining his situation as that of a victim. I argue that at the core of this predicament is the feeling of "vergüenza," a concept that expresses one part of the inheritance of *hijos*, as well as serves as a preventive measure against the mythologisation, glorification or excusing of the armed struggle's brutality.

The awareness of the family's connections with Sendero Luminoso in the El Augustino community results in the public acknowledgement of a supposedly clandestine life. Contrary to how "secretos públicos" such as belonging to a militant group can be viewed from the perspective of time, the author perceives them as "solo una metáfora" (loc. 193), challenging

assumptions that revolutionary efforts in the urban setting during the eighties and nineties occurred in isolation and unknown to the community. According to Agüero, the neighbourhood and family are not only cognisant of their situation but also seldom remain neutral, responding to it in various ways. Some neighbours express distant support for the message of social justice, while others exhibit hostility. Notably, some abruptly change their opinions based on circumstances. Agüero illustrates this phenomenon through a situation following the death of a Sendero member close to the family, leading them to leave their house and go into hiding. Some friends assist in securing their belongings from being burglarised, while others opt for self-protection through silence. However, one neighbour's attitude stands out as particularly painful for the narrator:

> Pero aún recuerdo mi decepción por una vecina en particular. Vivía cerca, con dos hijitos muy pequeños, en la miseria más terrible. Mi madre hablaba con ella sobre su relación con un tipo que la maltrataba, le daba consejos, la trataba como a una sobrina necesitada de amparo. Con ella no buscó hacer política o involucrarla en nada del "P" [Partido]. Constantemente le compartimos nuestra escasa comida y llegamos a cuidar de sus bebes. Ella fue la que nos señaló con más odio. Con rabia. "Esa mujer es una terruca, es la lideresa," les decía a los policías. No sé si todo el tiempo que estuvimos ayudándola nos odió. (loc. 206)

The author juxtaposes the benevolent actions of his parents, particularly his mother, with the sudden betrayal by the woman. However, he does not portray her in an entirely negative light; instead, he raises doubts about her motivation, seeking explanations for her behaviour: "Tal vez solo quiso existir. Y esa fue su oportunidad" (loc. 212).

Therefore, the author demonstrates a deliberate and careful approach to refraining from making explicit moral or ethical judgments, aligning with the broader context of his texts and the objective of "abrir estos temas a lo público" (loc. 65) without imposing restrictions on who can voice their experiences or how. The author's summary of the neighbour's story serves as a form of leading by example, reflecting the approach he advocates. However, this episode also adds a crucial layer of ambiguity to the narrative, a feature that distinguishes it not only in terms of content but also in expressing uncertainty inherent to memory itself.

While Salazar Jiménez characterises *Los rendidos* as "un lugar inédito en la narrativa peruana" (172), it is noteworthy that the text not only breaks new ground in its themes but also in its portrayal of the uncertainty surrounding memory. An instance of such doubt is tied to the scene, in which Agüero acknowledges that his memories starkly differ from those of his younger brother (loc. 1643). This disparity is unsurprising when considered within the context of the particular nature of childhood memories, a theme frequently explored by literary fiction writers and a significant aspect of autobiographical texts. Elenor Arfuch captures the intricacies of memory retrieval, stating: "ese volver sobre la infancia no es inocuo, hay allí una búsqueda de sentidos que se enfrenta a menudo con imágenes de contorno incierto" (loc. 1175). The essential process for the author-narrator to reconstruct his past through this "búsqueda de sentidos" is simultaneously flawed due to its inherent "contorno incierto," affected by time and perspectives.

Yet, Agüero's narrative goes beyond mere haziness in outline, introducing a direct contradiction between his recollection and that of his brother (loc. 1666). The two remember the quoted situation in radically different ways, with one portraying the neighbour as a traitor and the other as one who defended the family. They fail to find common ground or agreement between the two versions. In such circumstances, the reader is prompted to ponder the value of memories

when any certainty about their accuracy can be undermined. Should they be regarded as facts or rather fictional stories made up after? The text, by not avoiding the clash of the two, implicitly engages in the debate on the feasibility of writing "objective" history (Le Goff 23). However, the author refrains from directly forming a conclusion, just as he avoids making moral judgments. Instead, he embraces the inherent ambiguity within his texts which forms a situation in which his own version of events functions as equally valid to that of another person witnessing an event and remembering it differently. Therefore, in the ongoing debate between objective history and subjective memory, Agüero aligns with his own research and that of other Peruvian scholars associated with memory studies. They advocate for diversification and the inclusion of memories from various sources and perspectives, particularly for educational purposes (Uccelli et al. 146). The acceptance of ambiguity becomes a fundamental aspect of this approach, emphasising the importance of acknowledging and embracing diverse narratives in the collective understanding of historical events.

A confrontation with the memory of the neighbour's betrayal exposes the entire family's involvement in the "secreto público" (193) in which the origin of "vergüenza" is rooted. This awareness elicits various emotional reactions from Agüero himself, with shame being a predominant sentiment explored in the first chapter of the text. The narrative unfolds with instances in which shame takes on different forms, starting notably during Agüero's boyhood, before becoming orphaned. In a poignant episode, the author experiences rejection from a friend's parents who prohibit their child from playing with him. This clash between the carefree world of children and the cautious attitude of adults leads to Agüero's being asked to leave his friend's house, even though their intention was simply to play Monopoly together. His initial confusion is evident as he reflects: "Yo no había hecho nada para ser tratado así. Yo no había

querido ir, me habían invitado" (loc. 290). Despite lacking guilt, Agüero is left feeling hurt and accused just for being an extension of his parents or, as he later states, "construido desde su memoria de mi madre como un anexo de ella" (loc. 293). This vignette is mirrored in a similar event two decades later when a woman, familiar with his family's background, rejects him based on her relatives' opinions of his parents' history.

The anecdotes draw attention to a specific facet of shame that the author aims to illustrate. Firstly, Agüero recognises his lack of guilt for his parents' wrongdoings. Secondly, he accepts that, due to their familial connection, he will invariably remain linked to their guilt in some manner. Consequently, in *Los rendidos*, Agüero redefines "vergüenza" as an inseparable component of his identity as the son of Sendero militants. In examining the broader context of the association between the term "vergüenza" and political violence or armed struggle, it is often linked to war crimes of a sexual nature against both women and men. This connotation is evident in studies related to the internal armed conflict in Peru (Torres Falcón; Ledesma Narváez; Sastre Díaz). However, Agüero directs attention to a radically distinct aspect of shame in the post-conflict period, one divorced from physical humiliation. It transcends typical bodily reactions to embarrassing events, such as "la piel enrojecida o las manos sudorosas" (loc. 154). Moreover, it surpasses even the temporary response to rejection experienced in situations where he was judged based on his parents' militancy. Instead, Agüero establishes a responsibility for how he remembers his parents and the conflict, making "vergüenza" a part of it. This responsibility is founded on an awareness of belonging to a family whose members were involved in violent acts, an awareness intrinsically triggering shame. Thus, it evolves into a form of acknowledgement and consciousness of the internal imperative to arrive at the most objective assessment possible

of his parents' actions and their consequences within the armed struggle which is not overshadowed by pride or love.

Agüero grapples with the seemingly impossible task of confronting and reconciling the actions of his parents, who were involved with Sendero Luminoso and in doing so he constructs a reasoning that emphasises their active decision-making role. By acknowledging the collateral damage caused by their choices, he challenges the narrative that portrays individuals as pushed against the wall and devoid of choices, undermining the glorification of militancy for social justice. This exercise serves to prevent the creation of myths around Sendero and requires Agüero to renounce pride. Simultaneously, it places him in a vulnerable position, rejecting self-protection mechanisms. The narrative is repeatedly punctuated by reflections on his parents' guilt, appearing seemingly spontaneously, resembling confessions for someone else's sins. These reflections interrupt the logical flow of the narrative but are deemed indispensable for facing the reality of the family history through vulnerability and a rejection of self-protection.

Simultaneously, we might wonder why the narrator is the one to feel shame if he did not commit any crimes. He recognises this paradox when writing about his historical and political inheritance: "Los hijos no pueden heredar la culpa de los padres. No es justo. Pero sí la heredan porque la justicia no es más que una palabra que debe construirse en cada contacto humano, no un imperativo categórico" (loc. 450). Despite not committing any crime himself, Agüero experiences both guilt and shame, which he attributes to the societal attitude in Peru. The general perception of terrorists and their immediate environment, without proper investigation into their actual involvement, contributes to the burden of guilt as he notes: "los hijos de terroristas no tienen derecho a grandes manifestaciones de duelo. Todo, incluso la muerte, es parte de un secreto transparente y vulgar" (loc. 583). Society's expectations, including the denial of the right

to mourn peacefully for the children of terrorists, serve as a catalyst for these emotions. While Agüero's upbringing discourages adopting a victim identity (loc. 583), he acknowledges the societal moral judgment, leading to a paradoxical conclusion, namely, to recognise himself as a victim after all when he states: "No importa si no me siento víctima y si nunca me comporté como una. El hecho es que si este mundo de normas y moral tiene algo de valor, lo soy. Al margen de mi voluntad" (loc. 594). In both states, inherited guilt and acceptance of being a victim, seemingly contradictive positions, the "voluntad" is placed secondary to the social constructs that influence his identity. The act of writing could be therefore read as an attempt at rescuing individual will.

In the spirit of fostering open dialogue, Agüero acknowledges that the acceptance of shame is not a universal experience within the *hijos* community, recognising that individuals may respond differently to their parents' involvement with Sendero Luminoso or the MRTA. He observes that, contrary to his own perspective, some members of the community may find pride where he sees a place for shame because "no creer que esta vergüenza valga la pena, le sirve a muchos" (loc. 162). While he does not dismiss this alternative stance as inappropriate, the author-narrator acknowledges dangers arising from those who based on pride "iban creando nuevos mitos sobre los senderistas y sus proezas libertarias, su afán igualitarista, su entrega a causas mayores, su sacrificio personal por el bien de los demás" (loc. 154). Agüero goes further to challenge such straightforward answers that provide comfort to supporters of certain narratives, particularly those explaining parents' actions through the rhetoric of "lo hicieron por el bien de los demás" (loc. 154). He urges consideration of alternative perspectives, pushing the dialogue into a nuanced zone without constantly recusing the overused argument of recovering

the context. From this point of view, concepts like “legacy” and “responsibility” become central in discussions about post-conflict society, as also noted by scholars like Lorena de la Paz Amaro.

Agüero’s text suggests that the understanding of “responsibility” and the handling of family history will vary in each individual case. He does not push any particular way of fulfilling this responsibility or legacy. However, the notion of shame which he explores in the chapter titled “Estigma” constitutes a noteworthy challenge to the way the generation of *hijos* tends to portray themselves. A similar dilemma about the balance between pride and shame takes a central place in Rafael Salgado’s memoir *De silencios y otros ruidos*. In the next part of this chapter, I will examine this text as a source of one more perspective on the legacy of militancy and its influence on the author’s life arising from the circumstances of his orphanhood.

2.2. Rafael Salgado Olivera

Rafael Salgado Olivera, as delineated in the biographical note accompanying the initial release of his work *De silencios y otros ruidos* (2022), works as an educator and chemical engineer who currently resides in Belgium, all while maintaining an unwavering focus on his native Peru. The locus of his literary endeavours extends to Cuba, where he pursued higher education and encountered fellow members of the collective Hijos del Perú. This collective comprises offspring of left-wing militants, some of whom faced detention, execution or disappearance during Peru’s internal armed conflict. Notably, Salgado’s father, also named Rafael, fell victim to extrajudicial detention, torture and execution in 1992 (CVR 837), an event that indelibly marked the author and his family. In this segment, I examine Salgado’s literary portrayal, delving into his quest to fathom his father’s involvement with the MRTA and the enduring repercussions of this decision on the formation of the author’s identity.

The examination posits that Salgado's life can be dichotomised into distinct periods encapsulated by the titular concepts of "silencios" and "otros ruidos." These phases represent divergent responses to the traumatic events of the past, with "silencios" embodying protracted spans of veiling family history in secrecy, deeming it a taboo subject. In contrast, "ruidos" encapsulates the act of publicising the same narrative through avenues such as memory workshops, collective activism, literary pursuits and informal conversations within familial and peer contexts. This arduous and potentially deleterious process of denouncing human rights violations perpetrated against Salgado's father concurrently triggers Salgado's introspective endeavour to comprehend his own positioning within post-conflict Peruvian society. As delineated in this analysis, *De silencios y otros ruidos* accentuates the imperative to reevaluate the methodologies employed by organizations like Hijos de Perú in their collaborative reconciliation initiatives, underscoring the necessity for therapeutic interventions and mutual comprehension within their ranks.

To enhance comprehension of the narrative backdrop constructed by Salgado, a contextual exploration of the organisation to which his father belonged becomes imperative. This pertains to the broader conflict between governmental forces and subversive entities during the 1980s and 1990s, in which Sendero Luminoso commonly emerged as the preeminent force fomenting violence and terror. However, concurrent with Sendero Luminoso, other groups, notably the MRTA, played an active role in perpetrating terrorist actions. Distinguished from Sendero Luminoso by its modus operandi, specifically, the establishment of uniformed troops stationed in bases removed from civilian population centres, the MRTA, as per the findings of the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, accounted for approximately 1.5% of total casualties, significantly less than Sendero Luminoso (CVR, "Conclusiones"). Despite this, the MRTA's

actions left a pronounced impact on the urban population in Lima, Huancayo and Chiclayo, notably exemplified by the Japanese Embassy Hostage Crisis during which MRTA members held over four hundred individuals hostage during a celebration of the Japanese emperor's birthday, an event still subject to analysis for its educational value in security research (Saaty & Mu; Nguyen & Matusitz).

In recent years, the theme of the MRTA has gained increased prominence across various literary, academic and non-fictional domains. From a literary standpoint, Juan Manuel Robles' novel *Nuevos juguetes de la guerra fría* (2015) stands out, incorporating MRTA members as pivotal characters. The narrative employs a fictional account featuring an adult narrator endeavouring to reconstruct fragmented memories of his school days as a pioneer in the Cuban embassy in La Paz. Through this, historical contexts are seamlessly interwoven, addressing issues such as the political indoctrination of children and the intricate nature of reconciling a mosaic of false and authentic recollections. In the realm of non-fiction, noteworthy essays penned by Alberto Gálvez Olaechea, a leader within the organization, emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The collection, titled *Desde el país de las sombras* (2009), was composed during his incarceration. Subsequently, another compilation, *Con la palabra desarmada* (2015), authored by Gálvez Olaechea, ignited controversy regarding the legitimacy of a former terrorist's engagement in discussions on the political landscape of the country (Durand Guevarra). Simultaneously, efforts within the academic sphere sought to systematise the role of the MRTA in the narrative of the conflict, with Meza Bazán's thesis titled *El Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru* (2012) notably summarising the movement's activities comprehensively. Moreover, a key study by Miguel la Serna, *With Masses and Arms: Peru's Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement*, published in 2020 and subsequently released in Spanish

as *Con masas y armas. Auge y caída del MRTA* (2023), aims to fill a critical gap by focusing on the narratives of conflict participants, providing unprecedented insights into their everyday experiences, dilemmas and motivations (La Serna 12).

This comprehensive exploration aligns with the primary objectives of the present study. The text under scrutiny in this chapter, while considered a literary source, also functions as a non-fictional account, a record of a narrator's recollections. Although not directly involved in the armed struggle of the MRTA, the author-narrator-protagonist offers an intimate and familial perspective on the life and death of one of its members. Within this section of the chapter, I delve into the two contrasting attitudes toward the past evident in Salgado's narrative, stemming directly from his father's association with the MRTA, periods of silence and periods of vociferous denouncements. To address the latter, I introduce the term "hyperaudability," a concept that, alongside "hypervisibility," has traditionally been featured in scholarship related to race and women's studies (Hobson; Mowatt et al.; Ingleton; Newton). However, within the purview of this investigation, it proves instrumental in encapsulating a paradoxical position, expressing simultaneous silencing or invisibility and hyper-exposition (Arat- Koç), an experience not unfamiliar to the author in the specific post-conflict setting of Peru. Additionally, I examine the contradictory nature of this position itself, intricately linked with the complex role, definition and limits imposed on the notion of a victim within the unique sociopolitical context. Through this analysis, I argue that Salgado's activism, as articulated in his memoir, unveils voices in contemporary Peruvian politics and society that, though existent, remain unheard and unassimilated into the narrative of post-conflict reconciliation.

Irrespective of the sociopolitical or economic context, Salgado's narrative remains deeply intimate and familial, representing an individual experience while also belonging to a collective

of similar yet distinct voices. This narrative trend in Peruvian literature by *hijos* seeks "una verdad íntima, ligada a la necesidad de contar el propio yo" (Saona 180). In alignment with the objectives contained in the previous part of this chapter and articulated by José Carlos Agüero, it contributes to complicating the discourse of memory concerning the internal armed conflict, exposing its paradoxical nature as a tapestry woven from similar yet non-uniform stories, even within a specific collective. Lastly, I examine the state of orphanhood experienced by Salgado on two distinct levels. In a literal sense, his testimony denounces an act of political violence resulting in the loss of his father. However, the repercussions of this event, including the inability to secure legal justice for the harm suffered, extend to a broader sense of orphaning at a national level. This stems from governmental apathy toward his father's case and the lack of an anchor for the *hijos* generation within the national memory.

2.2.1. Silences

Losing his father undoubtedly stands out as the central event in Salgado's narrative. While the immediate temporal settings of this loss are explored in the first part of his testimony, comprehending the full magnitude of its repercussions and the circumstances leading to it requires a deeper exploration beyond the immediate before and after. This subsection follows the structure of the narrative, shedding light on the context of Salgado's orphaning, a theme expanded upon in the initial two parts of his account. My analysis focuses particularly on how his environment, notably the family, constructs a dense veil of silences and omissions as a defensive reaction, driven by the fear of ostracism and stigmatisation associated with being a member of a terrorist organisation. Through this examination, I aim to illustrate how the author's narrative standpoint emerges from an intricate network of family relationships intertwined with

social and political factors, resulting in an ambiguous role within the binary discourse of the conflict in post-conflict Peru, paralleling the nuanced position explored in the preceding part of this chapter concerning José Carlos Agüero. This ambivalence is closely tied to the challenge of finding a fitting place in the national memory, constrained by a rigid division into victims, perpetrators and peacemakers. Consequently, it serves as a crucial source for a deeper understanding of individual and, to some extent, collective memories that have yet to find ample space in public discourse, exposing obstacles in presenting such perspectives.

The initial indications of the family's role as a silencing structure around the narrator become apparent in their handling of Salgado Castilla's death (Salgado 88-89). The dissemination of information among relatives occurs gradually, starting with his brother and sister, who personally view the body in the morgue. Subsequently, the news reaches the executed man's ex-wife and, through her, the children. However, as Salgado attempts to reconcile the accounts of various relatives who were firsthand witnesses to the event, their narratives are marked by uncertainty, disagreements on certain aspects of the happenings and deliberate omissions. Such a fragmented or punctured memory is a characteristic outcome of trauma, resulting in "quiebres en la transmisión de las memorias dentro de las familias, causados por el impacto de la violencia política extrema, y que dan lugar a un relato fragmentario, hecho de silencios, secretos y pesadillas" (Basile, *Infancias* 33). The inability to construct a cohesive narrative exhibited by Salgado's relatives serves as another testament to the subjectivity of memory and a significant factor contributing to the subsequent silence following the death of his father.

