

**A Dio: A sociosemiotic/phenomenological account  
of the formation of collective narrative identity  
in the context of a rock legend's memorial**

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**Abstract**

God is dead, but, contrary to Nietzsche's diagnosis, 'we' didn't kill him; he died of cancer. This perhaps crudely cold and off-putting opening does not refer to a naively metaphorically constituted transcendental abstraction, but to a spatio-temporally situated rock legend, Ronnie James Dio. This study aims at contributing to the burgeoning research field of memory and collective identity by providing a sociosemiotic account of the formation of collective narrative identity. By drawing on the three major categories whereby collective memory is formed, that is artifacts, processes, places, as well as on the three key sociosemiotic metafunctions which are responsible for shaping a cultural event as sign system, the pursued interpretive route seeks to effectively contextualize how collective memory is fleshed out situationally in the context of Dio's memorial. At the same time, by expanding the interpretive canvass to incorporate phenomenological perspectives on the mode of formation of collective memory, the offered analytic is intent on tracing invisible structures that point to operative mechanisms beyond the formal constraints of a sociosemiotic reading. Both phenomenological and sociosemiotic approaches are reinscribed within an overarching narrativity paradigm, wherein their relative merits in addressing the scrutinized phenomenon are discussed in an attempt to formulate a hybrid sociosemiotic phenomenological perspective of memorial events.

**Keywords:** memorial, commemoration, phenomenology, sociosemiotics, rock music.

## **1. The memorial event as semiotic resource for shaping collective narrative identity**

Ronnie James Padavona (July 10<sup>th</sup> 1942- May 16<sup>th</sup> 2010), more widely known as Dio, the singer and mastermind behind the homonymous band, as well as lead vocalist and frontman for many years of the leading rock band Rainbow and the hard rock (heavy metal) band Black Sabbath, who passed away on May 16<sup>th</sup> 2010 after a prolonged battle with cancer, indubitably belongs to the pantheon of contemporary music culture. The cultural heritage he left behind, featuring both outstanding song-writing, as well as an imaginatively rich iconography, is likely to continue inspiring his loyal fandom, but also aspiring artists in the concerned genres. Dio's multimodal heritage constitutes an abundant semiotic resource that has been fuelling his fandom's collective identity for many years and whereupon its collective memory is likely to continue feeding in quest for a narratively mediated ontological scaffold: "The initial man-life correspondence is narrative" (Kristeva 2001: 27).

Dio's memorial event that took place at his burial site at Forest Lawn, Hollywood Hills, California on May 30 2010, attended by more than 1500 fans and friends, was (and could not have been other than) a ritualistic celebration of his life-long achievements, enacted in the form of a live-show, in which he excelled throughout his artistic career. May 30<sup>th</sup> has been officially declared 'Day of Ronnie James Dio' by the city of Los Angeles.

The role memorial places, memorial artifacts and processes/rituals of commemoration perform in shaping and consolidating the collective memory, and subsequently the collective identity of social groups<sup>1</sup>, has been amply theorized in various social sciences and humanities disciplines, including sociology, cultural anthropology, ethnography, cultural studies, memory studies and to a lesser extent semiotics. However, accounts of how the memorial events of famous artists are shaped alongside the aforementioned key aspects, viz., artifacts, processes, places, are scarce, if any. This study aims at accounting

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<sup>1</sup> "Narratives based on commonality, shared experiences and memories construct identity; therefore, memory and identity are mutually constitutive. Identities are narrative constructions, which articulate the individual's self-perception in relation to others, and are therefore contingent upon the reactions of the dominant sociocultural group towards its manifestations" (Ryan 2011: 156).

precisely for this crucial gap in the literature, concerning the mode of formation of a fandom's collective memory and identity in the context of a rock legend's memorial event by attending to how the event (or 'happening', in Halliday's [1978] terms) is shaped alongside artifacts, processes, places. The offered analysis assumes as its blueprint the three sociosemiotic metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, textual) as put forward by Halliday and later adopted by Kress and Van Leeuwen<sup>2</sup>, among others. Given that Halliday envisioned the metafunctions as being open to insights gathered from the social sciences, the analysis incorporates and is conceptually informed by accounts pertaining to salient facets of the scrutinized phenomenon from cultural studies, anthropology, rhetoric and most eminently from narrative phenomenology, with a focus on Ricoeur's unique take on issues of memory, narrativity and collective identity. The analysis culminates in highlighting the value of complementing a sociosemiotic interpretation of memorial events that includes narrativity as integral aspect of its theorizing mode, with a phenomenological angle that affords to elucidate invisible structures that are operative beneath the concerned semiotic resource's<sup>3</sup> manifest multimodal structure.