The voices of various family members at this juncture contribute to the silence, paradoxically, through distortions and noises, challenging efforts to systematise and formulate a

coherent story. The author-narrator finds himself unable to confirm either version of events presented differently by his aunt and uncle, as he himself appears to have forgotten its circumstances (89). Similar challenges in reconstructing memory related to traumatic events are not unfamiliar to researchers outside of literary criticism, spanning disciplines such as memory studies (Laney & Loftus), psychology (Manzanero; Odinot et al.) and even legal debates (Cañas Serrano). In the context of a family history entwined with the experience of brutal violence, trauma becomes a significant obstacle on the path to reconstructing facts (Harvey & Herman), thereby reinforcing silence. Features of such a phenomenon unmistakably manifest in Salgado's text when, in response to family members' stories about the immediate aftermath of his father's death, he admits: "Yo no lo recuerdo así" (88) or "Yo no recuerdo nada de eso" (89). Although he is not entirely devoid of memories from that time, these are largely supplemented by conflicting recollections from others (88). In attempting to reconstruct the circumstances of his father's death, the first aspect of the family's paradoxical role in the process becomes, therefore, revealed. Through their efforts to relay the facts to the narrator, they simultaneously create a fractured, fragmented story that distances him from a coherent summary, leaving the reconstruction as a collection of impressions dominated by contradiction.

Yet, the complexity of remembering extends beyond unconscious forgetting or discrepancies in various perspectives. An additional layer of intricacy in reconstructing the past arises through the deliberate fabrication of a false version of the father's death, a narrative that the narrator and his relatives find necessary to convey in certain circumstances. This occurs, for instance, when safety concerns or potential prejudice prevent them from or dissuade them from disclosing the truth. The author mentions such instances when recalling his reunion with his younger stepbrother, his father's son, who, as he realised, was also told a false reason for their

father's death, namely, a car accident (123). Ironically, the concocted story used by the stepbrother's mother and, at times, also employed by his own family, includes a mention of an accident, aligning closely with the official cause of Salgado Castilla's death fabricated by the police (123). Consequently, a false narrative adds a layer of suppressing the truth, driven by the imperative of survival in a particular political climate that compels the protagonist and those around him to align their account of events with the narrative crafted by Salgado's assassins. As a result, the narrative's reconstruction of events is distorted by a false input and, although the author strives to maintain relative chronological order in his relation, it is replete with digressions and additional viewpoints appended to the main axis, representing his own perspective. Consequently, one cannot escape the impression that Salgado's recollection and perception of the events from the eighties and nineties constitute a collage of opinions and observations, both factual and false, to which he was exposed at the time, often revealing contradictions and accumulating to obscure the truth rather than express it.

Engaging in silence becomes, for the author, a necessity intertwined with the imperative to conceal his private life, a practice initiated in early childhood. As the reader discovers, Salgado meticulously constructs a barrier between his home and school life, staunchly preventing the two realms from intertwining, especially when his family is compelled to relocate to San Juan de Luringancho following his father's death. This transition accentuates the divergence between schoolmates, whose parents belong to Lima's middle class and the altered circumstances of young Rafael, who daily confronts an environment where "terminaba la vida material como la había vivido y comenzaba otra" (56). Consequently, the boy finds himself leading a bifurcated life: "Dos Limas, dos Rafaeles, dos voces, dos ruidos, dos silencios. Una vida de contradicciones, de contrastes" (57). Hence, it is unsurprising that retreating into silence

emerges as the seemingly uncomplicated means of grappling with the paradox of these two parallel existences, as Salgado articulates: “Comenzaba así una etapa que profundizó el silencio en mi vida” (57).

The root of this as well as of further silences, as perceived by the child narrator, are therefore intricately tied to the day of his father’s death. This pivotal event is strategically placed at the forefront of the text, deviating from the predominantly chronological narrative structure. Salgado commences the story in medias res, on the day the news of his father’s demise surfaces. The scene unfolds in chaos, with family members’ displaying unusual behaviour, weeping, and congregating in an uncle’s apartment, all set against an environment that feels “extraño, diferente; incluso hasta desconocido” (22), emphasising the abnormality of the situation. However, the child’s response to his father’s death is equally atypical, given the circumstances, and brings to mind similar situations described by Agüero. Despite family members’ attempts to shield him from the details, the narrator instinctively senses that the event disrupting his weekly routine is his father’s death. Across several paragraphs, he recurrently hints at a foreboding feeling, even after being denied more explicit information: “Yo estaba en silencio, nervioso, quizás sabiendo en el fondo lo que sucedía, pero sin poder pronunciarlo, afirmarlo” (22). When his mother eventually admits to the father’s death, Salgado reiterates: “No sé bien por qué la noticia no me tomó por sorpresa. De alguna forma esperaba noticias difíciles” (23). Although initially claiming ignorance about the reasons for this foreboding, he simultaneously underscores the broader political climate immediately following Fujimori’s self-coup in 1992. The media extensively covered terrorism during this period, featuring images of family members searching for their *desaparecidos*, a fact that the author also includes in his memories (23). Despite being a

young child distanced from political discussions and the activities of his father and other MRTA members, the narrator instinctively perceives the danger surrounding his father's position.

Henceforth, the narrative unfolds a compelling argument suggesting that the absence of explicit knowledge does not impede the young protagonist from intuitively comprehending his father's involvement in perilous undertakings, potentially leading to fatal consequences. Both familial and sociopolitical contexts contribute to a form of conditioning that enables the boy to interpret silence as a significant source of information. Analogous to Agüero's predicament preceding his mother's demise, a sense of impending catastrophe emerges, stemming from the recurrent and prolonged absences of the father. These absences, perceived by young Rafael as unpredictable, sow the seeds of anticipation, hinting that one day they may evolve into an indefinite separation. It becomes evident that the abandonment experienced by the protagonist predates the arrest and demise of his father. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the notion of orphanhood for Agüero and his siblings appears to be suspended in time even before their mother's death. Her status as "living dead," awaiting capture and execution, elongates into a process resembling a temporal spread of death. Similarly in Salgado's story the palpable tension arising from ominous forebodings and the anticipation of the worst draws parallels with Teresa Basile's concept of "orphandad suspendida" (141). The author voices this suspension when he identifies with the shared experiences of the children of militants from Pampas de Molinos: "Todas cargadas de perdidas, de ausencias que no empezaron cuando desaparecieron a sus familiares pues la militancia de sus familiares generó ausencia también" (172).

Therefore, even before the state apparatus detains the father, his frequent disappearances contribute to a withdrawal from family life, establishing a state of "una presencia-ausencia" (Basile, "La orfandad" 143). This paradoxical presence-absence, reminiscent of the concept of

quantum superposition or Schrödinger's cat thought experiment, becomes apparent in various instances recounted by the author. For instance, Salgado Senior seizes a rare opportunity for a family outing as a cover for scouting Castro Castro prison in Lima from the outside with the purpose of planning the escape of MRTA comrades (86). Such situations underscore that, despite the lack of explicit discussions about his father's activism, young Rafael discerns his own secondary role in relation to his political involvement, grasping the nuances through observations of absences and silences.

The gravity of the disappearances described in the narrative is intricately linked to the father's heightened involvement in militancy, a phenomenon that amplifies the distressing nature of the circumstances. The culmination of this situation is his father's departure to Huancayo while the rest of the family is left in Lima:

> Cuando mi papá decidió irse a Huancayo mi mamá no sabía todo lo que él quería hacer allá. Por eso le propuso que nos fuéramos toda la familia. Él no aceptó, se fue solo. Esa fue su elección. Dicen que por nuestra seguridad fue mejor así (…) Creo que en gran medida esa etapa fue el comienzo del fin de su relación como pareja. (96)

This critical juncture is underscored by Salgado's introspective observation that this choice marked the inception of the unravelling of the parental relationship, an eventuality he perceives in retrospect as a premeditated act, "su elección" (96). The clandestine nature of this behaviour is attributed not only to security concerns but also to the author's youth, rendering him incapable of comprehending the full scope of his father's activities. Salgado emphasises that he was not indoctrinated or explicitly educated by his parents; rather, his understanding of their values emerges primarily from observational learning, particularly noting his mother's engagement in grassroots movements (94-95). Despite this, the author is explicitly instructed to maintain silence

on certain aspects of their life, specifically those that could implicate a connection with the MRTA (101). The overarching theme of secrecy permeates the narrative, reflecting the complex interplay between familial relationships, political activism and the imperative of safeguarding loved ones in a tumultuous sociopolitical context.

Does it mean that the father's death opens up the possibility of leaving the realm of silence? On the contrary: the pervasiveness of the clandestine motif in the narrative extends beyond the secretive life of the MRTA connection, casting a profound shadow over the author's existence in the years to follow. The intricate task of reconstructing the past becomes a formidable challenge, complicated by the distortion inherent in family members' memories, where facts intertwine with fabricated narratives. This approach is not solely a consequence of the fallibility of memory but also serves as a self-preserving mechanism. The author, cognisant of the distortions surrounding the discourse on the internal armed conflict in Peru, writes his testimony as a polemic against the prevailing homogeneity in narratives concerning that tumultuous period (16). This defiant stance is underscored by the enduring implications of security entwined with silence, particularly in the post-conflict setting for an individual in Salgado's precarious position. Growing up as the son of an active member of the MRTA implicated in terrorist activities and posthumously accused of kidnappings and murders associated with the movement (Jiménez Bacca 854, 858, 859), the author finds himself in the throes of a politically charged reality. The mere affiliation with a perceived or actual terrorist, whether known or unknown to the individual, makes one susceptible to "terruqueo," a Peruvian phenomenon characterised as "an instrument of political and social censorship that begins by delegitimising certain memory narratives focused on human rights, victims and reparations and moving on to delegitimise various claims that are associated with a Left-wing or progressive

agenda" (Velásquez Villalba, *Memory Battles* 51). José Carlos Agüero echoes similar accusations in *Los rendidos*, underscoring the impact of targeted allegations of terrorism. However, this phenomenon traces its roots back to the conflict itself, with the term "terruco" emerging as a synonym for "terrorista." According to Carlos Aguirre, it became widely used by the state security forces around 1983, if not before that year (119). The scholar highlights how expressions containing "terruco" infiltrated everyday language and media discourse:

> Era empleado en conversaciones privadas y cotidianas, pero también solía aparecer en la prensa escrita de la época. Expresiones comunes en esos días, como "pareces terruco" o "tiene pinta de terruco", revelan las asociaciones que se establecían entre "terroristas" y ciertos rasgos físicos (…). Niños inquietos, por ejemplo, eran llamados —afectivamente, se entiende— "terruquitos". (Aguirre 119)

Evidently, during the conflict, terms synonymous with "terrorist" not only acquired linguistic prominence to denote negative characteristics but also served as a vehicle for racial discrimination and political stigmatisation.

However, the practice of terruqueo persists beyond the resolution of the armed conflict and the downfall of Fujimori's administration. Recent studies indicate that right-wing leaders continue to employ this strategy to dismiss actions, narratives and opinions associated with political opposition and delegitimise them through alleged connections to terrorist methods and ideology (Velásquez Villalba, *Memory Battles*; Watanabe et al.). Unsurprisingly, the fear of *terruqueo* assumes a prominent role in Salgado's narrative, permeating various chapters and contexts. Notably, titular "silencios" primarily result from the apprehension of potential ostracism, a pervasive anxiety shared by his entire family, deterring them from discussing their experiences for decades, even within the confines of their home. As the author elucidates, the

imperative of silence originates in the clandestine way of life as a MRTA militant's family: "mi padre [...] vivía y nos hizo vivir, en cierta forma una vida clandestina" (15), but this necessity extends beyond the father's disappearance, transforming silence into "nuestra forma de sobrevivencia, representaba la frágil ilusión de seguridad, de no correr peligro" (15). Crucially, the author links breaking this silence to the perilous prospect of stigmatisation, loss of employment and social rejection, simultaneously recognising it as the only avenue to disrupt the prevailing homogeneous discourses on the armed struggle. Thus, he constructs a conflict that is not only discomforting but also potentially harmful.

This paradoxical situation ironically places him in a somewhat analogous position to that of his father when the latter decided to fully commit himself to militancy. Salgado theorises that the conundrum faced in both instances entails an unavoidable choice to act against one's best interest to effect change. Salgado Senior, opting for armed struggle to achieve social justice, did so at the expense of his family's safety (182-183). Years later, the son takes parallel steps, albeit without a weapon in hand. Despite being directly affected by his father's actions and understanding the potential consequences of speaking out, he perceives no alternative but to do so publicly. This decision, even if it means history coming full circle and exacerbating negative repercussions for the family, underscores the persistent dilemma of sacrificing personal well-being for the pursuit of broader societal transformation (15). The narrative thus unveils an interplay of fear, survival strategies and the compelling need to challenge established narratives, creating a poignant parallel between the father's commitment to armed struggle and the son's commitment to breaking the silence.

Overall, it may be said that Salgado's experience of abandonment predates the death of his father, marking the inception of a form of orphanhood that introduces the initial signs of this

state. The early signs of orphanhood, rooted in the abandonment preceding his father's demise, set the tone for a life fragmented by secrecy and veiled in silence providing an illusory cocoon of security. However, after years of maintaining a private existence shielded from public scrutiny, the author ultimately concludes that breaking this silence, even at the risk of enduring stigmatization and ostracism, becomes a potent means of advocating for justice. The persistent fear of *terruqueo*, encapsulated in the family's decades-long silence, serves as a haunting reminder of the sacrifices made for survival in a post-conflict society. However, the author's journey takes a transformative turn as he confronts the paradoxical necessity of breaking this silence. In doing so, he steps into the realm of hypervisibility and hyperaudibility, challenging established narratives, advocating not only against human rights violations but for his intrinsic right to exist within the intricate fabric of post-conflict reality, navigating between the shadows of fear and the quest for justice. It underscores the inherent contradictions faced by individuals compelled to act against their own interests for societal change. By breaking the silence, Salgado not only transforms his personal narrative but also contributes to the broader discourse on the armed struggle, challenging homogeneity and promoting a nuanced understanding of the complexities that define post-conflict societies. In conclusion, Salgado's journey from abandonment to hypervisibility encapsulates the enduring struggle for identity in the aftermath of the armed conflict. His story becomes a testament to the resilience required to confront silence, challenge prevailing discourses and, ultimately, assert the right to exist in a society grappling with the legacies of its tumultuous past.

2.2.2. Hyperaudability

Silence permeates Salgado's childhood, marking it with fragmentation and contradictions. Yet, his narrative also traces a transformative journey from silence to loud, public and collective

activism, a shift not merely towards regaining a voice but an explosive entry into hyperaudibility. This section argues that this transition results from a combination of factors that empowered the author to denounce human rights violations against his father and the injustices he himself endured. Key factors, highlighted in the narrative, include family support, experiences in Cuba, collaboration within the collective of Hijos de Perú, engagement with various organisations across Latin America and therapeutic interventions. The text suggests that overcoming the trauma tied to orphanhood due to political violence is not a one-size-fits-all process but a highly individualistic journey. Therefore, the narrative constitutes an instance of a tailored method of struggling for inner peace after traumatic events, showcasing the complexity of healing and the diverse paths survivors may take.

Terms such as "hypervisibility" and "hyperaudibility" have garnered attention in scholarly discourse on racial studies, particularly in recent years, serving as descriptors for the activism and public presence of women of colour (Mowatt; Ingleton; Stecher Guzmán; Newton). Marie-Louise Richards traces the conceptual origins of these terms to Frantz Fanon's phenomenological and psychoanalytical critique, highlighting their enduring significance within the realms of race, gender studies and cultural production (Richards 43-45). Hypervisibility and hyperaudibility are intricately tied to power dynamics, encapsulating the dual nature of a person of colour experiencing both "racial invisibility" (being perceived solely as lacking) and "racial hypervisibility" (being excessively Other) (Stein 134). However, inherently entwined with structures of power, the present argument contends that the concepts of hypervisibility and hyperaudibility manifest themselves, albeit more subtly, in cases involving marginalised individuals beyond the scope of race and gender. This is exemplified by the situation faced by Salgado in post-conflict Peru. His narrative unfolds the complex dynamics where he is

simultaneously excluded from national memory, silenced and subjected to overexposure, criticism and stigmatisation when attempting to engage in dialogue and present alternative experiences, such as being the son of an MRTA fighter. Consequently, Salgado experiences both silencing and hyperaudibility, illuminating the paradoxical role played by him and fellow activists in shaping contemporary Peruvian memory and culture. In the subsequent paragraphs, this analysis endeavours to examine how the potentially adverse consequences of hyperaudibility are navigated by the author across three contexts: the familial sphere, the collective identity of Hijos de Perú and psychological therapy.

As demonstrated in the preceding section of this chapter, the family significantly contributes to maintaining a veil of silence surrounding Salgado's father's story. This is achieved either through deliberate non-disclosure of information, the dissemination of details that perpetuate confusion about the past or the creation of alternative narratives. The apparent contradiction arises when considering how, concurrently, family members actively participate in facilitating the author's transition to hyperaudibility. This paradox aligns with the broader theme of inconsistency deliberately embraced by the author in his life, where conflicting emotions coexist towards a singular individual within the same familial structure and opposite actions can be taken by the same people at different stages of existence. Consequently, it should not be surprising that, within the narrative, relatives simultaneously uphold the taboo surrounding Salgado Castilla's militancy while supporting the narrator's endeavours to amplify his voice.

In contrast to some authors, exemplified by José Carlos Agüero's texts analysed in the previous section of this chapter, who employ diverse literary forms or hybrids of established genres to mirror the challenges of non-linear remembrance, Salgado adheres to a more chronological structure. This is evident in the organisation of his texts into four parts delineated

by temporal sequences. Furthermore, within the narrative itself, digressions serve to underscore the author's intention to maintain a relatively linear plot, as articulated in the chapter "Bruno, Gabriela y Nico" where he states: "Así dejé de saber de mi hermano, dejé también de verlo por casi 15 años. Nos reencontramos el 2010, pero para el relato aún estamos en los años 90" (118). Despite the pursuit of a linear structure, a closer look at the narrative exposes an amplification of a variety of voices, disturbances and noises, referred to as "ruidos" or distortions. However, even in the face of the inherent challenge of unifying memories, the family assumes a pivotal role in Salgado's activism through alternative channels.

Primarily, the cultivation of the father's memory through the author's maternal grandparents assumes profound significance. Within the confines of his home in Lima, certain subjects remain unspoken and objects, notably photographs, are conspicuously absent due to their potential as incriminating evidence and a source of *terruqueo*. A contrasting atmosphere prevails in the grandparents' residence in Chimbote, where Salgado discovers metaphorical fragments of his father during his visits: "Cada año encontraba alguna novedad en relación con él. Fotos que no podía tener en mi casa en Lima. Recortes de periódicos. Libros" (63). These fragments of memory, coupled with the grandparents' warm sentiments toward the deceased father and their admiration for his political activities, contribute to the construction of a heroic image of Salgado's father in the young boy's imagination. By adopting this perspective, the author inadvertently aligns himself with a binary narrative that portrays the internal armed conflict as a dichotomy between good and evil, heroes and perpetrators. However, the duality present in the young Rafael's perception recognises subversive efforts as heroic while categorising state actions as terrorism (Ríos Sierra & García de las Heras González). Consequently, the vision of his father he constructs resonates with the narrative embraced by

some members of the left during the latter half of the twentieth century. Warner Mackenbach identifies this representation in the literature of the 1970s to 1990s, particularly in Central America and other regions, glorifying counterviolence as a means to achieve justice (320).

Considering the intricate web of ethical, moral and legal implications intertwined with the sensitivity of (counter)violence as a means to achieve social justice, it becomes apparent that Salgado's initial inclination to believe in his father's heroism is not merely a political assertion but rather a coping mechanism employed by a child grappling with the detention, capture and tragic demise of a parent. This perspective aligns with previously analysed concerns in Agüero's prose as he emphasises the necessity of acknowledging the destructive nature of the radical left's actions to prevent the construction of potentially harmful myths around it (*Los rendidos* loc. 162). As Salgado matures and gains greater political awareness, the "orgullo de ser su hijo" (90) propels the author into a realm of personal reflection and activism. This evolution is evident in various instances throughout his narrative depicting his childhood and teenage years. A pivotal moment occurs within the grandparents' house as he reads Gorki's novel *Mother*. Salgado claims a profound identification with the main character, Pavel, expressing his commitment to follow in the protagonist's footsteps "comprometiéndome cada vez más con la lucha revolucionaria" (65). A form of identity emerges, interweaving Salgado, his father and Pavel, the protagonist of *Mother*. This connection is further solidified by the revelation that his father had gifted a dedicated copy of the novel to his maternal grandparents and Salgado discovers certain attributes of the titular mother in his own grandmother (66). However, as the narrative unfolds, the author undergoes a revaluation of his revolutionary practices, opting for the use of words and legal processes over arms. This shift underscores his ability to transcend the mere glorification and mythologisation of his ancestors. The progression is palpable in his decision to pursue legal

avenues in the quest for justice for his family, reflecting a nuanced understanding of activism that extends beyond the glorification of revolutionary tactics.

In his legal endeavours, it will be again the support of his family that reinforces his efforts. Upon first learning of the possibility of holding his father's torturers accountable, Salgado hesitates, apprehensive about officially breaking the silence surrounding the taboo (34). Unexpectedly, it is the relatives who play a pivotal role in encouraging him to take action. In a surprising turn, one of the main pillars supporting these steps is Salgado's stepfather, Nicolás. This association is particularly noteworthy given Rafael's earlier memories of a tumultuous childhood marked by quarrels and violence with Nicolás. Nevertheless, when media attention is drawn to Rafael Salgado Castilla's case, highlighted in the CVR's report for potential human rights violations, it is Nicolás, not Rafael's mother, who assists in seeking support from Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (115). Ironically, the momentum for justice for a man whose traces Nicolás had tried to erase in the 1990s gains impetus through Nicolás himself. This results in another irreconcilable paradox, manifest in the terms used by the narrator to convey his emotions toward his stepfather: "doble sentimiento," "amor [...] más difícil de asumir, sobre todo hacerlo sin culpas" (113), "el amor," "la cólera," "la culpa por quererlo" (114) all summarise this relationship. Simultaneously, Salgado is cognisant of the violence and anxiety endured by the entire family due to Nicolás' aggression, yet he cannot deny his role in breaking the silence and, therefore, expresses his appreciation. The culmination of this support occurs when Nicolás welcomes Rafael's half-brother into the family, treating him as his own son, despite the absence of blood ties (116).

Therefore, the relationship Salgado shares with his closest family members reflects an evolution from silence to a collective venture aimed at seeking justice and securing a rightful

representation in the twenty-first-century Peruvian national memory. A pivotal aspect of this transformation is the process of getting to know one another. As the narrator reveals, it was only in adulthood that he began discussing the past, including the circumstances of initial meetings, the wedding and subsequent family life, with his mother and Nicolás (113). This unveiling of previously unknown details and the understanding of past events by the author became the foundation for conversations, collaborative legal efforts and the potential to build a family grounded in love and trust (127). The comprehensive understanding of the past enables Salgado to develop an appreciation for it, leading to a transformative declaration about Nicolás: "Hoy decidí asumir sin culpas que lo quiero y que es mi padre también" (117). This acknowledgement serves as evidence of unwavering support from those closest to him. The progression from silence to open communication and the acceptance of the past not only fosters a deeper connection within the family but also empowers Salgado in his pursuit of justice and social change.

The family's support in the legal process related to the violation of human rights regarding his father's death aids Salgado in finding his voice, yet it does not place him directly in a position of hyperaudibility, overexposure to stigmatisation and *terruqueo*. The decisive shift from silence to loudness, both literal and metaphorical, is accomplished through public activism within leftist militant children's organisations. Notably, the most significant strides in this transformation occur far from his home country, in the streets of Cuba, where Salgado can freely share his story without the fear of *terruqueo*. In Cuba, he forges strong connections with other children of MRTA members, actively participating in memory activism by co-organising events and engaging in dialogue with diverse groups of Peruvians from varying backgrounds.

Salgado's initial foray into activism took place during his university days in Lima, inspired by encounters with other children of militants. Visiting the prison, meeting his father's former comrades and forming close bonds with their children evoke a sense of togetherness akin to family ties, referred to by Salgado as being "hermanos y hermanas de historia" (138). Simultaneously, he becomes involved in the Asociación Pro-Defensa de la Vida y la Libertad Micaela Bastidas (APRODEVIL), which unites relatives of MRTA members. In a symbolic gesture mirroring the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, he publicly breaks the silence about his father's death for the first time: "De pronto, luego de años de silencio, de no contarle a casi nadie sobre lo sucedido con mi padre, me encontraba en la calle, con un megáfono en la mano, gritando" (140). Taking action with a loudspeaker on the streets of central Lima, Salgado embraces the anticipated consequences that follow when the entire organisation is subjected to *terruqueo*, leading to the eventual shutdown of their activities (141-142). The aftermath of this initial encounter with hypervisibility serves as evidence of the discomfort associated with the kind of memory that Salgado and his companions seek to expose. It also underscores a lingering question as he burns materials that could potentially tie him to APRODEVIL: "¿no había terminado la dictadura?" (142).

In the aftermath of the dissolution of APRODEVIL, memory becomes, in a way, placeless (Dietrich and Ulfe 10), rendered unable to be expressed in Peru, its country of origin. However, Salgado's political opportunities undergo a radical transformation with his departure for Cuba. While he notes that the primary motivation for this change was the desire to study rather than an act of "autoexilio" (143), the narrative quickly becomes dominated by the theme of involvement in organizations bringing together other Peruvians in similar situations. In Cuba, his political awareness flourishes, leading him to write, think and read books that deepen his

understanding of the structure, goals and methods of operation of the MRTA during his father's involvement. Noteworthy, he encounters "peruanos y peruanas quienes teníamos historias y memorias diferentes, muchas veces en contradicción" and envisions the possibility to "encontrarnos, conocernos, tratar de entendernos e incluso pensar en el país colectivamente" (147-148).

As Goya Wilson et al. underscore in interdisciplinary research on collective memory projects in Peru and Colombia, the presence of groups from diverse backgrounds in similar discussions inevitably provokes tensions and contradictions. However, these do not pose insurmountable obstacles to dialogue, allowing for both quiet collective discussion and loud denouncement (Wilson 5-6). In Cuba, on a neutral ground far from the fear of *terruqueo*, a chance emerges for Salgado to engage in both quiet and loud forms of collective expression. The community among the students facilitates the initiation of "un proceso testimonial" (148), during which Salgado's story can be openly and fully told for the first time. This transformative exercise is crucial, shifting his experience from one always considered in the context of his father's story to a proper, individual and independent narrative: "Era la primera vez que sentía que a alguien le importaba lo que yo había vivido, no solo la historia de mi padre" (149). Collaborating with other *hijos* reveals a simultaneous belonging to a community that encourages regaining one's voice while acknowledging the personal and unique nature of each experience: "tenían historias similares a la mía, *que no es lo mismo, pero es igual*" (138).

The positive facet of this collective experience, however, undergoes a notable transformation into a negative one within a few pages. Rather abruptly, the shared project that initially fuelled his resolve to unveil his life story becomes somewhat alienating:

> Digo que es paradójico porque fue justamente con quienes ya sabían: los compañeros de mi padre y mis compañeros de HIJXS, con quienes realmente me costó sentir que tenía el valor para contar mi historia. Al punto que no fui parte de ninguna de las actividades que habíamos decidido realizar en Perú durante esas vacaciones. (150)

This contrast culminates in an internal discord within Salgado, as he confesses to feeling "cobarde, incoherente" (151) for abstaining from participating in the group's planned activities for the summer in Peru. This decision not only isolates the author from the group but, beyond his self-ostracism, reveals doubts and a lack of trust held against him by the collective. This observation gains significance when juxtaposed with similar mechanisms observed in far-left military groups of the previous generation during the conflict itself, experiences encountered by the HIJXS' own parents. I delve into this theme in greater detail in the next chapter, drawing on the writings of Lurgio Gavilán Sánchez, which elucidate that members of Sendero Luminoso frequently turned against each other during orchestrated processes exposing alleged transgressions against the Party, often resulting in death penalties for militants deemed guilty of treason (*Carta* 64-69). Salgado is cognisant of analogous circumstances within the MRTA, noting instances where his uncle was killed by his comrades for dissenting from a collective stance (Salgado 156).

This renders the ostracism by the collective, purportedly tasked with representing the memory of its deceased or missing loved ones and dismantling the deleterious mechanisms that led to the conflict, all the more paradoxical. Despite this, the HIJXS group appears to adopt an approach where, devoid of discussion or factual confirmation, one member is branded as untrustworthy solely based on their unwillingness to partake in communal political actions. As Salgado articulates a collective opinion: "Qué importaban las razones, lo cierto era que no se

podía confiar en mí" (151). Furthermore, he becomes privy to this state of affairs not directly but through third parties (151). Such a depiction of events experienced within the collective prompts a pessimistic assessment, if not a crisis, of the role of such organisations in the post-conflict milieu. These entities, despite persistently advocating for family members affected by political violence, appear to replicate analogous discriminatory mechanisms, albeit with emotional rather than physical violence.

The narrative, at a certain juncture, challenges the efficacy of organised collective action, despite its initial pivotal role in empowering the author-narrator to break the silence. Facilitated by two crucial factors, the relocation to Cuba and integration into the Peruvian diaspora engaged in projects related to human rights violations during the internal armed conflict, Salgado achieves full immersion into the realm of hyperaudibility. This immersion is manifested through active participation in public discussions, unabridged storytelling of his personal narrative and the assertion of his identity as an individual rather than a mere appendage to his father's experiences. In this newfound space, he can openly and audaciously articulate the challenges of finding a place in the post-conflict reality and grappling with the difficulty of assuming the role of victim. However, a stark contrast emerges when the collective swiftly ostracises and alienates him the moment his behaviour diverges from their expectations, triggering a surge of mistrust and doubts. This unfolding scenario suggests a highly critical appraisal of collective endeavours aimed at preserving the memory of victims of political violence. Yet, Salgado presents a potential resolution to this crisis by advocating for enhanced communication and therapeutic interventions.

In addition to the initially pessimistic view of the collective of HIJXS highlighted by the narrator, a subsequent perspective surfaces, directly linked to the imperative of critically reassessing their actions to collectively confront their traumas (Salgado 152). According to the

author, their misstep stems from a narrative rooted in pride for their beloved family members while simultaneously relegating their own personal traumas, resulting from the actions of those very relatives for whom they now advocate justice, to the background. Thus, what proves profoundly cathartic for the narrator and fellow collective members is the transition from "el orgullo que sentíamos por nuestras familias, a aceptar o más bien a mostrar el hondo dolor que cargamos" (152) during sessions colloquially termed "contar-tomar-llorar, tomar-contar-llorar" (152). However, the process of unearthing this profound pain extends beyond the spaces described by Salgado as "esas conversaciones tan íntimas," referring to the intimate meetings among collective members during which they share their stories within a secure environment of mutual understanding.

To amplify the cathartic impact, the collective decides to venture into the public domain by organising workshops in Cuba, where narratives are presented before representatives of the international student community. Rather than serving as the pinnacle of the process, however, this workshop marks the commencement of further activities, with members sensing that "habíamos abierto una caja de pandora, de emociones y frustraciones" (153). This pivotal juncture underscores a distinctive and arguably the most prominent aspect of Salgado's narrative, the pivotal role of therapy, both individual and collective, in the endeavour to construct national memory.

The role of therapy as a means of re-establishing dialogue within communities whose relationships were fractured due to the internal armed conflict has been the subject of scholarly research in sociology and social development (Reynoso Rosales). While sparingly mentioned in the context of literary works from the generation of HIJXS, such as Renato Cisneros' autofictional novel *La distancia que nos separa* (2015), where psychoanalytic therapy is

portrayed as a generative force for the narrative (Saona 191), therapy's place in the reconciliation process does not seem to command the same attention as cultural or political initiatives. Consequently, the collective's decision to embrace group therapy emerges as remarkably significant, offering an alternative avenue for rebuilding fractured bonds.

The author himself acknowledges undergoing multiple therapy sessions to cope with the trauma he experienced, concurrently recognising the challenge of reaching the point of "superar" his father's death and finding an answer to the question "¿por qué a mí?" (132). According to research on reconciliation strategies, this query is commonplace among victims, particularly those affected by a traumatic event randomly or during childhood. It often impedes psychological recovery, hindering the affected individual from fully comprehending the events (Daly and Sarkin 48). In Salgado's case, the "why" question is compounded by inquiries into his culpability for his parent's death. Salgado refers to this as the butterfly effect, linking an argument he had with his father on the day he was detained and killed by security forces (72). The amalgamation of these factors contributes to the narrator's exceedingly challenging position in working through the trauma. Compounding the complexity of this condition is the author's subsequent re-traumatisation due to repeated sexual abuse at school. In his eyes, therapy, alongside the support of family and friends, becomes the means by which he begins to piece together the fragments of himself that have been eroded by multiple traumas (164).

Through a combination of family support, collective actions and therapy, the author manages to attribute meaning and purpose to the process of breaking the silence. However, this decision is not made without profound uncertainty and doubt. The experience of becoming a father himself introduces additional anxieties related to the moral correctness of his father's decisions, thereby complicating his own actions: "Cuando nació mi hija, había finalmente

aceptado que tenía una gran sensación de ausencia en mi vida; que en gran medida sentía que mi padre no había optado por mí, que poco a poco fue más central su opción política" (192). Simultaneously, a pivotal outcome of this self-reflective process is the gradual acceptance of paradoxical emotions and decisions. The author refrains from outright rejection or blame towards his father, acknowledging the contradictory nature of his feelings, pride for his dedication to social causes on one hand and a sense of absence and abandonment on the other (193). Notably, this approach is met with resistance from his father's comrades from the MRTA when he attempts to share his emotions with them as an adult. Instead of acknowledging his perspective, they defend his father's behaviour, diminishing the validity of his son's feelings. This backlash serves as a significant indication that rigid and unsympathetic opinions often permeate the narratives of various groups, not only as propaganda from *fujimorismo* heirs but equally within leftist circles. Consequently, a binary narrative that simplifies individuals into heroes and perpetrators, good and bad, emerges as deeply harmful, irrespective of its origin.

Salgado thus presents a variety of issues arising from hyperaudability, both individual and collective. Some of these can be partially resolved through therapy and conversation, such as disagreements within the HIJXS collective or difficult relationships between family members. Others remain impossible to alleviate, as shown by the reaction of former militants to his attempts to express the traumas associated with his father's choices. In each case, however, coming out of silence means a potential duel with rejection, stigmatisation and *terruqueo*. Salgado decides to take on this challenge as he considers it the only attitude able to contribute to a change in monolithic narratives. According to the author, the key to challenging such discourses lies in amplifying diverse voices to share their unique stories publicly (187). This

realisation becomes the primary impetus for his radical shift from a position of silence to active participation in post-conflict and reconciliation discussions.

2.3. Conclusion

This chapter has undertaken an examination of the thematic locus of orphanhood as depicted in the literary works of Agüero and Salgado. It posits that a discerning analysis of the imagery surrounding orphanhood within these texts unveils the enduring repercussions of political choices made by the protagonists' parents. Employing the conceptual framework of suspended orphanhood, drawing from the authors' retrospective contemplations, I have stated that parental abandonment to ideological militancy serves as a prologue to a protracted and agonising emotional affliction. The parental positioning delineated in both texts resides within a liminal space, oscillating between the dialectics of life and death, presence and absence, love and abandonment. This thematic ambiguity is mirrored in the authors' own perspectives, manifested both through their literary compositions and extratextual activist engagements, encapsulating a dialectical contradiction. This paradoxical stance is revealed in the tension between victimhood and the simultaneous inheritance of parental culpability, as well as the imperative to articulate the past notwithstanding the enveloping refuge of silence. Such tensions give rise to a distortion of affective bonds, spotlighting dilemmas which often entail a delicate balance between self-preservation and the quest for justice.

Contrary to presenting a remedy for societal reconstruction in the aftermath of internal armed conflict, neither of the examined texts purports a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, they engender more questions and uncertainties than they proffer answers. This is exemplified in the complex relationship between Salgado and human rights collectives, as well as the dilemmas

evident in Agüero's dialogues with fellow representatives of the *hijos* generation. Key topics necessitating specific revaluation within these discourses include pride, shame and the notion of victimhood. Both authors grapple with the fundamental issue of memory cultivation, in private as well as public spheres, endeavouring to circumvent the peril of re-mythologising or romanticising the violence rooted in the far-left pursuit of social justice. While firmly rooted in the *hijos* generation's contextual milieu, the authors underscore the indispensability of acknowledging the individuality inherent in their experiences and recollections. By directly portraying contradictions and familial frictions in memories, the subjectivity of perception is foregrounded. This nuanced approach advocates for the differentiation of memories pertaining to the armed conflict, thereby broadening the experiential spectrum when disseminating historical narratives to subsequent generations through educational channels or media platforms.

Chapter 3: Migration, Orphanhood and the Post-Conflict Hope

As delineated in the preceding chapters, the first-person narratives recounting the formative experiences of individuals whose youth was affected by the ramifications of the internal armed conflict transcend the temporal confines of the period itself, extending into the post-conflict and making itself visible in their cultural production and political engagement. Such texts often serve as pivotal points in discussions pertaining to reconciliation and the requisite transformations needed for the reconstruction of a society fractured by violence. Consequently, it is reasonable to inquire whether the theme of orphanhood, encompassing not merely its literal connotation but also its social or national dimensions, can be extrapolated to the immediate aftermath of the period characterised by violence and terror. In this chapter, I undertake an examination, extending beyond the temporal constraints of the internal armed conflict, to analyse the experience of migration as yet another manifestation of orphaning. To achieve this objective, I focus on the issues of *choledad* and belonging, which constitute central motifs within the non-fictional narratives of journalist Marco Avilés and visual artist Rocío Quillahuaman.

Migration emerges as a theme profoundly interwoven within the socio-political fabric of Peru. The phenomenon of migration from rural villages to urban centres can be correlated with the internal armed conflict, as the exodus from province to urban hubs intensified as a means of escaping violence and economic turmoil. Scholarly discourse has underscored the significance of these mass population displacements during the 1980s and 1990s. While investigations such as that conducted by Carlos Iván Degregori ("Dimensión cultural") have characterised this migration as a catalyst for democratisation within urban spaces, José Matos Mar contends that

the movement of *campesinos* during this period caused negative consequences, including urban overcrowding and the proliferation of informal settlements beyond the control of state jurisdiction. In both cases, they unarguably took part in shaping the processes of urbanisation, especially in Lima. Concurrently, Gisela Cánepa highlights the role of hegemonic discourses in perpetuating racialised perceptions of Andean migrants, resulting in the reinforcing of Lima's centrality within the national geography. However, migration transcends its status as a mere social and cultural phenomenon; it also constitutes a significant facet of individual experiences for those affected by it. Thus, it remains a focus of scholarship in areas such as psychology and psychiatry (Timotijevic & Breakwell; Ward & Styles; Portes & Rivas).

Historically, accounts given as a part of the testimonio genre in Latin America have traced migrations, including intercontinental journeys. Texts such as *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983) documented by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray or *Testimony: Death of a Guatemalan Village* (1987) by Víctor Montejo are classic examples of the genre that include the experience of migration. Within Peruvian literature, similar themes can be found in the narrative of Irene Jara, as compiled by Francesca Denegri in *Soy señora* (2000), which depicts her forced exile to London due to political activism. Although the examples mentioned include stories of forced relocation rooted in safety concerns, some migration narratives of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries are not the result of threats of imminent violence but are motivated by economic reasons or other personal circumstances.