## **2. Collective narrative identity as the outcome of a semiotic resource's interpersonal metafunction**

Perhaps an unnecessary remark for researchers whose primary field is social semiotics, yet crucial in terms of setting the tone for the ensuing analysis, Halliday envisioned social semiotics as a discipline that may furnish grammar(s) for understanding social action(s). For Halliday grammar is not exhausted in the province of grammar books for correctly articulating sentences in a natural language, but is primarily concerned with mapping social action in whatever

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<sup>2</sup> "Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) have extended this idea to images, using a slightly different terminology: 'representational' instead of 'ideational'; 'interactive' instead 'inter-personal'; and 'compositional' instead of 'textual' " (Jewitt and Oyama 2008: 140).

<sup>3</sup> "The term 'semiotic resource' [...] originated in the work of Halliday who argued that the grammar of a language is not a code, not a set of rules for producing correct sentences, but a resource for making meanings" (Van Leeuwen 2005: 4).

mode this may deploy. Potentially there are as many grammars and languages<sup>4</sup> as fields of human action and this fundamental hypothesis has been pushing forward for some time now the research stream of multimodality. However, scrutinizing the differential ways whereby distinctive modes function and interact in multimodal texts is not an end in itself. Multimodality is an aspect of social semiotic theory and concerns the provision of a more nuanced understanding of how semiotic or cultural resources are utilized by groups while producing meaning out of ordinary activities.

Insofar as a social actor's personal identity is largely conditioned and shaped by the various social groups to which s/he belongs<sup>5</sup>, the meaning that is assigned to events, artifacts, processes is always already mediated by a collective identity. In sociosemiotic terms, the generation of meaning from cultural representations concerns the ideational metafunction of language. However, insofar as cultural representations are the outcome of collective meaning making activities (assuming that humans are primarily social animals), the ideational metafunction is interwoven with the interpersonal metafunction or the way cultural representations or cultural signs are produced through social interaction among social actors. "Semiotic systems are social systems, and meaning arises in shared social consciousness" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2006: 614). Both ideational and interpersonal metafunctions are in need of textual resources in order to assume a concrete, identifiable structure and hence are underpinned by the textual metafunction. The "textual metafunction has an enabling force, since it is this that allows the other two to operate at all" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2006: 512). This functionalist approach to language as situated and contextual use of multimodal resources has been carried over to Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual social semiotics (Jewitt and Oyama 2008: 140).

The way metafunctions operate in the context of Dio's memorial event will be elucidated one at a time (although it should be kept in mind that meaning

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4 For Halliday "language does not consist of sentences; it consists of texts or discourse- the exchange of meanings in interpersonal contexts of one type or another" (Cobley 1996: 89).

5 "Individuals possess various identities according to the various groups, communities, belief systems, political systems, etc. to which they belong" (Assmann 2008: 113).

is produced from their constant interaction, as Halliday repeatedly stressed<sup>6</sup>), beginning with the interpersonal metafunction and collective identity as its outcome in this section and moving on progressively to the ideational and the textual metafunctions respectively in the following two sections. Let us note in a precursory fashion with regard to the analysis that will follow that the semiotic resources of a multimodal grammar do not concern merely verbal and visual (or even musical) signifiers and their syntactic patterns, but any possible resource in any mode. The relative saliency of modes and resources is incumbent on each scrutinized social phenomenon. In the case of a memorial event, and even more specifically of Dio's memorial event, as will be shown, semiotic resources such as places and gestures constitute indispensable resources whereby the meaning of the event is produced. As McIlvenny and Noy (2011: 147) remark "socio-semiotic constructions of places and spaces are multimodally accomplished and performed." According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2006: 536) "gestural systems, by contrast [to verbal signs], have a far greater potential for construing experience iconically."

But prior to delving further into how the collective narrative identity of Dio's fandom is shaped in the context of his memorial event by recourse to distinctive classes of semiotic resources alongside the three metafunctions, let us dwell briefly on how collective identity has been theorized in various disciplines. The insights that will be imported in our analysis by attending to how salient theorizations have framed collective identity are directly incumbent on how the interpersonal metafunction actually unfolds in the context of the memorial.