In this chapter, I examine the non-fictional narratives of two authors, Marco Avilés and Rocío Quillahuaman, from the vantage point of their respective migrations, one internal, the other intercontinental. Both texts manifest deep engagement with the issues of race in Peru that have been highlighted as crucial in numerous studies by scholars and intellectuals (Drinot;

Méndez; Rottenbacher de Rojas; Oboler; Turpo Gebera & Gutiérrez Gala), indicating connections between the question of race and the motif of migration. Similar to observations made in preceding chapters, recent texts emerging within post-conflict Peru, initially of an autobiographical nature, transcend their individual narratives to offer a fragmented yet robust, essayistic commentary on prevailing social and political issues. In the case of the two aforementioned authors, Marco Avilés and Rocío Quillahuaman, an analysis of the motifs of youth and orphanhood is focused on narratives represented by individuals impacted by the conflict in a significantly less direct manner than the authors whose works were read in the previous chapters of this investigation. Nonetheless, through the examination of these, I show how the consequences of the violence echo both across the geography of the country in the 1980s and 1990s as well as through time, into the post-conflict, in the mentality of the younger generation who have not experienced armed struggle personally.

3.1. Marco Avilés

The initial section of this chapter examines the phenomenon of internal migration from the Andes to Lima, precipitated by partial orphaning, through the lens of Marco Avilés. As a Peruvian journalist, he became widely recognised for his extensive documentation of the *cholo* experience, an urban Andean identity. Avilés, who himself identifies as a *cholo*, provides autobiographical insights primarily derived from his early works, *De dónde venimos los cholos* (2016) and *No soy tu cholo* (2017). These narratives elucidate the discrimination faced by Lima's migrant youth in the 1980s and 1990s, exacerbated by the indiscriminate and unjust mainstream discourse associating all Andean residents with terrorism during the time of the internal armed conflict which, according to contemporary research, continues in the post-conflict setting. I

contend that Avilés' portrayal of the generational identity of Lima's inhabitants whose early years were shaped by the armed conflict, portrays a group metaphorically orphaned in their own country by being forced to reject their Andean identity in order to avoid bullying, persecution and violence. Such an imposed disconnection from their roots, figurative loss of origin, simultaneously to being a negative phenomenon, creates a space to rethink the *cholo* identity. In the further part of this chapter, I argue that the strategies for confronting racial discrimination proposed by Avilés align with decolonial theory and praxis as articulated by Mignolo and Walsh.

Born in Abancay in 1978, Avilés grew up in a family with a rich tapestry of ethnic diversity. His journalistic career, exemplified by publications such as *Día de visitas* (2007) as well as articles written for renowned journals such as *El País*, underscores his dedication to chronicling narratives across Peru and Latin America, focusing on exploring various racial and ethnic identities, as well as sociopolitical issues troubling contemporary Peru. Concurrently, Avilés pursues his academic endeavours as a PhD candidate at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn Arts & Science), while maintaining an active presence on social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter), under the handle "@MarcoAvilesH," where he engages with issues of social justice, political violence, and racial and gender-based discrimination.

This chapter's subsequent examination centres on Avilés' representation of the theme of *choledad,* an identity shared by the author and numerous residents of Lima who migrated to the city in the last decades of the twentieth century. Herein, I analyse the nexus between partial orphaning, consequent familial migration to Lima, and the ensuing quest for identity stabilisation as presented in the narrative. I argue that in *De dónde venimos los cholos* Avilés interweaves personal childhood memories, of which losing his mother constitutes the earliest one, with seemingly unrelated narratives of Andean inhabitants, thereby establishing a temporal continuum

linking past familial history with contemporary Peruvian sociopolitical dynamics. This narrative strategy contributes to the diversification of perspectives on recent sociopolitical history, shedding light on the intimate experiences of racial conflicts among Lima's youth during the 1980s and 1990s, and advocating for the acknowledgment and acceptance of Peru's inherent diversity. I argue that the autobiographical elements of Avilés' narratives show that the lack of proper recognition of this vast diversity, followed by inequality in spaces such as schools and the labour market, places young people who identify as *cholos* in a position of metaphorical orphanhood due to the lack of protection and support from their own fatherland. Simultaneously, it prompts the question of long-term patterns that are repeated in the post-conflict reality and are related to marginalisation and racialisation.

Conversely, *No soy tu cholo* assumes an essayistic character, foregrounding the issue of racial discrimination in Peru through a distinctly personal lens. Rather than prescribing solutions, Avilés presents a collection of "observaciones y testimonios personales de mi propio hartazgo" (15), encapsulating his exhaustion stemming from societal pessimism regarding the prospect of transformative change in Peru. Thus, the overarching motivation driving Avilés' narrative endeavours lies in fostering dialogue concerning Peru's racial divisions and exploring avenues for improving resultant social structures. Despite genre variations, both texts serve a unified purpose, articulating a critical stance towards contemporary racial dynamics in Peru, contextualised within the backdrop of the internal armed conflict and its aftermath. The ensuing subsections will examine Avilés' approach to the theme of *choledad* as an ethnic and cultural identity, rooted in his personal narrative of partial orphaning and subsequent migration. Additionally, an exploration of Avilés' strategies for resolving identity-related conflicts will be undertaken, emphasising the convergence between his personal philosophy of *choledad* and

overarching concepts such as the colonial matrix of power (Quijano, "Coloniality of Power") and elements of decolonial theory (Mignolo & Walsh).

3.1.1. Orphaning and *choledad*

In his 2016 article, scholar Andrés Alexander Puerta Molina ponders the emergence of a potential new *Boom* in twenty-first-century Latin American literature, speculating on the prominence of non-fiction, particularly through the genre of the chronicle (166). Coincidentally, 2016 also marks the publication of the first edition of *De dónde venimos los cholos,* the second book authored by Marco Avilés. Considering the genre and timing of publication, if we entertain the notion of this new *Boom* as an ongoing phenomenon, Avilés could indeed be classified as one of its representatives. However, what distinguishes his chronicle is the intersectionality of autobiographical writing and journalism. Avilés acknowledges the personal motivations behind his professional journalistic inquiry into the theme of *choledad*, rooted in his own migration from the provinces to Lima in 1980 (*De dónde venimos* 17), a result of a tragic car accident in which he lost his mother. Hence, in the ensuing analysis, I posit that within Avilés' texts, personal and collective experiences form a symbiotic relationship, where individual perspectives inform the understanding of the collective and vice versa. Specifically, I will analyse how the author examines *choledad* as an ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity in Peru and his orientation towards this concept. To do so, I examine the textual representation of two instances of orphanhood: 1) literal, resulting from the death of Avilés' mother; 2) his family's migration following the event as a metaphorical orphanhood, to some extent shared with the entire group of young Peruvians of Andean origin in Lima in the 1980s and 1990s. I argue that the latter relates to the lack of protection from the people of authority such as teachers and the overall instability

of the sociopolitical situation that leads to systemic marginalisation of young *cholos*. Consequently, I will explore how the narrative of a collective becomes an integral aspect of the origin story of an individual, the author, and how individual attitudes towards the collective potentially contribute to its representation. To accomplish this, I will contextualise Avilés' texts within existing scholarship on the topic of *choledad* (Cosamalón; Nugent), contending that his narrative can be construed as a manifesto of a new identity that transcends stereotypes associated with the urban Andean population.

As proven within the realm of memory studies, journalistic endeavours serve various functions within society, one of which involves contributing to the construction of historical memory at a national level, particularly in contexts marked by violent pasts (Nieto & Hernández). This function is evident in the recent surge in popularity of the genre of *crónica literaria* in Latin America, which, beyond perpetuating events in the national memory, also serves to express solidarity with marginalised or oppressed groups, as well as to testify to their resilience (Bielsa 50). Part of this potency emanates from "la subjetividad del escritor y la manera en que ofrece un espacio de denuncia" (Sotelo 91). Thus, the author's presence in the genre is notably pronounced as facilitating, in a subjective manner, a platform for discourse. In certain instances, a chronicle may assume a form that accentuates the author's position even further, through autobiographical elements. Susan Griffin, in her 1992 book *A Chorus of Stones* underscored the inevitable connection between herself and history when she states: "I do not see my life as separate from history. In my mind my family secrets mingle with the secrets of statesmen and bombers" (4). A similar connection is evident in Avilés' chronicles. The position at the nexus of journalism and memoir constitutes a salient feature, as acknowledged by the author himself. Furthermore, the title of the book *De dónde venimos los cholos* formulated in the first-

person plural intimates a collective narrative of origin to which the author also belongs. Thus, a work ostensibly chronicling the lives of inhabitants across the Andean regions, metamorphoses into a quest for personal genesis, a literary purpose unveiled through its autobiographical elements.

A closer look at the first chapter of the book identifies this clearly intimate dimension of writing. In the chapter "Abancay," the name of Avilés' birthplace which directly refers to his own place of origin, the author explains the motivation behind the writing:

> Cuando mis colegas me preguntaban por qué me gustaba escribir sobre esos temas, mis respuestas eran una pose juvenil: me encanta lo marginal – respondía -, quiero darles voz a quienes no la tienen. La verdad era otra. No soy un periodista con vocación de mártir del interés público. Siempre fui un simple mirón guiado por su curiosidad personal. Escribir sobre los inmigrantes de Lima me recordaba de dónde había venido yo mismo. Estaba seducido por mi propia biografía de cholo. (17)

Following the author's introspective revelation, it becomes evident that the inaugural and concluding chapters of the book *De dónde venimos los cholos*, titled "Abancay" and "Últimas coordenadas" respectively, serve as pivotal junctures linking the personal narrative to broader sociopolitical contexts. In doing so, they uncover the author's positioning as a *cholo* and a partial orphan within the fabric of Lima's society during both the period of conflict and its aftermath. To contextualise this positioning, it is imperative to first examine the racial theme vis-à-vis other facets of the author's upbringing and adolescence, as depicted in this work and the subsequent text *No soy tu cholo*. Some of the factors which I analyse include familial dynamics, especially the early loss of his mother, inter-student relationships, and the influence of the internal armed conflict on the author's generation.

The narrative arc of *De dónde venimos los cholos* commences with a deeply personal anecdote recounting the author's earliest recollection, a moment when he becomes partially orphaned. In the chapter "Abancay," Avilés delineates a car accident caused by his father, in which the author, then a two-year-old infant, bore witness to his mother's death. While the precise circumstances surrounding the incident remain somewhat nebulous, Avilés provides select details, including the fact that his father was driving under the influence of alcohol. The way this recollection is presented, a blend of lucidity and obscurity, encourages the reader to ponder its reliability, especially given the inherent elusiveness of toddler memories. The very young age of the narrator at the time in itself invites speculation regarding the authenticity of the recollection, whether it is a genuine memory, a later fabrication or a product of oral narratives absorbed over time.

At the same time, the inaugural anecdote intertwines with the titular inquiry, characterised by quasi-mythological undertones, encapsulating the quest for origins. Thus, from this juncture onward, the collective quest for genesis among the group of *cholos* intersects with the author's personal narrative. The opening anecdote not only carries a shock value that captures the reader's attention but also puts forward the author's origin story, tracing his journey as a self-identified *cholo* from Abancay, his birthplace, through the car accident and his mother's death, to Lima. Concurrently, allusions to the internal armed conflict also penetrate Avilés' narrative backdrop. Born in 1978, the author's formative years coincided with the conflict's high-intensity phase. Nevertheless, unlike the focal centrality attributed to this period in the works of authors such as Gavilán, Serván, Agüero or Salgado, Avilés' narrative portrays a series of repercussions originating in prejudice and discrimination justified by the conflict. Moreover, unlike many contemporaneous migrants fleeing provincial turmoil, the author's relocation to Lima is

primarily motivated by economic circumstances stemming from the car accident, not the terrorism itself. As the author states, they leave Abancay because his father has to sell his business and belongings to pay medical bills. Therefore, they abandon their life in the Andes which Avilés describes metaphorically in terms of a funeral that leads to a direct association of emigration with another type of re-orphaning: "dejamos sepultada nuestra historia anterior, en esa pequeña ciudad de los Andes llamada Abancay" (*De dónde venimos* 9). Thus, as a two-year-old, Avilés not only becomes an orphan after the loss of his mother but is also uprooted from his birthplace to a hillside settlement in the capital.

Henceforth, in the case of Avilés, a notable departure from the life narratives examined in the preceding chapters of this inquiry lies in the fact that the internal conflict does not directly underpin the trauma experienced by the author-narrator-protagonist. Rather, it emerges almost simultaneously with another personal traumatic event, albeit exerting a significant influence on his everyday life and relationships. The sequence of events, starting with the accident, the death of the mother and ending with the relocation to Lima, forms the point zero from which Avilés' self-identification as a *cholo*, a migrant from a Peruvian province to the urban space of the capital, emerges.

It is crucial to elaborate that the notion of *choledad* itself bears nuanced complexity in Peru, integrated into the country's historical trajectory. Aníbal Quijano, in the book *Dominación y cultura. Lo cholo y el conflicto cultural en el Perú* (1980), traces its etymology to colonial times when the term *cholo* denoted individuals of mixed-race heritage whose phenotypic traits bore a closer resemblance to Indigenous populations (56). Quijano underscores the social ramifications of such categorisation, delineating individuals who "ya no eran indios ni racial ni culturalmente, pero cuya condición de mestizos era una barrera para ser admitidos con todas las

consecuencias en la sociedad occidental-española, esto es en la casta dominante" (56). Evidently, the weight of this phenotypic classification underscores the constraining potency of physical attributes within the cultural and societal hierarchy.

As per Quijano and subsequent scholarship, the pejorative undertones inherent in the term *cholo* persist into contemporary discourse, particularly amidst mass migrations from rural to urban spaces during the latter half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, Quijano contends that the intricacies of centuries-long racial amalgamation render it academically futile to demarcate discrete categories such as "indios puros" or "cholos" in a purely phenotypical way (58). Consequently, the modern connotation of *cholo* stems primarily from the cultural and social resonances reaching back to its colonial antecedents of "casts", particularly its exclusionary nature (58). This perspective underscores the amalgamation of "scientific" or "biological racism", which is based purely on physical characteristics (Anthias & Yuval-Davis; Garrod), with "cultural racism," a phenomenon observed more widely in Peru in recent decades (Zavala & Back). However, as research shows, the adaptation of *choledad* as a discriminative notion does not end with the transition from biological to cultural. Amidst the burgeoning realms of social media and cyberculture, the concept of *choledad* undergoes further metamorphosis, becoming a potent political tool (Cortez; Brañez Medina). The emergence of new media platforms thus mirrors age-old paradigms, a phenomenon even christened as "choledad virtual" by Verónica Salem in her postgraduate thesis at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

Nevertheless, the persistent pejorative connotations associated with the term "cholo," akin to "indio" or "serrano," endure as asserted by Méndez. Furthermore, Carlos Aguirre contends that during the internal armed conflict in Peru, a conflation occurred between overlapping racial attributes linked with Indigenous populations and affiliation with terrorist

organisations (110). In alignment with these analyses, Avilés offers a comparable interpretation of the term, labelling it an insult and a tool for segregation (*No soy tu cholo* 14). However, the author diverges by tracing the etymology of "cholo" proposed by María Rostworowski, positing its potential lineage to Incan times, a historical continuum predating Quijano's colonial reference. Hence, Avilés sees the term as deeply entrenched in the continent's historical fabric, being "tan antiguo como las momias y las fortalezas prehispánicas" (14) and, more importantly, both more durable than physical archaeological objects and possible to inherit from generation to generation (15).

The ramifications of the pervasive negative connotations associated with the term "cholo" in the enduring cultural narrative, along with its perceived hereditary nature, are manifested in Avilés' narrative through personal anecdotes dating back to his school years. To delineate the existence of a racial hierarchy perpetuated from generation to generation, the author describes interpersonal dynamics among his peers. A recurring manifestation of this phenomenon makes itself known in the form of never-ending flows of insults directed at individuals perceived as "cholos oscuros" (dark-skinned students of Andean origin). These are vocalised not only by white students but also by lighter-skinned *cholos*, who are seemingly more readily accepted within social circles. Avilés lists entire stream-of-consciousness-like clusters of racially loaded insults directed at his *cholo* schoolmates: "Alpaca conchetumadre. Báñate, indio apestoso. Hueles a queso. Comequeso. Vicuña. Vicunita. Me da pena tu vida, serrano" (*De dónde venimos* 12); or: "cholo de mierda, serrano, indio, mezclado, marrón, chuncho, alpaca, sucio, color puerta" (*No soy tu cholo* 15). These disparaging comments not only reflect physical attributes but also linguistic and cultural traits associated with Indigenous heritage.

Avilés underscores that individuals who exhibit pronounced Indigenous features, both physically and culturally, "cholos hasta la punta del cabello" (*De dónde venimos* 12), are particularly vulnerable targets for discrimination, exemplified by the ordeal endured by a peer named Cochachi. Cochachi's accent – Quechua being his primary language – and overall appearance render him emblematic of the traits that elicit discrimination. Avilés portrays Cochachi's suffering as akin to that of a Christian martyr, enduring persecution stoically and with dignity in the face of continuous torments (*De dónde venimos* 12). The comparison in itself is somewhat ironic, given the contrast on which the discrimination was built in the first place, namely between the criollo version of the Eurocentric culture transplanted to colonial America, elements of which intertwine deeply into the bases of Christian values and beliefs, and the Andean culture considered in this model to be supposedly less advanced, based on primal survival instincts and kill-or-be-killed rule visible, among others, in the famous *Informe sobre Uchuraccay* (Vargas Llosa 21). Therefore, through the example of the friend, Avilés builds an image of his early years built on two motifs. The first is that of normalisation of the discrimination against *cholos* at school, among children, which strikes the reader as a case of a painful abandonment of an entire ethnic group who become victims of marginalisation before they even reach adulthood, placing them in a state of metaphorical orphanhood. The second is the reversal of the predicament on which the discrimination is based, namely the superiority of the "civilised" Eurocentric point of view over the brutal and primal Indigenous one.

A notable aspect of this persecution lies in its occurrence within the seemingly regulated environment of the educational institution, where mechanisms supposedly should exist for the mitigation of such improper conduct. This is especially pronounced in the face of the fact that in the period of conflict, thousands of students attending schools were orphaned as a result of the

violence and, therefore, particularly vulnerable due to the lack of parental protection (Bello 30). In such cases, the support of the school, along with good family relationships, could have been a positive factor in securing the well-being of children, just as pointed out by 2011 research by Crivello and Boyden (9). However, Avilés' recollections notably lack any indication of such efforts or even intervention by authority figures in response to such derogatory behaviour, thereby highlighting the passive stance of educators in the face of discriminatory incidents. A study by Juan Carlos Callirgos conducted in 1995 further corroborates this observation, suggesting that instances of racial discrimination in educational settings were not merely overlooked but sometimes tacitly endorsed or enabled by educators. The scholar points out the presence in the classroom of phenomena such as "insultos racistas que pueden ser celebrados por los profesores" and "segregación dentro del salón" (15). Such complicity extended beyond racial discrimination to encompass other forms of derogation, including the stigmatisation of timid students (Callirgos 13) or those perceived as intellectually deficient (Callirgos 14).

The pervasive nature of such discriminatory behaviours among children suggests that they are not developing these attitudes in a vacuum but rather internalising and reproducing societal norms and prejudices learned from adults. It is essential to contextualise Avilés' recollections of his school years within the broader socio-political landscape of the 1980s and early 1990s, a period marked by the active internal armed conflict in Peru. This perspective is further underscored in various anecdotes found in *No soy tu cholo* where Avilés depicts the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes in both everyday interactions and media portrayals. Symbolically, this societal division is epitomised by the construction of a literal wall in downtown Lima during the 1980s. In the chapter titled "La muralla de Lima," Avilés chronicles the history of this barrier designed to segregate the poor from the wealthier segments of society.

Drawing a poignant parallel, he contrasts this construction with the demolition of the Berlin Wall during the same period, highlighting the starkly different socio-political ideologies at play:

> A fines de los años ochenta, en Europa, los alemanes derribaron el muro que dividía su país y el mundo celebró este ejemplo como un triunfo de la democracia. En el Perú, los nuevos vecinos de Asia entendieron el mensaje al revés – o no entendieron nada – y comenzaron a edificar una muralla para aislarse del resto del distrito, de todo el país. (*No soy tu cholo* 37)

Existence of the wall serves as a physical representation of the division between sectors that suggests a reincarnation of the former colonial dynamics: "los señores vivirían dentro y el mar sería solo para ellos. Los bárbaros – los cholos – se joderían fuera" (37).

However, the division in the form of the wall serves not so much as the cause but rather the effect of the socio-economic segregation that existed in Lima much earlier, the extent and importance of which was consolidated during the period of internal armed conflict (CVR 400; Lozano Martínez 14). It should be mentioned that the creation of settlements of refugees from the province was not exclusive to Lima; similar displacements occurred also in regions like Ayacucho and Junín (Deng; Escárzaga et al.). However, for the purpose of this investigation, the discussion will concentrate on Lima, the focal point of Avilés' narratives.

While Avilés acknowledges his own migration to Lima due to his father's personal financial problems rather than direct conflict-related factors, he highlights that this is not the case for numerous other families. He observes that "millones de personas abandonaban las provincias y se refugiaban en la capital" (*De dónde venimos* 9). These migrants, Avilés contends, are as much the victims of the conflict as those killed or wounded in its course. However, the relocation of migrants to Lima as refugees from the violence perpetrated by groups like Sendero Luminoso

or government forces often gave rise to new challenges and sources of trauma. Francisco Javier Lozano Martínez, in a comprehensive report focusing on violence-related displacement during the internal armed conflict, describes this as "el conflicto permanente" stemming from displacement:

> Así, el conflicto permanente de los desplazados mantiene sus tensiones y se manifiesta de formas diversas: en la exclusión de sus derechos colectivos, en la poca o nula presencia del Estado en las comunidades marginadas, en la precariedad de la vida de los asentamientos humanos, en sus demandas no resueltas, en la marginación social derivada de su condición de "cholos" y desplazados; del estrés postraumático generado por la guerra interna y de aquel contacto directo con la violencia brutal que han experimentado. (57)

The factors enumerated by Lozano Martínez, which perpetuate conflict even after the physical escape from war-torn areas, engender a state of perpetual tension among settlement residents. However, Avilés' narrative demonstrates that migrants not directly affected by the conflict, like himself and his family, still face marginalisation due to social and cultural factors that connect certain origins and physical appearance with belonging to terrorist organisations. While they may not endure post-traumatic stress disorder or the trauma of direct violence, they are nonetheless subject to cruel segregation, a factor highlighted by Lozano Martínez as contributing to sustained tension in settlements.

Consequently, the structural dynamics highlighted in the 1980s by the erection of the dividing wall reflect a pattern of geographical discrimination linked to one's origin. As Avilés explains: "Ser de provincias, en la Lima de esos años, te tatuaba con un estigma: los provincianos creábamos barriadas en los cerros, nos adueñábamos de las calles para vender

baratijas y, por supuesto, éramos terroristas" (*De dónde venimos* 9). Location thus becomes not only a reflection of socioeconomic status but also a marker of political ideology, with those residing "en los cerros," synonymous with settlements inhabited by *provincianos*, equated with terrorism. As these settlements are inhabited by numerous children, some of whom lost their parents as a result of the armed struggle, consequently they become subject to a double orphaning, this time in the form of a rejection as a valuable part of society.

In the face of such discrimination, it is imperative to analyse the author's response to his condition of *choledad* and the strategies he and his peers employ to evade bullying. Crucially, Avilés acknowledges that the degree of discrimination against *cholos* varies based on physical characteristics. An examination of autobiographical excerpts describing his schooling reveals that avoidance of bullying is feasible in certain instances. Severe harassment, such as that endured by Cochachi, targets students with visibly Indigenous features or distinctive provincial accents and mannerisms. Avilés, on the other side, identifying himself as "cholo blanquiñoso" (*De dónde venimos* 12), benefits from a lighter complexion, enabling him and other young *cholos* to blend in with Lima's white children. Consequently, group identity is not universally shared among individuals classified as *cholos* based on their origin, as some may escape bullying through what could be qualified as racial passing.

The phenomenon of "passing" has been explored at large in sociology (Kennedy; Sasson-Levy & Shoshana; Shoshana) as well as literature and culture (Nerad), mostly in relation to the Black population. This phenomenon which the scholar Julie Nerad deems to be a "centuries-old practice" (9), can be related to the concept of the performance-based understanding of identity. As Nerad explains:

> Passing, in the broadest sense, is now understood by many scholars as synonymous with performance: it is the iteration of a set of behaviors, cultural codes, language, etc. ascribed to a specific identity category such as race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and so on. This understanding of all identity as performance/passing challenges at a fundamental level the idea of biological essentialism, that we are who we are because of what we are. (9)

At the same time, in the case of racial passing, physical appearance plays a key role as it opens the opportunity to perform an identity that reinforces visually verifiable classification. Therefore, one of the natural aspects of passing is its relativeness. The author realises that when he further emigrates, this time internationally, to the United States. What could serve as a facilitator for passing in a Peruvian school in Lima, does not work in a similar way in the predominantly non-Hispanic white region, the state of Maine (United States Census Bureau). The narrator clearly sees the difficulty in passing in such environment: "Yo, marrón, soy un lunar choco chip en ese helado de vainilla. Siento en la espalda el leve cosquilleo de las miradas. Mi cabello es negro y crespo, y tengo cara de ídolo de barro" (*No soy tu cholo* 67). Nevertheless, at the same time, in changed circumstances also the meaning of the difference becomes questionable, as he ponders: "Soy el único marrón. ¿Significa algo? ¿Debería significar algo? ¿Quiero que signifique algo?" (67).

The convergence of biological and performative elements, coupled with the notion of relativity, emerges prominently in Avilés' narrative as a form of camouflage: "Los cholos blanquiñosos nos camuflábamos" (*De dónde venimos* 12). For Avilés, the strategy of passing is not a means to acquire special privileges but rather a survival tactic at school which he describes as "una trituradora de cholos y negros" (*No soy tu cholo* 84), a stark depiction of an educational

environment that should ideally foster opportunities for children. Hence, as part of his survival strategy, Avilés describes his performative approach to identity:

> Me escondí. Jamás conté dónde había nacido. Tampoco que mis padres y abuelos hablaban quechua. Nunca llevé a mis compañeros a casa porque en casa – temía – ellos iban a rastrear las huellas de mi origen y – además – iban a descubrir cuán pobre era. (*No soy tu cholo* 84)

This stance is consistent with Avilés' later observation encapsulating his perspective on racial identity:

> Ser blanco tiene que ver con tu piel, también con la actitud que asumes frente a los demás, el lugar que quieres ocupar en el ajedrez social, y con el lugar que los demás te dan en este juego. (…) Ser cholo tiene que ver con tu piel, con tu historia, con tu origen, pero también con el papel que asumes, la actitud que tienes frente a los demás, el lugar que quieres ocupar en el juego y el lugar que los demás te dan. (*No soy tu cholo* 73)

Here, Avilés underscores the multidimensional nature of racial identity, incorporating biological, historical, social and cultural facets. Importantly, he allows room for individual agency in embracing or rejecting roles ascribed within society.

Avilés' memories from his school years prove the widely present phenomenon of cultural racism that is part of his experience as a student. In doing so, they contribute to the construction of a vision of metaphorical orphanhood experienced by teenage *cholos* who are ethnically, culturally and linguistically different from their peers. Discriminatory behaviours of the young pupils stay in line with the nationwide climate of polarised opinions based on race and origin that are written into the binary conflict narrative. However, at the same time, the author indicates strategies for avoiding the negative consequences of these dynamics through what he calls

camouflaging the whiter *cholos* among the white students. On the other hand, in another part of Avilés' narrative, especially in the essay *No soy tu cholo*, a metamorphosis of the author's attitude can be observed as a turn towards active resistance against discriminatory treatment and reshaping the self-perceived value of his *cholo* identity. In the subsequent section of the chapter, I will explore these strategies towards fostering acceptance of diversity that Avilés personally embodies and describes in his texts.

3.1.2. Affirmation of *choledad* and Transition to Post-Conflict

In the second subsection of this chapter, I will examine one of the possibilities of identity formation and affirmation within marginalised groups, exemplified by Marco Avilés through his personal experiences and observations. I will analyse the ideas and attitudes proposed by the author regarding strategies for addressing racial issues and marginalisation in post-conflict Peru, thereby examining the nexus between the conflict and post-conflict realities delineated in the narrative. These mechanisms illustrate both the continuation of the metaphorical orphanhood beyond the era of violence, as well as the author's proposals for the conditions of readoption in Peruvian society as a *cholo*. I contend that Avilés' personal journey and familial history, as depicted in his journalistic endeavours, align him with the twenty-first-century trend of diversifying narratives surrounding the experience of the internal armed conflict and other social issues that were previously silenced due to the backgrounds of their authors. Like other authors discussed in preceding chapters, Avilés leverages his education and intellectual position not to "blanquear" (*No soy tu cholo* 73) himself, but rather to undertake a process of "revalorización" (55), the terms which I will analyse in this part of the investigation.

Drawing from details elucidated in *De dónde venimos los cholos* and *No soy tu cholo*, we can identify Avilés' initial responses to overcoming racial discrimination, characterised by his adoption of camouflaging or passing techniques to evade bullying and persecution rooted in his provincial origin. However, as the author indicates, the need to defend himself from persecution does not dissipate upon graduation; rather, as he asserts:

> Todo el país puede funcionar como un salón de clases. No importa cuánto hayas estudiado ni cuánto hayas escalado ni cuánta autoridad tengas ahora. Muchos querrán seguir tratándote como al serrano de mierda que antes podían humillar sin recibir castigo. (*No soy tu cholo* 41-42)

Thus, Avilés delineates a continuity in the behaviours exhibited by school students and adults, positing that many individuals do not outgrow discriminatory actions but rather persist in deeming them acceptable and justifiable.

Coincidentally, the trajectory of the author's education intersects chronologically with the period of conflict and its end. The point at which he loses his mother falls in the year of the start of the armed struggle, so the actual orphaning immediately precedes the marginalisation as a result of migration, interpreted by the author as a figurative burial of the past life (*De dónde venimos* 9). His formative school years spanned the tumultuous decades of the 1980s and 1990s, while his transition to independent adulthood paralleled the transitional phase within the state apparatus, including the works conducted by the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, culminating in its final report in 2003. In line with Avilés' juxtaposition of school years with adulthood, where discriminatory behaviours persist beyond the classroom, the perpetuation of violence has been underscored even after the official end of the conflict and the downfall of the Fujimori regime. Jorge Bruce highlights this continuity, remarking: "Si bien el trabajo de la CVR

abarca dos décadas de la llamada 'violencia política', el hecho es que la sociedad peruana está recorrida por unas marcas de violencia social desde su fundación hasta el día de hoy" (15). Thus, violence, along with various forms of discrimination and marginalisation, is portrayed not as confined to the internal armed conflict but rather as symptomatic of a systemic issue rooted in Peru's centuries-old history.

Avilés himself encapsulates the persistence of deeply entrenched issues spanning centuries when he reflects on the conflict's nature: "Fue más que un profesor loco y sus seguidores locos versus los soldados locos y sus generales locos y sus presidentes más locos. En aquellos años se enfrentaron odios antiguos" (*No soy tu cholo* 54). If these ancient animosities were pivotal in precipitating the armed conflict, there is little reason to believe they disappeared with its formal end. Furthermore, a well-documented nexus exists between the conflict and the enduring manifestations of racial, ethnic, and linguistic discrimination within Peruvian society. This predates the armed struggle of the 1980s and 1990s, lasts throughout its duration and continues in its aftermath (Heilman). As Carlos Aguirre articulates, despite socioeconomic changes in recent decades complicating the direct correlation between skin color and status, entrenched "ciertos hábitos mentales" endure among many Peruvians, encompassing "el racismo, el autoritarismo y el desprecio por lo indígena [que] siguen informando la visión del mundo de muchos peruanos" (139). Thus, the crux of the issue lies in the foundational tenets of individuals' belief systems and values that shape their worldview.

Drawing from decolonial theory, espoused by scholars such as Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, which builds upon the insights of Aníbal Quijano's concept of coloniality, the colonial matrix of power remains relevant in understanding contemporary post-colonial societies. This approach refers to the imperative of replacing "the master's tools" in an attempt to

dismantle his house (Audre Lorde 106), which presupposes the need to produce one's own alternative theoretical framework in order not only to demolish the colonial order but to create a new one, through the process of epistemological decolonisation (Gordon & Gordon xi). In such an approach, a pluriverse of opinions, options and points of view operate in a parallel rather than hierarchical manner.

One potential application of decolonial theory can be observed in Avilés' proposition to counter the deeply ingrained worldview and tools of colonial remnants, particularly their discriminatory dimension. Avilés notes a prevalent strategy among many *cholos* to improve their socio-economic status through a process he terms "whitening":

> La plata y la educación te pueden blanquear. La raza no solo se 'mejora' teniendo hijos con alguien de piel más clara, sino acumulando más dinero, pasando por una universidad costosa, mudándote a otro barrio, podando las ramas de tu árbol genealógico, cortando tus raíces, olvidándote de dónde vienes. (*No soy tu cholo* 73-74)

This pursuit of the process of "blanquear" arises from the belief that advancement can be attained by adhering to the cultural, economic, and social norms of hegemony, which include forming certain relationships, pursuing specific educational paths, and selectively embracing some parts of one's family history while erasing others. However, such actions merely mimic what Audre Lorde terms "beating him [the master] at his own game" (107) while failing to effect lasting change in the rules of colonial domination.

Avilés proposes a paradigm shift aimed at altering the underlying logic itself, aligning with the suggestions of Mignolo and Walsh to "disobey the universal signifier that is the rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality, and the West's global model" (3). Initially grappling with uncertainty regarding his attitude towards *choledad*, Avilés progresses from rejection and

camouflaging to firm acceptance: “Soy indio, quechua, serrano. Vengo de las montañas y voy de regreso a ellas. Decirlo me ha dado energía. Ahora tengo los puños en alto” (*No soy tu cholo* 16).

This affirmative stance represents more than a mere acknowledgement of biological or genetic heritage; it embodies an empowering decision to embrace *choledad* as a deliberate choice to live authentically. The identity which causes, in the first instance, rejection or orphanhood within the borders of one’s own country, must be reversed allowing *cholos* for appropriate and deserved recognition as sons and daughters. This transformative step involves revaluing the term *cholo*, imbuing it with positive connotations to dismantle the discriminatory logic it traditionally carried: “Ser cholo no es mi ‘desventaja’ sino mi decisión. Mi historia. Mi riqueza” (*No soy tu cholo* 73). Despite past analyses that may have portrayed the *cholo* identity ambivalently or in a negative light, positive qualities associated with *choledad* have also existed within cultural consciousness. For instance, Cosamalón’s study conducted in 1993 highlights various admirable attributes attributed to the *cholo* identity, among them:

> (…) una alta valoración del trabajo, que viene de su tradición andina; una valoración grande de la fortaleza y resistencia física; un deseo de cambio y progreso, siendo fundamental la experiencia de migrar; una iniciativa personal para lograr el éxito económico; el uso de los lazos de parentesco para la formación y reproducción de empresas informales; una combinación de géneros y ritmos musicales diferentes, sin dejar los propios; el surgimiento de sentimientos nacionales, es decir, sentirse herederos de una tradición autóctona; un sentido práctico frente a la vida, lo que les permite adaptarse a diferentes situaciones y ser creativos en sus actividades laborales. (214)

Therefore, while challenges and reluctance may exist in assuming the *cholo* identity, for authors such as Avilés it is crucial to acknowledge and amplify the positive aspects intrinsic to *choledad*.

This is further reinforced by the twenty-first-century research that indicates a shift in attitudes towards *choledad* within the *cholo* community itself. Sandra Vanessa Bernal Heredia, in her analysis of the song "Cholo soy" by Luis Abanto Morales and its contemporary rock cover featured in a televised commercial for a financial institution, illustrates this change in portrayal. Bernal Heredia suggests that these two versions, recorded over forty years apart, reflect an altered depiction of *choledad* within the neoliberal context. She observes: "Al cholo se le adjuntan parámetros de conducta autosuficiente ligados únicamente por sus características raciales, sociales y culturales" (Bernal Heredia 233). However, simultaneously, the scholar acknowledges an issue of oversimplification inherent in this approach:

> (…) las habilidades y luchas de supervivencia de los cholos se exaltan, sirviendo como cortina de humo ante la estructura del neoliberalismo contemporáneo, ya que simplifica las relaciones sociales y políticas y deposita toda la responsabilidad de progreso en el iconizado esfuerzo del individuo cholo. (233)

This simplification leads to obscuring systemic inequalities and, as a result, the question of resolving identity conflicts related to *choledad* remains open, despite increasing attempts to affirm its positive impact on multiculturalism in mainstream media. Avilés himself explores this issue in the first chapter of *No soy tu cholo*, where he ponders the possibility of a successful strategy to imbue *choledad* with predominantly positive connotations. I argue that in subsequent parts of his text, as well as the final chapter of *De dónde venimos los cholos*, the author offers options that stay in line with the decolonial paradigm to address these identity conflicts and overcome the issue of figurative orphaning of *cholos*.

First and foremost, a decolonial approach necessitates the acknowledgement of the validity of multiple lifestyles and worldviews. Avilés refers to this as "revalorización" (55),

which can be aligned with the decolonial notion of "re-existing" proposed by Mignolo and Walsh (3). Therefore, validating *cholos* as members of society does not require them to conform to a lifestyle leading to "whitening" but rather demands acceptance of their perspectives as equally legitimate representations of Peruvian reality alongside those of the white middle class or white intellectuals. The decolonial objective is not to eliminate completely the worldview and knowledge production systems currently considered hegemonic but rather to alter the dynamics between various modes of life and knowledge. Similarly, Avilés advocates for fair access to expressing opinions and participating in the state-wide dialogue on equal footing.

This can be illustrated by his commentary on an interview that he sees on national TV in relation to the student protests where the threat of "terruqueo" and racial bullying leads to the impossibility of the protestors to express their standpoint. Avilés does not call for the destruction of the representatives of the hegemonic point of view who silence the others but rather criticises the mechanisms that keep the hegemony alive, similar to what he observed as a schoolchild (*No soy tu cholo* 90). As he writes: "Tres personas blancas y privilegiadas en la mesa de un programa radial no garantizan la pluralidad de voces ni el respeto a quien no comparte sus privilegios" (*No soy tu cholo* 91). Such lack of respect is not supposed to be solved by removing the privileged voice entirely but rather by opening access to different ones:

> Por eso, las personas menos privilegiadas tenemos que seguir peleando a diario para entrar a esos espacios donde todavía no estamos, donde nuestra voz no se escucha con la misma atención, donde nuestra piel no se mira con el mismo respeto. (*No soy tu cholo* 91)

Therefore, what Avilés advocates is a pluriversal option meant to replace the universal hegemony. He criticizes the mechanisms that sustain the status quo, emphasizing the importance of opening access to different voices.