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<sup>6</sup> "(1) to understand the environment (the *ideational* [meta] function), and (2) to act on the others in it (the *interpersonal* [meta] function)' (Halliday, 1985: xiii). To these a third metafunctional component will be added, the 'textual', 'which breathes relevance into the other two', and marshals combined representations-cum-interactions into the kind of coherent wholes that we recognize as specific kinds of texts or communicative events [...] Halliday stresses that language always fulfils these three functions simultaneously, and that there is no particular hierarchy among them – all three are equally important" (Van Leeuwen 2005: 77). "These three metafunctions are interdependent; no one could be developed except in the context of the other two" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2006: 532). "In systemic theory, all three metafunctions are found both at the level of semantics and the level of grammar: it is not possible to export transitivity from grammar into semantics, because this area of semantics is already occupied by the semantics of transitivity" (Matthiessen et al. 2010: 138).

Although it is the individual who is seen as the agent of remembering, the nature of what is remembered is profoundly shaped by ‘what has been shared with others’, such that what is remembered is always a ‘memory of an intersubjective past, of past time lived in relation to other people’ (Miztal, 2003: 6). This shared intersubjective memory is forged, Miztal states, by means of social processes such as language, rituals and other commemorative practices and in relation to common memorial sites.” (Middleton and Brown 2005: 14)

This circular relationship between who remembers and who furnishes the content of remembrances has been noted ever since Halbwachs’ seminal work *On Collective Memory* (1992). As Kligler-Vilenchik et al. (2014: 486) point out “Halbwachs saw individuals as recalling memories, though the groups to which the individual belongs provide the contents for her memory, notably through other people with whom the memory is shared”. This circular relationship has been framed eloquently by Assmann (2008: 109) as follows: “Memory enables us to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities enables us to build a memory”. But in itself this remark does not say much about how collective identity is construed out of the interaction among social actors and in what settings. Halbwachs has been repeatedly criticized for this gap in his otherwise seminal work which “represents the human agent as an agency-less factor and gives us no explicit sense of the fact that ‘social groups are made up of a system, or systems of communication’ (Connerton, 1989: 38)” (Shahzad 2011: 379). “This gap is in part explained by Pierre Nora (1998) who claims that groups construct collective memory by selecting certain dates, material objects and people to commemorate” (Shahzad 2011: 379).

Memorial events, the process of commemoration, the artifacts and narratives that sustain the process of commemoration and the places where processes of commemoration are enacted, thus, constitute a prominent manner whereby the individual social actors become part of collectives which in turn

impose on the individuals' 'aspects of seeing' their situated action<sup>7</sup> and the meaning that springs from it. As will be shown, Dio's memorial constitutes a multimodal ritual whereby collective identity is, if not formed *ex nihilo*, undoubtedly sustained and further solidified.

Group cohesion and the sheer ontological value of being-with<sup>8</sup> pose interactional and interpersonal constraints on what is remembered in social interactions. "It does not matter whether the events recalled did or did not happen in the way in which they are retold. What does matter is that the commemoration takes a form that is sufficiently consonant with the group's collectively held values that members may affirm it without finding it 'strictly believable'" (Middleton and Brown 2005: 21). Collective memory is not simply an abstraction from individual memories, but a set of semiotic constraints as mnemotechnical system<sup>9</sup> that determines to a certain extent what is remembered and how by individual social actors in specific situations. This sort of mnemotechnics starts from the very pre-reflective level of the body and moves progressively and/or simultaneously towards the employment of non-linguistic markers of common ground (e.g., gestures) to common postures (e.g., standing) to common bodily response patterns (e.g., clapping hands) to the common representations that populate collectively individual streams of consciousness. Allen and Brown (2011) furnished the perspective of the 'live memorial' in order to account for the affective aspects of commemorating the London 2005 bombings. They argued that the body makes the space for meaning-making and reflection possible through its capacity to affectively connect with other elements in a living memorial: "Embodied action as participation comes first, determinate meaning comes second" (Allen and Brown 2011: 316)<sup>10</sup>. This standpoint resonates a key tenet of the Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology of

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<sup>7</sup> As noted by Halliday ever since 1979 a "situation is a theoretical sociolinguistic construct; it is for this reason that we interpret a particular situation type, or social context as a semiotic structure" (Halliday 1979: 110).