One of the noteworthy examples described in *De dónde venimos los cholos* by which Avilés illustrates the opening of pluriversal options, and that seems far removed from any political debate, is that of the cuisine. This theme has been approached from a decolonial perspective in anthropological and cultural research conducted in Latin America in the twenty-first century (Albán Achinte; Ramírez Vidal). Therefore, it should not be a surprise that the potential of food can be of interest in a country with as significant importance in the culinary world as Peru currently holds. In the book's final chapter, Avilés reflects on the role of this recent boom in Peruvian cuisine (*De dónde venimos* 249), which incorporates various features of multicultural reality, thereby establishing certain coherence to Lima through its diversity (*De dónde venimos* 248). Avilés notes the transformation in the popularity of traditional dishes like *anticuchos* which have become iconic and served in fashionable restaurants. He observes similar changes in other forms of street food, indicating a shift towards greater acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity. Avilés suggests that national cuisine has the potential to connect cultures without prejudice, leading to real, long-lasting societal change. The conclusion that autor reaches when writing about one of the most famous cebicherías is bold but optimistic: "Hasta parece que los grandes problemas del país (el racismo, la discriminación, el miedo al otro) se hubieran resuelto en aquella barra, gracias a los aderezos del chef" (248). Thus, the author believes that mundane practices like food consumption could potentially disrupt the underlying logic of colonialism by promoting pluriversalism.

At the same time, Avilés acknowledges that societal shifts take time and patience. He draws attention to overlooked aspects of everyday life, such as the city's fauna, particularly wild birds. After buying a book about wild inhabitants of neighbourhoods such as Barranco, Chorrillos and Miraflores, the author makes a remark about "vida inteligente que se eleva sobre

el infierno de motores humeantes, bocinazos insistentes y gente que se grita" (*No soy tu cholo* 27). This observation is immediately followed by a more general one about the entire city and its possibility of creating a harmonious space within its society, despite hostile circumstances inherited from the past: "debemos tener paciencia con Lima, que todo se arreglará pronto, que las cosas no están tan mal aunque lo estén" (*No soy tu cholo* 27). As the author uncovers when tracing back the origin of *cholo* identity, the practice of rejection is deeply embedded in the Peruvian history, therefore, the condition of orphanhood as a result of marginalisation is a long-standing theme in social relations. As a result, a certain amount of time should also be required to reverse this situation.

The enduring patience and optimism for the future can also be discerned in the context of generational shifts. This aspect is notably shown in Avilés' discourse regarding the disparity between the cohort of individuals raised during the internal armed conflict, including himself, and the subsequent generation coming of age in the post-conflict era. In *No soy tu cholo*, Avilés delineates how the former cohort was profoundly influenced by the pervasive sense of peril, a sentiment he illustrates with personal anecdotes:

> Son los jóvenes que, durante la guerra, vivían encerrados en casa mientras afuera las bombas estallaban y los terroristas y militares mataban y secuestraban. No iban a fiestas ni a discotecas. Sus padres no los llevaban de vacaciones al Cusco. Esa manera de vivir y sobrevivir formó a una generación. Mis tres hermanas mayores salían a la calle tomando muchas precauciones cuando querían divertirse por las noches. Siempre iban en grupo. Siempre a lugares cercanos. Si había muchos riesgos, se quedaban en casa. Una vez mataron al compañero universitario de una prima cercana. (31)

The observation underscores the profound impact of the conflict on the daily lives of individuals not directly affiliated with Sendero Luminoso or government forces, not even residing in the most war-torn zones of the country, highlighting the pervasive sense of danger that permeated the decision-making process of an entire generation. Avilés suggests that this context led individuals to either emigrate from the country promptly or adopt a singular focus on securing a safer future for their children (32). This mindset, characterised by urgency and haste of "los niños que salen al recreo después de haber pasado mucho tiempo castigados y encerrados" (32), may inadvertently diminish the emphasis on addressing radical sociopolitical issues.

However, such urgency becomes less relevant with the generation of their children. These, according to Avilés, are on the other hand, innocent in relation to the experience of their parents who grew up in the shadow of the violent period in the history of Peru. Based on his own observations, he characterises the new generation using the following illustration:

> Un pequeño óvalo se abre en medio de la pista como un oasis fantástico. El monumento que domina el centro de la plazoleta es una obra inconclusa cubierta con mayólicas y a medio camino entre en transbordador espacial y un iglú. Los niños del lugar trepan hasta lo alto y se deslizan cual si fuera un tobogán. La arena seca amortigua sus caídas. A falta de parques públicos, han colonizado ese territorio incomprensible para poder jugar. Su inocencia recuerda la actitud de los niños que dan saltitos en las camas elásticas de los KFC mientras los adultos complacidos hacen la sobremesa. Es la generación que viene. Intentan jugar en una ciudad tugurizada. (*No soy tu cholo* 34)

The depiction of the space introduces a juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory images, such as the sight of joyous children playing against the backdrop of slums. This portrayal may also allude to the earlier discussion regarding the thriving wildlife in Lima, serving as a metaphor for

the hope for a brighter future. Much like wild birds navigating the city's noise and pollution, the children of the post-conflict generation demonstrate an ability to adapt and transform unconventional spaces into playgrounds. Thus, they symbolise a potential catalyst for societal change, offering a glimmer of hope for addressing deeply entrenched sociopolitical issues.

Avilés' autobiographical elements encompass both a critique of negative behaviours like racism and marginalisation, as well as observations on the potential for shifting societal perspectives, a transformation necessitated by the enduring influence of colonial legacies. Moreover, he acknowledges the necessity of sustained, intergenerational efforts for meaningful change, recognising the post-conflict period as a pivotal starting point. From a personal standpoint, Avilés advocates for embracing one's *cholo* identity, challenging the prevailing paradigm that assigns negative attributes to this group relative to the white middle class. Such a stance aligns with the colonial/decolonial paradigm initiated by Aníbal Quijano and further elaborated upon by scholars such as Mignolo and Walsh.

In the second half of the chapter, I will go beyond the generation that grew up in the time of the conflict, to reach further into the post-conflict time. To do so, I will examine the theme of international migration and its result, another incarnation of metaphorical orphanhood, as depicted in Rocío Quillahuaman's memoir. This analysis will be framed as a continuation of Avilés' reflection on the post-conflict generation, examining how the theme of orphanhood and abandonment penetrates social dynamics beyond the transitional justice period and how experiences of migrants, particularly the children of those who endured the violence of the 1980s and 1990s, can reflect both fears as well as aspirations for improved livelihoods of their parents. In line with the main theme of this investigation, I will point to the metaphorical orphanhood arising from uprooting from one continent to another. Additionally, I will investigate how

Quillahuaman's narrative shows the necessity of facing the persistent issue of racialisation, even after migration and how Barcelona becomes in her text a space that facilitates the option for re-inventing a *cholo* identity abroad in an effort of a possible adoption back into Peruvian society.

3.2. Rocío Quillahuaman

This section of the chapter delineates a broader perspective beyond the thematic purview of preceding chapters, which predominantly delved into autobiographical reflections on the internal armed conflict by authors who experienced it during their formative years. The text under analysis, authored by Rocío Quillahuaman born in 1994, pertains rather to the later generation, coinciding with the political metamorphosis in Peru from the early 2000s onwards. The author migrated with her mother and siblings to Spain shortly after the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was published, thereby delineating a pivotal moment symbolising her detachment from her homeland and the imperative to reconstruct her reality within a significantly distinct geographic and cultural milieu. While not a literal orphan, the author experiences a dual sense of abandonment, firstly by her father's relocation to Spain, and subsequently due to the displacement from Lima. Notably, the latter event catalyses a need for identity reassessment while also engendering novel contemplations regarding one's place of origin.

Quillahuaman's literary contribution, along with works by contemporaries such as Marco Avilés, discussed in the previous part of this chapter, and Gabriela Wiener, constitutes a corpus of twenty-first-century narratives delineating the experiences of racially marginalised individuals, elucidating instances of discrimination both within Peru and amidst diasporic communities. Jorge Bruce underscores the potential of these authors, including Quillahuaman, due to their "voluntad

de romper el silencio del dolor y la humillación" (239), thus rendering them pivotal sources for discourse on racial dynamics, not solely confined to the Peruvian context but resonating on a global scale. It is worth highlighting that, unlike Avilés or Wiener, Quillahuaman operates not as a journalist but as an audiovisual artist specialising in animation and illustration, thereby primarily communicating through visual artistry, accessible on her website (https://rocioquillahuaman.com/) and social media platforms such as Instagram (Rocío Quillahuaman [@rocioquillahuaman]). Consequently, the written recollection of the author's childhood and youth, as encapsulated in the book *Marrón* (2022), constitutes merely a fragment of her engagement with issues such as racism and marginalisation, particularly pertinent to the internet-era generation.

A disparity from the other authors whose texts compiled the corpus of this investigation so far lies in the fact that Quillahuaman did not endure orphanhood during her formative years. However, a notable aspect of her narrative is the recurring absence of her father. Initially, the account obfuscates the rationale behind the author and her sister being raised solely by their mother (*Marrón* 25). Nonetheless, as the story unfolds, and with the subsequent reunion in Barcelona, additional insights into Rocío's sense of abandonment emerge (137). Thus, she navigates her upbringing within a single-mother household, not orphaned by her father's death but nevertheless wounded by his decision to embark on a new familial trajectory. Consequently, she regards her elder sister as a surrogate maternal figure and highlights the peculiarities of dwelling in a predominantly female environment, evoking associations with orphanhood, particularly characterised by the absence of both physical (25) and financial security (141). Although her father's persona resurfaces later in the narrative during their reunion in Barcelona, this encounter fails to manifest as a prospect for reconciliation but rather accentuates his

continued detachment from his daughter's life (139). Predominantly, however, I contend that the artist's experience is emblematic of a metaphorical orphanhood stemming from the migratory process, thereby epitomising a metaphorical adoption, rooted in the displacement from one homeland to another. This process remains relevant throughout her account of the issue of national and ethnic identity.

In this segment of the chapter, I undertake an analysis of an autobiographical narrative penned by Rocío Quillahuaman titled *Marrón* (2022), where the author chronicles her transition from Lima to Barcelona at the age of eleven, accompanied by her mother and siblings. This part of the chapter is structured around two distinct geographical and temporal spheres delineated within the narrative: Lima, her city of birth, and Barcelona, her newfound home. I posit that within the autobiographical narrative, Lima is portrayed as the locus of multifaceted fears and anxieties, primarily of an economic and social nature, predominantly articulated by the author's mother and siblings but simultaneously internalised by the author herself. While the principal thematic threads of the book revolve around race, racial discrimination and self-acceptance, my analysis endeavours to elucidate Lima's perception through the lens of a young emigrant representing the post-conflict generation, albeit still affected to some extent by the intergenerational transmission of anxieties and fears. Conversely, I explore the role of emigration and geographical dislocation in fostering a realm of optimism for the author's reconstruction of Peruvian identity.

3.2.1. Lima and Fear

The primary thematic undercurrents that can be identified in *Marrón* based on its inaugural chapter entitled "Prólogo. Tres años en el infierno por una buena causa", encapsulate the dialectic of self-identification as a consequence of emigration, sentiments of estrangement and

the underrepresentation related to race and origin. The author's articulated purpose, rooted in the discourse surrounding the Latin American community in Barcelona, underscores the community's pervasive presence in various facets of daily life juxtaposed against their systemic marginalisation in key domains such as education and cultural production: "Si has estudiado en un instituto público en Barcelona, sabes que estamos por todas partes. ¡Pero nunca nos retratarán como protagonistas!" (*Marrón* 11). This dissonance prompts Quillahuaman to recount in written form her personal emigration and racialisation experiences. Concurrently, it unveils underlying complexities, facilitating comprehension of the ambiguous emotions depicted by Quillahuaman concerning her transition from Peru to Barcelona and, significantly, in relation to her brief returns to Lima.

The author represents a generation born in the mid-1990s, bereft of direct recollection of the conflict yet affected by its residual anxieties. Consequently, she embodies a conflicted, transitional state emblematic of a generation enmeshed in parental legacies while poised for liberation. This position is further accentuated by the contradictory identity arising from Quillahuaman's Latin American heritage and upbringing in Europe. In the wider sense, the internal struggle between inherited fears and newly discovered freedom as well as the search for national identity are, in the case of the author, features emblematic of a generation in flux, both ideologically and spatially, forging an identity that transcends national confines and challenges the socioeconomic strictures experienced, notably, by the *cholo* populace in Lima.

In this section of the chapter, I examine the author's portrayal of Lima, informed by her early childhood experiences residing in one of its hillside settlements, as well as her subsequent visits to the city. I contend that her immediate, visceral associations with the capital generate predominantly negative connotations, often tied to feelings of insecurity or displeasure.

Moreover, I argue that a portion of the author's childhood and adolescent anxieties, evident even during her life in Barcelona, are manifestations of inherited anxieties passed on to her from her mother and elder siblings. The notion of inheritance of negative emotional responses has been present in the context of memory studies, psychology and sociology, particularly when entwined with the notion of trauma, forming the concept of "intergenerational trauma" (Wanderer Cohen; De Haene & Rousseau). In the Peruvian context, especially amid the backdrop of conflict, such trauma often encompasses instances of sexual violence, as evidenced in critical analyses of cultural artefacts like Claudia Llosa's film *La teta asustada* (Varas; Rueda; Weatherford). However, in Quillahuaman's case, the narrative eschews an explicit, singular traumatic event inherited by the author-narrator in favour of the pervasive harshness of living conditions, prompting her mother to raise her daughters in a climate of fear. Drawing on the conceptual framework of "Survival Messages" and their role in cultural transmission (Cherepanov), alongside the mechanism of epigenetic inheritance (Lassi & Teperino), potential regulatory mechanisms governing such upbringing and their attendant ramifications are delineated. Using these concepts, I investigate how the narrator's reproduction of inherited fears and anxieties underscores the enduring influence of the social dynamics characterising Lima in the 1980s and 1990s, despite geographical dislocation and time passage.

Quillahuaman's narrative commences with her migration from Lima to Barcelona; however, in the second chapter entitled "Mi barrio, mi mundo" (*Marrón* 23), the author revisits her former neighbourhood in San Juan de Miraflores. This segment of recollection documents her virtual exploration of the area where she spent her childhood, offering an evaluative juxtaposition of its contemporary state with its historical context. Notably, the utilisation of digital tools, such as manipulating the "hombrecillo de Google Street View" (25), appears to

afford the author a sense of solace while acknowledging the perceived danger of the neighbourhood. As explained by Quillahuaman, San Juan de Miraflores was among the "asentamientos humanos" situated on a hill, inhabited by migrants who laid claim to the land by constructing makeshift dwellings (24). In an analogous fashion, Quillahuaman's family established their residence there, erecting a home with her mother's hard, manual labour.

While the author refrains from explicitly employing the term "cholo" in reference to her family's life in Lima, comprehensive consideration of the familial background divulged later in the narrative warrants such categorisation. Firstly, both parents hail from a village near Cusco, alluded to only upon the family's visit to relatives subsequent to their relocation to Barcelona (87). Secondly, towards the narrative's end, Quillahuaman discloses her mother's native language as Quechua, although she is reluctant to teach it to her daughters (129). Moreover, the author's surname, possessing Quechua origins, a fact that is disclosed on her website (Quillahuaman, *Sobre mí*), further underscores her cultural heritage. Additionally, Quillahuaman delineates distinct physical features inherited from her father, notably darker skin compared to her siblings and mother, that indicate her Andean roots (97). These socio-economic and physical attributes collectively portray the family as emblematic representatives of the *cholo* demographic prevalent in Lima during the turn of the millennium (Cánepa).

Meanwhile, the narrative unveils Quillahuaman's mother's persistent endeavours to disassociate herself from the *cholo* population. The author recounts instances where her mother ensured the enrolment of her daughters in schools situated within higher-middle-class areas (15), advocated for exposure to English music over cumbia and reggaeton (126), shopped in a "supermercado del barrio bonito" (86), and refused to teach her daughters her native Quechua language (129). This concerted effort is characteristic of the repudiation of *cholo* identity and

attempts at acculturation to the white demographic that, according to Nugent, had mostly failed in the twentieth century and resulted in the creation of the *cholo* identity in the first place (65). Simultaneously, these actions align with the notion of whitening that many *cholos* practice through avenues such as education, financial success and cultural assimilation, as expounded by Avilés (*No soy tu cholo*73).

The maternal rejection of the *cholo* identity and the concerted effort to distance herself and her daughters from it may be ascribed to the exigencies of life within the settlement, predominantly inhabited by urban Indigenous populations and the aspirations for upward social mobility. Quillahuaman's portrayal of the neighbourhood not only underscores its perilous nature but also delineates its progressive degradation. Engaging in a virtual stroll through the streets of San Juan de Miraflores via Google Maps, the author reflects upon the area with a rather solemn disposition:

> Si te paseas con el buscador por las calles de mi barrio parece que haya habido una guerra y solo queden los restos de las explosiones. Viendo las imágenes me da la sensación de que antes había más vida y menos pobreza que ahora. Me resulta desolador porque ojalá fuera al revés. (*Marrón* 24)

Quillahuaman discerns a decline in the condition of her old neighbourhood, articulating subjective impressions such as "más vida y menos pobreza" (24). The author goes even further and compares the landscape of the settlement to a post-war one. This imagery is noteworthy, as the author does not chronicle the immediate aftermath of the internal armed conflict, but rather reflects on the neighbourhood's deterioration from her perspective since her emigration in 2004. Simultaneously, the text itself calls into question the objectivity of this assessment. The subsequent chapter of the memoir, titled "La forastera" (85), where Quillahuaman recounts her

return to the city, intimates the possibility that it is not the neighbourhood undergoing decline but rather her acclimation to the comfort of life in Barcelona, thereby accentuating the inconveniences and insecurities of her former house, as she admits: “nos chocó ver en qué condiciones habíamos vivido” (86). Similarly, in reference to her father, she observes that he was “mucho más acostumbrado que nosotras a la buena vida” (86) and, consequently, incapable of protecting his household.

Such perception of the city may not be, therefore, a product of unbiased observation of its physical state but rather an embodiment of profound anxieties intertwined within almost every recollection thereof, spanning from the period when she resided in Lima (26), subsequent visits to the capital (86, 88), to her virtual reacquaintance with it through Google Maps (25). Consequently, the locus of this anxiety warrants examination. Primarily, the author draws attention to her memories of the living conditions within the settlement, characterised by a pervasive apprehension of violence and theft. Describing San Juan de Miraflores as “peligroso, quizá no el más peligroso de Lima, pero sí era lo suficientemente peligroso como para que viviésemos preocupadas por nuestra seguridad cada día” (25), Quillahuaman articulates a fear not only of potential theft but, more significantly, a manifestation of her mother’s concern for the safety of her three daughters, whom she must raise single-handedly. Such anxiety is highlighted even more by their gender: “éramos cuatro mujeres viviendo solas en un barrio lleno de maltratadores, borrachos y pandilleros” (24). For Quillahuaman’s mother, the task of safeguarding her offspring proves particularly daunting, given extant research indicating a correlation between single-parent households in Lima settlements and heightened susceptibility to physical and psychological violence (Leon-Neyra et al. 47).

It is pertinent to acknowledge that while the precise age of Quillahuaman's mother remains undisclosed, an inference drawn from the ages of her daughters suggests a plausible overlap between her youth and the twenty-year timeframe of the internal armed conflict. Although the direct mention of the conflict itself remains absent from the narrative, their living circumstances in Lima, situated within one of the "asentamientos humanos," in a dwelling constructed by the mother during the infancy of Rocío's elder sister, positions them within the context of migration waves prevalent during the 1980s and 1990s, thus establishing a sociopolitical nexus to the era of the armed struggle. This nexus is further accentuated by the pervasive atmosphere of terror pervading their daily lives, extending beyond individual apprehensions to encompass the collective ethos of the neighbourhood and similar settlements, where conditions of existence were often even more dire. This shared experience of fear engenders a tacit solidarity among residents, fostering a silent understanding.

In a chapter titled "Querida Shakira" and styled as fan mail to the Colombian singer, Quillahuaman expounds upon the inevitability of fear within the context of her life in Lima and its subsequent normalisation:

> Cuando vivía en Lima, tener miedo no me daba vergüenza, porque estaba justificado. Era normal ponerle a tu bebé un cuchillo debajo de la almohada porque era normal tener miedo. Estaba tan instaurado en el interior de la gente que este tipo de cosas no les parecían extrañas. Y aunque hubiese gente que pasaba de todo, comprendían de dónde venía el miedo que sentían las que vivían asustadas, como nosotras. (56)

This collective response evokes the characterisation of the generation delineated by Marco Avilés in his essay *No soy tu cholo*, as discussed in the preceding section of this chapter. Avilés underscores that this cohort, habituated to a cloistered existence and perennially vigilant amidst

violence, persists in maintaining an overtly vigilant stance even post-conflict. Additionally, they are imbued with a fervent commitment to shielding their progeny from analogous states of terror (Avilés, *No soy tu cholo* 32).

The case of Quillahuaman's mother in her narrative represents a pivotal instance illuminating how this mechanism influences the behaviour and anxieties of subsequent generations, thereby contributing to the formation of identity. On one hand, the mother diligently orchestrates measures to move her daughters from the dangers of San Juan de Miraflores to a safer place, an effort which results in their move to Barcelona. However, concurrently, she instils in her daughters a pervasive sense of fear that transcends the rational, persisting as a manifestation of overprotection. Quillahuaman acknowledges her role as a receptive vessel for the fear predominantly inherited from her mother and subsequently reinforced by her sisters. The narrator's anxiety escalates to irrational levels, as evidenced by her admission: "Temía lo mismo a un columpio que a un asesino en serie" (57). Similarly, in recounting her experiences in Lima, Quillahuaman concedes to encountering only one perilous situation during her visits to the city. Nevertheless, she remains traumatised irrespective of the actual frequency of exposure to violence or potential threats. Hence, the inability to trace her fear and anxiety to specific events does not preclude the presence of trauma as such, as the inherently hazardous conditions themselves can constitute a potent source of trauma. Janis H. Jenkins, in her research concerning psychiatric issues among Mexican urban youth subjected to extreme living conditions, underscores that in such contexts, traumatic events may become "casi una rutina" (202). A prolonged life of fear can be compared to just such routine trauma through continuously expecting the worst, even if that worst never comes.

Quillahuaman's depiction of sleeping with a knife under her pillow as a toddler encapsulates the normalisation of fear-induced practices within the community (56). Furthermore, the exacerbation of hopelessness arises from the incapacity to mitigate security issues due to limited resources and opportunities (26). Consequently, the mother's strategy to safeguard her daughters from an early age revolves around the cultivation of fear. In her letter to Shakira, seeking solace, Quillahuaman recounts:

> No sé cómo fue para ti, pero a mí de pequeña me metieron mucho miedo. Mi madre crio ella sola a tres hijas y no daba abasto, así que supongo que lo más fácil era asegurarse de que tuviésemos miedo de todo para protegernos de correr peligro. Mi hermana mayor, que también me educó, me inculcó algún miedo más. (56-57)

This strategy of protection through fear is not novel and has been linked with the transmission of intergenerational traumas. Recent research by Elena Cherepanov in post-totalitarian societies elucidates how such mechanisms contribute to the transfer of anxieties within families, while also highlighting how approaches to intergenerational trauma shape the cultural fabric of society which, sometimes, lacks linguistic or epistemological tools to name it. One instance of such phenomenon is the term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder becoming integrated into the West cultural framework but not necessarily recognised in other cultures (78). This observation resonates with Katherine Theidon's critique in *Intimate Enemies* (2013), in which she expounds on the pitfalls of universalising trauma narratives:

> In the process of globalizing the discourse of trauma through humanitarian and postconflict interventions, the trauma narrative itself has become increasingly normative, making it difficult to think otherwise about violent events and their legacies. (26)

Therefore, even when severe trauma and its repercussions exist within a family, they may not be explicitly acknowledged as such due to the absence of requisite vocabulary or the normalisation of traumatic experiences, as exemplified by the routine state of fear and vigilance in the settlement context.

Cherepanov introduces a concept instrumental in elucidating the mechanism of fear inheritance observed in Quillahuaman's narrative, namely "Survival Messages" defined as "the compact behavioral prescriptions that are passed down through generations as family or cultural wisdom that aims to protect progenies and to increase their chances for survival" (129). Instilling fear through cautionary advisories about potential dangers serves as one such protective measure. Cherepanov contends that such messages are prevalent across diverse cultures globally (138-140). The scholar further posits that these admonitions are most effectively reinforced through reinterpretation in specific situations of danger. Quillahuaman recounts such an instance when her mother's unusual behaviour during a taxi ride to the airport in Lima alerts her to a potential hazard, possibly a robbery (*Marrón* 90). While initially oblivious to the threat, the narrator discerns cues from her mother, thereby reinforcing, reinterpreting and assimilating the Survival Messages ingrained in her during her childhood and adolescence. Quillahuaman dubs this phenomenon the "sexto sentido del terror peruano" (90).

Therefore, instilling fear can indeed serve as an efficacious means of protecting children to a certain extent, potentially safeguarding them in moments of jeopardy. More commonplace manifestations of this mechanism include parental warnings against touching hot surfaces or interacting with strangers. However, Survival Messages may also engender a paradoxical situation in which fear persists unnecessarily due to its encoding within the consciousness of the second generation, thereby becoming destructive. This can manifest in the development of social

hypervigilance, distrust and paranoia (Cherepov 17). Such a contradiction is prominently evident in Quillahuaman's narrative, in which she underscores those fears and anxieties that persisted during the family's relocation to Barcelona, far away from the potential hazards of a *cholo* settlement. She accentuates this by contrasting her experiences with those of her Spanish peers, noting the stark contrast in their perceived freedoms:

> Cuando llegué acá, a Barcelona, ¡vi que la gente de mi edad no tenía miedo a nada! A mis compañeras de clase las dejaban ir a donde quisieran y volver a casa a la hora que les diera la gana. Mientras yo tenía que hacer sacrificios, rituales y la ouija para conseguir que mi madre me dejase salir un rato por la noche. Cuando le contaba que a las otras chicas las dejaban volver a casa más tarde de las diez de la noche, simplemente me decía: "¡Qué porquería de padres!" (57)

However, despite the irrelevance of the old fears ingrained in daily life in San Juan de Miraflores, Quillahuaman finds herself paralysed by both her own anxiety and her mother's extreme protectiveness. Fear is transposed onto routine activities constituting the everyday lives of Barcelona's children and adolescents. Quillahuaman provides examples of such situations in which innocuous activities are linked with the possibility of death: "Cuando era adolescente y quería ir a conciertos, mi madre nunca me dejaba porque pensaba que si iba a un concierto, cualquiera, simplemente me moriría" (54-55); and: "no me dejaba subirme a columpios ni a toboganes, porque me podían matar" (57).

Consequently, fear becomes intergenerationally transmitted, irrespective of the presence or absence of real danger, evolving into a detrimental adaptation (Wolynn 30). From a scientific standpoint, such reactions can be explicated through epigenetic mechanisms of inheritance, in which environmental stressors, including exposure to trauma, can induce long-term behavioural

modifications on a genetic level beyond immediate responses to the stressor itself (Lassi & Teperino 160). This also elucidates why adapting one's behaviour in response to epigenetic changes can be a protracted and challenging process as seen through Quillahuaman's struggle with liberating herself from fear.

Thus, fear emerges as an integral facet of life for Rocío Quillahuaman and her family, both in Lima, where it serves as a survival mechanism amidst a hazardous environment, and in Barcelona, where it remains an unnecessary adaptation. In introducing fear into the narrator's consciousness, mechanisms of inheritance of fear play a pivotal role, emanating primarily from her mother and, indirectly, her older sisters. Additionally, this sentiment is closely intertwined with the geographical location, with the accumulation of anxiety in the narrative distinctly associated with Lima. Simultaneously, the mother instils in her daughters the imperative of surmounting otherness and acculturation as prerequisites for advancement. Building on the analysis of fear dynamics in this segment of the chapter and its correlation with the author-narrator's birth country, the subsequent subsection will investigate the prospect of liberation from anxieties and the reconstruction of a new relationship with her roots, as delineated in Quillahuaman's memoir. Through this exploration, the chapter will also examine how her narrative embodies the transition to a post-conflict generation and the identity-building strategies necessitated in the twenty-first century.

3.2.2. Barcelona and Liberation

The migration from Lima to Barcelona constitutes the central event in Quillahuaman's narrative, marking the inaugural episode of her memoir's first chapter. In this section, I argue that despite having both parents alive, the situation of migration catalyses Quillahuaman's state of a metaphoric orphanhood which leads to internal conflict regarding her sense of belonging. Such

circumstances precipitate enduring challenges in establishing a stable identity. Through an analysis of Quillahuaman's narrative, I contend that external factors in Barcelona, including educational institutions, social circles and occupational endeavours, alongside intra-familial dynamics, exacerbate the crisis she faces. Furthermore, I explore the author's strategies for resolving this conflict, drawing parallels with the approaches examined in the writings of Marco Avilés. This comparative analysis involves juxtaposing Quillahuaman's efforts to negotiate societal norms and expectations with Guillermo Nugent's metaphor of a labyrinth. By analysing the author's efforts to transcend the cycle of fear and marginalisation while grappling with issues of otherness, I posit that her text exemplifies a post-conflict generation of *cholos* navigating an identity struggle distinct from that of their parents who came of age amid conflict. In my reading of the memoir *Marrón*, Barcelona emerges as a space of paradoxical nature where the author experiences both confusion and liberation. This environment affords her an opportunity to reassess her relationship with her country of origin. I argue that elements of everyday culture, such as music, attire, career pursuits and the act of writing itself, serve as tools through which the author endeavours to liberate herself from the maladaptive effects of inherited fear and the negative emotional consequences of her departure from Lima. Furthermore, I explore her efforts to reconstruct the author's connection with a city in which she no longer feels a sense of belonging.

Migration often connotes loss, as highlighted in literature related to the topic (Timotijevic & Breakwell; Bhugra & Becker; Kelly). Ward and Styles go so far as to characterise migration as an "assault" on the migrant's identity, citing the absence of social support and networks. Conversely, the same scholars, as well as, for instance, Sawicki, suggest that the loss inherent in leaving one's homeland is accompanied by opportunities for reinvention or reconstruction of

identity. Within the specific context of Peru, Degregori (*Del mito de Inkarrí*) elucidates shifts in Peruvian culture in the twenty-first century precipitated by migration, underscoring the pivotal role of interaction with the Others in reaffirming national identity. He writes about failed efforts of acculturation that surrender to nostalgia:

> En efecto, no todos se "aculturan" o no lo hacen totalmente. Por el contrario, conforme se intensifican los contactos entre pueblos y culturas diferentes se intensifica también el deseo de esos pueblos de reafirmar sus identidades propias. Esto sucede porque cualquier identidad colectiva, cualquier Nosotros, se define en contraste con los Otros, con los diferentes. Por tanto, conforme se intensifican los contactos con esos Otros diferentes, surge la necesidad o al menos la posibilidad de fortalecer ese Nosotros. Así, por ejemplo, los migrantes peruanos en Estados Unidos o en España son los que más extrañan la comida y la música peruanas, los que con más devoción sacan en procesión las imágenes del Señor de los Milagros y del Señor de Qoyllur Rit'i por las calles de Nueva York o Madrid. (337)

However, Degregori's observations primarily pertain to adult migrants with firmly established identities rooted in their country of origin. For these individuals, contact with familiar cultural elements fosters feelings of nostalgia. The dynamics become more intricate when considering young migrants relocating with their parents. For instance, examining the position of children of undocumented migrants to the USA in the twenty-first century, Svilen V. Trifonov notes that narratives of such youth can "complicate the dominant understanding of immigration as grounded in the logics of family values, cultural belonging, and the acceptance of a new homeland" (154).

Similarly, in the case of Quillahuaman and her family, migration elicits disparate emotional responses among them. This phenomenon is not inherently tied to generations but rather correlates with the ages of the individuals at the time of emigration, a factor that can "sociologically align them closer to the second generation [born in the host country]" (Portes & Rivas 220). Quillahuaman observes that while her mother and older sisters maintain a strong emotional connection to Peru and yearn for their homeland, she herself does not share this sentiment (*Marrón* 32). In her depiction of Lima, she portrays it as challenging to forge an emotional bond with "a city in which she had not truly lived" (91). However, this detachment from Peru does not facilitate an easier process of adaptation to the migrant experience, nor does it shield the author from an identity crisis. On the contrary, it compounds the complexity of her perceived place within both Peruvian and Spanish societies.

Quillahuaman recounts instances that highlight the manifestation of this confusion. For example, she notes linguistic disparities in communication with her Peruvian family members and Catalan friends, such as the usage of "ustedes" and "vosotras" (139). Furthermore, she acknowledges distinctions in familial dynamics between her own household and those of her Spanish schoolmates (56). Additionally, she admits to leading a life split between two cultures, stating: "cuando estaba en clases estaba en Barcelona, cuando llegaba a mi casa estaba en Lima, Perú" (36). Portes and Rivas, drawing from their analysis of data concerning youth migrants in the United States, observe the emergence of a "dual" or "transnational" identity characterised by ambiguity, particularly among educated individuals who, according to their study, are more inclined to embrace it (229). However, it is noteworthy that Quillahuaman's initial self-identification, articulated at the onset of her narrative, diverges from a dual or transnational identity. Instead, it reflects a dual rejection: "Nací en Lima pero no me considero limeña. Vivo en

Barcelona pero no me siento barcelonina" (10). This rejection, contrary to the possibility of adoption into the new country, brings to mind a metaphorical orphaning, the loss of a place to which one belongs and the impossibility of becoming fully rooted in another land.

The author's stance on the issue of belonging proves problematic from the outset of her migration, growing increasingly opaque with the passage of time. The zenith of her struggle with identity materialises in a reflective moment following her return from a visit to Lima. While in her city of birth, she grapples with an unsettling realisation: she finds herself incapable of navigating the traffic, feels discomfited within the stark simplicity of the home built by her mother and is besieged by fear regarding the neighbourhood's potential dangers (86). Of significance is, however, her ability to find solace in Cusco, her parents' region of origin, despite never having resided there. She draws a poignant comparison between the two places:

> En Cusco la experiencia fue totalmente diferente. Allí el aire era limpio, siempre hacía sol y por las noches podíamos ver las estrellas. Allí no había nada que temer. No sé qué tenía Cusco que me hacía sentir segura. Quizás era tan sencillo como que no era Lima. (88)

This portrayal stands in stark contrast to Lima, where she admits to being unable to sleep, haunted by the persistent dread that someone might intrude upon her former home and perpetrate harm upon her family (86). The author's words betray a poignant acknowledgement: while the house was once hers, it now evokes feelings of both familiarity and estrangement, further underscoring the complexity of her identity conflict. On the other hand, Quillahuaman finds comfort in Cusco, a place to which Avilés alludes when he describes the generation raised during the internal armed conflict in Lima: "Son los jóvenes que, durante la guerra vivían encerrados en casa mientras afuera las bombas estallaban y los terroristas y militares mataban y secuestraban. [...] Sus padres no los llevaban de vacaciones al Cusco" (*No soy tu cholo* 31). A re-evaluation of

places and their functions takes place in Quillahuaman's consciousness. For her, Lima is synonymous with danger while Cusco offers unexpected protection and peace.

Therefore, as the family home ceases to provide the sanctuary it once did, the city itself emerges as a formidable source of peril. Quillahuaman candidly recounts an incident where she and her sister confront the sobering reality that even the seemingly mundane act of crossing a highway in Lima proves daunting:

> Justo entonces, tuvimos que parar de hablar para concentrarnos en la carretera. No había semáforos para personas, como los que hay en Barcelona, y teníamos que espabilar para pasar a la calle de enfrente. Fue difícil cruzar porque no sabíamos cuál era el momento adecuado, mientras todo el mundo sabía hacerlo sin ningún problema. Lo hacían con tal soltura que parecía que estuvieran representando un *flashmob* conjunto con los coches en plena carretera. Como lo hacíamos nosotras antes. Ahora solo éramos dos idiotas haciendo el ridículo. (87)

The contrast between the two sisters and the usual inhabitants of Lima is striking. Quillahuaman compares the locals to a "flashmob" suggesting an unspoken symbiosis between pedestrians and drivers, an implicit arrangement or choreography guiding the city's movements. In contrast, two visitors from Barcelona find themselves bereft of any assigned role in this urban ballet, despite once being integral participants in the city-wide spectacle. This leaves the author feeling ludicrous and displaced, evoking a cultural reference to the film *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* (2008), where she portrays herself as the privileged lap dog lost amidst the hustle and bustle of a Latin American metropolis, compelled to navigate the streets for survival (88). This metaphor gains potency through the chihuahua's status as a Mexican breed popularised in the United States since the late nineteenth century (Redmalm 2014), implying that representatives of the breed would

typically be accustomed to the comforts of American pet culture rather than the harsh realities of urban life in Mexico.

This comparison complements an earlier anecdote from the memoir where Quillahuaman reminisces about her interactions with schoolmates in Barcelona. While her Catalan peers engage in discussions comparing themselves to actresses and celebrities, their preferences lean towards figures who are white, even notably pale, such as Bella Swan from *The Twilight Saga* (2008-2012) portrayed by Kristen Stewart or Elizabeth Swann from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series (2003-2017). The names of these characters, although not explicitly mentioned in the text, immediately evoke the image of a perfectly white bird, therefore, raising the question of whether they are merely coincidental or intentionally underscore the contrast with Quillahuaman's own racial features. The author thus elucidates that, owing to the lack of meaningful Latin American representations in Hollywood productions or within Spanish and Catalan cultural spheres, her classmates can only conceive of one individual who bears resemblance to her: Pocahontas. Such comparison proves upsetting for the protagonist, evident in the strong language she employs to express her frustration: "siempre me tocaba ser Pocahontas, que ni siquiera era una actriz o un ser humano, era un dibujo animado, joder" (39). Thus, assuming the role of Pocahontas is indeed dehumanising, particularly when contrasted with her peers who can find role models and reflections of themselves in real individuals rather than animated characters.

The two parallels to elements of popular culture serve to underscore the profound identity conflict and sense of displacement experienced by Rocío Quillahuaman in both Lima and Barcelona, aligning with her initial assertion of identifying as neither "limeña" nor "barcelonina" (10). However, this declaration undergoes a radical reversal in the concluding paragraphs of the text, transforming a double rejection into a series of acceptances: "Soy peruana, *sóc barcelonina*

y soy marrón" (169). What emerges between these two opposing attitudes is a process of affirmation facilitated through everyday activities, therapy, relationships and writing, leading to an embrace of the ambiguity inherent in the author's identity.

The pivotal moment in Quillahuaman's journey occurs during her visit to Lima, where she resolves to confront her conflicting emotions and make peace with them to the best of her ability. This epiphany prompts a critical reflection on the writing process:

> Mi relación con Lima es tan confusa que he tenido que reescribir este capítulo varias veces, pero gracias a eso he descifrado cómo me siento en realidad. Estaba forzando una relación con una ciudad en la que en realidad no había vivido. Me fui con once años y la mayoría de las experiencias que viví en todo ese tiempo fueron negativas, así que es normal que no me sintiera acogida. Es normal que me sintiese como una extraterrestre o un chihuahua perdido, porque me estaba obligando a sentirme en casa por el mero hecho de haber nacido allí. No había razón para sentir ni culpa ni vergüenza, más bien era buena noticia que no sintiese nostalgia por Lima porque así podíamos empezar una nueva relación. (91-92)

Thus, the therapeutic role of writing is confirmed as a mechanism that facilitates the journey from rejection to acceptance. The outcome of this process is the capacity to acknowledge and embrace feelings, especially negative emotions, as part of reality, ultimately leading to welcoming them as her own.