<sup>8</sup> "Collective memory is not about 'thought', but is about becoming-together in space with the material artifacts around us, in film, in museums, in memorials" (Bollmer 2011: 462).

<sup>9</sup> "This system is made up of all the objects, people, and places – the various actors, living and non-living – that are involved with the various rituals that constitute the maintenance and differentiation of an individual-collective in time and space" (Bollmer 2011: 462).

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Allen and Brown also identified the establishment of fund-raising non-profit organizations that relate to such memorable events as 'live memorials'. In our case, the establishment of the 'Standup and shout cancer fund' by Dio's family constitutes such a live memorial.

perception with which we shall engage critically in the concluding section: “At the most basic levels, human communion is a communion of flesh and not a relation between isolated subjects” (Dillon 1988: 122). This purely affective dimension of communication has been extensively theorized since Ahmed’s (2004) coining of the term ‘affective economy’, in which terms affect plays a “crucial role in the ‘surfacing’ of individual and collective bodies through the way in which emotions circulate between bodies and signs” (Ahmed 2004a, 117)” (cited in Poynton and Lee 2011: 634). “For Ahmed, the boundaries between bodies and worlds, and their profound interconnectness, are created through affects” (Poynton and Lee 2011: 642).

Social semiotics aims at providing types of situations (Halliday 1978) where collective identity is produced by analyzing their deployment against the background of which representations (the ideational metafunction) emerge from what textual sources. In the ensuing section we shall be concerned with identifying these representations in the context of Dio’s memorial and their textual sources immediately thereafter.

### **3. The death of a rock legend as ideational substratum for solidifying the fandom’s collective identity**

However oxymoronic this may sound, albeit not untruthful, the death of a rock star is representation’s life. This is not just an etymological remark concerning the ontologically necessary embalmment (enshrinement, in Nietzsche’s terms) of presentations in order to become re-presentations, but is reflective of the very fundamental ideational underpinnings of the interpersonal metafunction. Insofar as a group of fans maintains its collective identity around a set of social (cultural) representations that circulate in the inter-subjective communicative trajectory of members, in terms of more or less coded signs<sup>11</sup> and given that a re-presentation may be said to constitute an idealized fixation of the flow of the imaginary in a stream of consciousness or the stream’s arrest and its presentations’

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<sup>11</sup> That is, from undercoded peripheral imagery, such as the color of the crystal ball held by the dragon on the front cover of Dio’s third album ‘Sacred Heart’ to overcoded signs and hence conventional symbols, such as Dio’s gestural symbol of the ‘devil-horn’ on which we shall dwell more elaborately in the ensuing section.



mortification prior to circulating in a communicative trajectory, the symbols or the iconography of a music product constitute 'dead matter'. Yet, it is this 'dead matter' that infuses semiotic life to the members of a fandom. In these terms, the natural death of the central *figura* in this figurative landscape not only does not confer oscillations to the representational armory of the music product, but, on the contrary, it reinforces its representational status. Why so? Because death brings about the ultimate semantic closure to a process of becoming, to the variable mutations a product's iconography undergoes in the artist's development, while semantic closure post-mortem signals the eternally immutable conventionalization of the key symbols that sustain an artist's iconography (at least for as long as the iconography's meaning does not change due to wider shifts in cultural axiology, but also provided that the artist's followers do not perish). Hence, the natural death of the rock legend affords to solidify the conventional, symbolic value of his production for the members of his fandom or to reaffirm the life-infusing value of the cultural representations that he spawned throughout his artistic career.

In a similar vein, the way whereby the meaning of Dio's death was negotiated in his memorial was not through filtering by an irrelevant, undifferentiated (with regard to the meaning of the iconography that is inscribed in the communicative trajectory of discrete social groups) third party discourse about the after-life (e.g., church discourse; although there are vestiges of such institutional/official discourse particularly in the commemorative speeches of cultural mediators). On the contrary, the memorial site was filled with the highly situated and contextual iconography of Dio's artistic production (even though this iconography did leverage expressive elements and thematic aspects of a dominant religious discourse, as in the case of the highly influential Black Sabbath album 'Heaven and Hell'). The fact that such an iconography may feature intertextually vestiges of other discourses, though, does not by any means mitigate its heterogeneity and its non-reducibility to some sort of univocal chain-of-Being. In short, Dio was not 'put to rest' post mortem. Dio was reinscribed post mortem in a community for which he simply 'rocked'. Indeed, Dio's death

'rocked'<sup>12</sup> and it is the ritualistic re-enactment of a live-show in lieu of a sad and truly 'dead' memorial that affirms the life-giving potential of Dio's death as meaningful semiotic resource for his fandom.