In addition to the narrative's therapeutic and cathartic qualities, Quillahuaman delineates various strategies through which she negotiates her identity in her daily life. These efforts suggest that the identity crisis she grapples with is not solely rooted in displacement but also intersects with race-based marginalisation, necessitating proactive measures to navigate and

overcome. Although the author primarily discusses experiences of marginalisation as a Latina in Barcelona, she also reflects on earlier manifestations of this issue in Lima. In an earlier section of the chapter, I referenced the author's mother's efforts to minimise the perceived differences between her family and the white middle-class residents of the affluent neighbourhood which they call "barrio bonito" (24). However, despite her mother's attempts to bridge gaps in areas such as culture and education, they serve as indicators of otherness as much as skin colour does. Quillahuaman elucidates these evident divisions in Lima, asserting that "El racismo y el clasismo dirigían a todos los aspectos de la vida cotidiana" (126), a phenomenon she instinctively comprehends without explicit instructions. This societal stratification is directly correlated with skin colour, as she delineates two distinct worlds: that of "gente marrón" and "gente blanca" (126).

In Barcelona, the discrimination Quillahuaman encounters manifests in subtler forms. Early indications of this bias become apparent in her school experiences, where institutions with a high percentage of students of Latin American origin are deemed less prestigious, and teachers express covert surprise whenever she achieves good grades (38). Similarly, in her later endeavours at university and in the labour market, she experiences a sense of alienation, feeling conspicuous amidst predominantly white surroundings: "me veía completamente rodeada de gente blanca y me sentía muy rara" (148). This leads the author to attempt to "clean" her skin, to make it whiter, or less radical efforts such as avoiding certain colours of clothing that, according to her friends, do not match people with her complexion (96). This does not save her from feeling low self-esteem during her adolescent years just for the reason of being Peruvian which in itself made her feel "fea" in comparison with her Spanish friends (96).

In response to the feeling of inferiority based on racial features, Quillahuaman takes steps to liberate herself, a process that aligns with principles of decoloniality aimed at "constructing paths and praxis toward an otherwise of thinking, sensing, believing, doing and living" (Mignolo & Walsh 4). She consciously rebels against the imposed patterns of thought, whether by resisting her mother's desire to assimilate into the white middle class or by challenging the societal norms and boundaries prevalent in Barcelona. One notable instance of this resistance occurs in her reaction to comments about certain colours that purportedly do not complement darker skin tones, particularly red and white. Quillahuaman asserts defiantly: "llevar ropa blanca será, para mí, un acto político en contra de esos prejuicios que arrastro desde hace años" (98). Additionally, while her struggle with red clothing proves more challenging to overcome, she still achieves partial success in adjusting her mindset toward the colour. Yet, her conclusion is not solely tied to her relationship with specific styles of clothing but extends to the broader message of empowerment her efforts convey: "Algún día llevaré un vestido rojo y, además de lucir increíble, me sentiré despampanante" (100-101). This sentiment transcends mere everyday choices, embodying a larger concept of self-acceptance: "También sé que algún día dejaré de sentirme culpable por las cosas que pensé, sentí y me hice a mí misma y a mi piel marrón" (100).

Thus, the culmination of this endeavour is an ongoing process rather than a singular triumph. Similarly, in her potential efforts to rebuild a positive relationship with Lima, there exists no guarantee: "Quizás esta vez me guste Lima o quizá no" (92). However, the most crucial element of this process is hope. The uncertainty of outcomes and the acknowledgement of the necessity to proceed in darkness, without assurances of success, evoke the metaphor employed by Guillermo Nugent in his work *El laberinto de la choledad*, specifically that of the titular labyrinth. Nugent underscores the defining features of this structure as being constructed in a

manner which, if viewed from ground level, becomes a series of trial-and-error, passages and impediments:

> Generalmente sabemos del laberinto que tiene una entrada y un centro, la curiosa meta de ese viaje tortuoso que luego reclama la habilidad para reconstruir el camino recorrido. Solo cuando se ha llegado al centro tiene sentido reconstruir el camino, pues antes de ese momento, ¿cómo se podría distinguir entre un camino y una barrera? (18)

A first-person narrative depicts the navigation of a social labyrinth that aligns with Nugent's focus, eschewing a detached, overarching perspective often found in political commentaries addressing national issues. Instead, this point of view emphasizes that "no puede ser visto ni entendido sino solo cuando se participa y no tenemos un papel que nos diga dónde está el tesoro" (18). In such circumstances, Nugent contends, cooperation among all those encased by the structure is imperative to "juntar las trayectorias" (18), with the objective of reaching rational conclusions and averting the madness of perpetual circulation through the same blind alleys.

In this context, Quillahuaman's narrative may be interpreted as an exemplification of contributing to the communal effort of navigating the social labyrinth by sharing her own experience as a Peruvian migrant. This aligns with the objective emphasised by the author herself in the prologue of her book, which underscores the necessity of representation, even if the narrative itself may seem unremarkable. However, the process of crafting her recollection proves to be emotionally taxing, akin to the tortuous nature of Nugent's labyrinth, as Quillahuaman describes her writing experience as "una pesadilla" and "un absoluto infierno" (*Marrón* 12). This position suggests that for the post-conflict generation, endeavours aimed at effecting change, such as combating marginalisation or reshaping societal perceptions of racialised individuals, are highly correlated with some form of emotional suffering. Nevertheless, such endeavours are

undertaken with the hope of easing the collective navigation of the labyrinth by revealing and connecting trajectories. Thus, there are two main axes that elucidate the purpose of Quillahuaman's writing, both explicitly stated by the author: first, to contribute to collective progress by offering representation through her own life trajectory (11); and second, to achieve personal catharsis, serving as a therapeutic quest for comprehending her own feelings by confronting a past intentionally buried "que había enterrado no solo en otro continente, sino también en mi memoria" (12).

Quillahuaman's narrative diverges from previous analyses in this investigation due to her early emigration to Spain, which complicates her national identity significantly. This disparity is also evident in her age and the generation she represents. Unlike the authors examined in earlier chapters, Quillahuaman was born in the mid-1990s, and while the theme of internal conflict is not explicitly present in her narrative, the social and economic challenges of Lima she describes in the first part of her memoir exhibit elements of continuity with those experienced by the *cholo* population in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, the transmission of fear between generations is palpable, particularly in the relationship between the author and her mother, where Survival Messages as a strategy for protecting the next generation are discernible. However, rather than remaining passive, Quillahuaman aims to confront both intergenerational anxieties and the discrimination and marginalisation experienced in Peru and Barcelona. She achieves this through subtle, everyday adjustments of her mindset that exhibit decolonial characteristics, as well as through writing, which possesses cathartic power and contributes to mapping trajectories of personal experiences within the network of a social labyrinth. Consequently, her narrative serves as a significant complement to texts penned by individuals who came of age during the conflict, providing a perspective on post-conflict Peru from the vantage point of a generation that views

the time of violence with increasing distance, yet echoes its enduring repercussions, such as marginalisation, polarisation and racial discrimination.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to delve into the motif of metaphorical orphanhood stemming from segregation, discrimination and racial marginalisation, particularly focusing on the urban Andean population known as *cholos*. Through an analysis of texts and fragments of text by two selected authors, particular attention was devoted to understanding the experiences of internal – from the Andes to Lima – and international migration. The texts of Marco Avilés provide insights into the author's self-identification as a *cholo* during his formative years in Lima, parallel to the internal armed conflict. Avilés' narrative vividly exposes the mechanisms of persecution and discrimination experienced by children and teenagers, reflecting the attitudes prevalent among adults at the time. Additionally, autobiographical elements within Avilés' writing shed light on strategies for liberation from oppressive circumstances, echoing themes found within decolonial theory.

In contrast, Rocío Quillahuaman's memoir *Marrón* transcends the timeframe of the internal armed conflict in Peru yet shows the story of a family grappling with similar socio-economic challenges, residing in one of Lima's hillside settlements. Quillahuaman's narrative centres on the migration from Peru to Spain, highlighting her strategies for renegotiating and reinventing her national identity. Through daily acts of resistance against discrimination and humiliation, she mirrors Avilés' approach, aligning with the broader decolonial project.

The texts of both authors can be therefore perceived as complementary, each focusing on themes of migration and identity while representing the experiences of different generations

marked by distinct historical events, yet still entrenched in patterns of oppression and discrimination persisting since the colonial era. They collectively illustrate a trajectory of change within post-conflict Peru, albeit acknowledging that they do not possess the sole solution to negative social phenomena. Instead, these narratives serve as subjective propositions, offering fragments of insight into the social landscape and contributing to a more nuanced understanding of navigating its labyrinth. By offering essential representation and inspiration, these texts play a crucial role in shaping a more effective approach to addressing societal challenges, fostering a deeper understanding and commitment to social progress, and empowering individuals to contribute to positive change in their communities.

Conclusion: Plural Orphanhood in Post-Conflict Narrative

The theme of orphanhood is clearly present in many of the narratives as a formative element of growing up surrounded by an armed conflict. As shown through the texts analysed in this investigation, the experience turns out to be a crucial part for many who lived through the conflict itself but, even more noteworthy from the perspective of today, also carries multiple repercussions into the post-conflict setting. The variety of ways in which it is portrayed, however, suggests that forming one, consistent and monolithic vision of childhood and youth in similar circumstances turns out to be a fruitless task that indirectly also destabilises attempts at a monolithic national narrative of the period. Instead, what has been proved as part of this investigation is that dialogue around complex historical situations can benefit from exploring multifaceted first-person accounts.

Over the past decades, the narrative of the internal armed conflict in Peru has been developing, growing and forming an interdisciplinary dialogue with sociology, anthropology and political science. Intricacies that support or silence this dialogue in public spaces are closely related to the problematics of memory politics, the way in which political structures and official institutions regulate ways in which events of the past should be commemorated and used as a reference point for future decision-making process on a national scale. However, contemporary non-fiction narratives, similar to what *testimonios* did for the second part of the twentieth century, can serve as an impulse to explore different points of view, sometimes contradicting each other within the same national space, and find voices that do not feel represented in a black and white narrative. Therefore, the subjectivity of experience further complicates the concept of a singular,

objective story so desired by traditional history, and creates a space of "multiple and divergent truths" (Payne 298).

One of the questions arising at the beginning of this investigation was that of representation in non-fiction, both its technical issues, who talks and can we speak about "truth" in recollection as well as the nature of the representation of the outside world through the eyer of the author-narrator. Memory, far from being a constant, functions in states that change with both the evolution of a person as well as their environment and circumstances. In scholarship, such nature was connected, among others, with "avatares de la memoria" (Arfuch; Rincón) or "states of memory" (Olick), the latter not only suggesting the dynamic condition of recollections but also their "peculiar synergy" with nation-states in shaping a collective identity (2). First-person narratives analysed in this investigation form a fascinating illustration of this characteristic as they simultaneously reflect on an extremely troubled, engraved in the national identity events while taking this task on from the perspective of the significant passage of time. Life stories delivered by the authors are a product of decades of personal evolution and changing political circumstances.

Therefore, recollection does not function as a constant but is affected by internal and external influences that contribute to what can seem like a negative phenomenon of contamination, however, is at the same time part of the critical evaluation of one's experience that allows growth. A conclusion that comes to mind, especially based on the first and the second chapters of this investigation is that an inseparable part of autobiographical writing is the ambiguity of its multiple aspects. First of all, there is the ambivalent role of the narrator. Recollecting their childhood, the author-narrator-protagonist is, in the first place, an adult. However, by recovering the experience of the distant past, they borrow and employ the emotions, fears and joys of their younger selves, an overall unique character of the adolescent age that "parece situarse, de algún modo, más allá

del tiempo" (Baena 481). Therefore, the figure of the author becomes torn between distinct temporal positions, even contradictory at times, stretched throughout their conscious lifetime. Even further, a possibility exists of intentional or unintentional contamination of non-fiction narratives with false memories and direct deceptions (Vice). Examples of such problematic memories have been analysed in this investigation and are particularly visible in José Carlos Agüero's text. In an anecdote about the neighbours' reaction to a police raid on their house, he admits the impossibility of getting at the facts when the recollections of the various eyewitnesses to the same event differ and no single material evidence exists which can resolve these discrepancies once and for all (*Los rendidos* loc. 206). Therefore, looking at recollections through the lens of an investigation or scientific process in which facts can be clearly established based on evidence turns out, at times, impossible.

The second element of recollection which makes it unstable is its ever-changing nature in time, its contamination with new experiences. On a personal level, when a person grows up, their point of view, philosophy, priorities and understanding of the world that surrounds them are likely to evolve. This is particularly true within the age group that is analysed in the presented investigation, children and youth, as they are in their formative years biologically, intellectually and emotionally. Therefore, their often-radical opinions about subjects such as politics or morality become verified by the world which gains complexity with the passage of time as black-and-white judgements need to be revaluated to comply with a scale of grey. In my evaluation, it is particularly visible in the first chapter where I show how the influence of ideologically rigid institutions and organisations can carve a binary perspective into the minds of young cadets and child soldiers. No matter on which side of the conflict are they, they are bombarded with propaganda and radical statements. However, as presented in this chapter, such efforts at shaping minds can possibly

crumble under the pressure of unforeseen circumstances such as near-death experiences which render the subjects useless for the institutions or otherwise drag them away from their charm.

Moreover, not only people, but times also change. As Leonor Arfuch notes, "hay temporalidades de la memoria, cosas que requieren un tiempo para poder mostrarse a la luz, ser aceptadas, entrar en el debate público" (loc. 1190). According to recent scholarship, time plays a crucial role in dealing with negative experiences such as loss and trauma so a proper approach to both the passage of time as well as recurring events such as anniversaries and commemorations, may be beneficial in coming over emotional and psychological wounds (Saltzman). As pointed out when painting the historical background of the presented investigation, the case of Peruvian internal armed conflict and the efforts for reconciliation after its end are particular because of their quick progression. The official end of the conflict fell in the year 2000 with the end of Fujimori's administration while the establishment of the most significant transformation effort, the creation of Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, took place the next year, with its final report being published in 2003. The freshness of the violence cannot be ignored when looking at those dates. It is, therefore, only just to expect that time brings unknown perspectives that could not be uncovered with the works of the CVR. First-person narratives, written and published as literary texts, describing the lives of young people and children during the conflict are such a natural consequence of the passage of time. They required maturing to surface, not without a meaning being here the intellectual and emotional growth of their authors who indicate, like Lurgio Gavilán and José Carlos Agüero, that the process of writing in their case started years if not decades before the actual publication in form of books (Gavilán, *Memorias* 12; Agüero, *Los rendidos* loc. 43). A feature of the narrative that can be drawn from this is that the text grows up and evolves with its

author. Thus, while depicting events from a few decades ago, it is in fact a reflection of a much wider period, including changes in the authors themselves and the world around them.

However, as problematic as the notions of objectivity and truth are for the analysed texts, their authors are far away from suggesting they constitute a quest for such. First-person narrative as a literary device opens up a space for an intimate, personal, sometimes devastating and raw depiction of experiences which serves an important purpose. It humanises perspectives that otherwise would exist only as statistics or as a part of case studies. Contrary to reports, historical accounts and statistical data, non-fiction literary texts uncover nuances of dilemmas otherwise difficult to imagine and though they facilitate a more democratic space for various experiences. As presented in this investigation, such space can create contradictions, likely even within the experience of one person, which can be either forcibly eradicated or accepted as a part of human nature.

As this thesis has shown, the motif of orphaning in texts written by authors raised during the conflict and directly after its finish is often present in both literal and metaphorical forms. The analysis focused on three cases in which orphanhood manifests itself in different ways and leads to significantly diverse effects among three groups: child soldiers, children of militants executed extrajudicially, and child migrants. Non-fiction narratives become a source of highly intimate stories illustrating individual reactions to similar events, namely the loss of a parent or parental abandonment, evidence of the need for diversifying the discourse around the experience of the internal armed conflict beyond the simple binary of saviours and perpetrators.

Initially, this dissertation has centred on the issue of orphanhood among child militants and child cadets. The analysis has revealed that these children often form surrogate family ties within the political or military organisations to which they belong. Their loyalty to these

organisations is frequently driven not by ideological commitment but by the fraternity, solidarity and care that these institutions provide. This dynamic is particularly evident in the case of Lurgio Gavilán, who, as a teenager, was affiliated with both the Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian army, perceiving elements of a surrogate family within both. However, while many members of subversive or military organisations form a significant part of their identity based on this belonging, both analysed authors, Gavilán and Serván, experience profound disillusionment with the superficiality of the promises of lifelong support, leading to a renewed sense of orphanhood. This sense of abandonment extends beyond the intimate realm of the immediate family, touching on deeper issues of social hierarchy and marginalisation. This perspective elucidates both the motivations driving young individuals to engage in armed struggle and the dangers they face upon leaving the service. It also demonstrates that attributing clear political or ideological motivations to all members of an organisation is problematic, as personal reasons and external propaganda, particularly affecting the youth, intermingle with these impulses.

Conversely, the perspective of the children of extrajudicially killed militants revises the understanding of victimhood in post-conflict Peru. The texts analysed reveal the ambiguous social positions of individuals such as Agüero and Salgado, who, despite not being involved in terrorist activities themselves, experienced the conflict as children and adolescents through the involvement of their parents. However, they have faced social stigmatisation due to their association with members of the MRTA and Sendero Luminoso through family ties. For these individuals, literal orphanhood is explicitly inscribed in their identities, partly through their activism in organisations representing the *hijos* generation. This thesis has examined that being the children of people accused of terrorism results in a metaphorical political and social orphanhood in their own country. This abandonment manifests through stigmatisation and

inherited guilt, highlighting the necessity of diversifying the understanding of different post-conflict positions. One of the opportunities to do that, as pointed out in the second chapter of this dissertation, can be through non-fiction narratives.

Finally, the theme of orphanhood has been explored in the context of migration. In Marco Avilés' case, partial orphanhood has been identified as a pivotal moment in his life, leading to his migration from the Andes to Lima. This migration shaped his identity as a *cholo*, which, during a period of conflict, is interpreted in this thesis as related to metaphorical orphanhood through marginalisation within his homeland. Similarly, in Quillahuaman's case, orphanhood is linked to migration, this time international. The younger author's experiences illustrate the continuation of discrimination and suspicion patterns related to the post-conflict reality in which she was raised. The anxiety and desire for social advancement passed down from her parents to her result in the symbolic orphaning of the author. This occurs through the loss of contact with her father who emigrated to Spain, and through her subsequent emigration to the same country, uprooting her from her homeland and leaving her without a clear national, ethnic and racial identity. Both cases, however, present a positive aspect, as they offer opportunities to reevaluate the perception of diversity in Peruvian society and to create new identities that transcend established ethnic and class divisions.

Although the presented dissertation has covered a significant period of recent Peruvian history, orphanhood remains a significant issue for many Peruvian children in the twenty-first century in more forms than commented on these pages. One of the critical events exacerbating this problem is the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which a study published in *The Lancet* medical journal described as "a hidden pandemic resulting from COVID-19-associated deaths" (Hillis et al. 391). Thus, there is a continuity of the theme of orphanhood permeating Peruvian history,

potentially tracing back to pre-colonial practices as suggested by Leinaweaver, present through colonial and post-colonial reality, still recurrent in the twenty-first century. Consequently, orphanhood, while being a negative phenomenon, has been a crucial cultural and social element for communities in Peru for millennia, necessitating the development of models to address children's needs amid a turbulent history marked by violence.

This investigation's analysis of texts underscores the generational shifts in Peru's cultural, intellectual, and political landscape. The protagonists' experiences during the peak of the internal armed conflict in the 1980s and early 1990s, characterised by direct exposure to violence and migration, highlight the persistence of negative phenomena such as marginalisation and stigmatisation. These sources of metaphorical orphanhood remain prevalent in Peru's current sociopolitical climate. While the perspective of complete eradication of such issues may be overly optimistic, in line with one of the leading objectives of this dissertation, it has been demonstrated that by diversifying national dialogue and incorporating new voices, it is possible to develop a nuanced understanding of the diverse positions that emerge in complex political contexts such as internal armed conflict.

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