"The dead, according to psychologist Paul Schilder (1950: 280) 'do not disappear from the community of the living. They remain as long as their pictures are revived in any members of the community'" (Schwartz 1998: 16). This is perhaps the most outspoken function of rock memorabilia as cultural artifacts, as visual metaphors, in their capacity to transpose the spectator to all sorts of different places, in this and in any other possible world (including the imaginary space of the after-life). But, most importantly, in the context of a memorial, visual metaphors perform a unique function, that of 'gateways' between the world of the living and the dead. Through communion, the fans collectively connect with the deceased ritualistically through visuals and re-enactments of moments from live-shows, but also in the commemorative narratives that are deployed by significant others who were close to the deceased.

Dio's death functions interpersonally by virtue of the special bonds that are forged among fandom members while participating in a mysterious and ontologically binding transition from here to where. "Death rituals facilitate effective community building through strengthening ties and shaping beliefs" (Bonsu and DeBerry-Spence 2008: 713). A memorial event may be structured like a live-show. However, this was not an ordinary live-show. The audience in this memorial event communed not simply because it was mirrored in commonly supplicated cultural paraphernalia, as expected in a common live-show, but because the meaning of the paraphernalia was on this occasion 'put to rest', that is forever representable in such and such a manner.

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<sup>12</sup> This does not imply that Dio's non-presence in flesh-and-blood will not be missed by his natural family and that the workings of mourning will not be put into motion in the face of such an absence by his close significant others or that his familial environment is more likely to go partying in the event of Dio's death. Our analysis concerns Dio as representation for his fandom who came to know Dio in his capacity as symbolic resource, which differs markedly from his non-public, individual persona and how this was negotiated by significant others close to him. It goes without saying that a rock legend's private and public lives are occasionally and most frequently miles apart (and I can personally attest to this most likely common place based on numerous interviews that I have conducted with bands for a decade).

If, according to Halliday, social semiotics is concerned with the meaning potential of semiotic resources as they are utilized in discrete social settings by groups of social actors, the memorial event marks the end of the concerned resources' potential or the signifiers' being ultimately put to rest. Ontologically speaking, the memorial is a relief (surely a provisional one). It is a relief from angst in the face of death (in Heidegger's terms) with a strongly communal character, but also of the immortalization of an artist in the multimodal narrative that is variably deployed in every corner of the memorial space. "Merely attending a funeral can build specific ties or bind the broader community, as attendance contributes to reaffirming the community's existence" (Bonsu and DeBerry-Spence 2008: 703).

At this juncture, the memorial as artifact is intermingled with the memorial as process insofar as the process involves collective gazing and mutual mirroring against the background of t-shirts, posters, banners, but also the negotiation of the artifacts' meaning through consecrational turn-taking that is geared towards affirming a collective identity through collective remembrance (in terms of past participation in Dio's live-shows, experiences of listening repeatedly to specific tracks, display of autographed records that were brought to the memorial site).

How did grammar afford to bring about the immortalization of the artist and subsequently the reaffirmation of his fandom's collective identity? As evinced and inscribed in fans' statements (Dio 2010a) such as "Dio was a great man. Dio for everybody. Dio for ever", "The real God, the real fuckin' metal god bro" and "Long live metal" there is a marked tendency towards the employment of adjectives of grandeur ('great'), superlatives ('real God' echoing Thomas Aquinas's ascription of 'ens realissimum' to God), mass nouns ('everybody') that are indicative of mass appeal, and with the employment of adverbial phrases of infinite/indefinite duration ('for ever', 'long live'). At the same time, we witness a sort of Dio's royal deification in the employment of phrases that are prefaced by 'Long live...' and which culminate intersubstitutably in Dio, rather than an 'actual' king. "Royal deaths often set in motion powerful ritual representations of unifying value" (Huntington and Metcalf 1979: 122). In fact, this type of ideational metafunction that is encountered in fans' discourse

resonates the so-called 'two bodies' phenomenon that is defining of royal existence and of modes of address of royal death: "This was what was at stake with the well-known idea of the King's two bodies: *this* King's physical flesh might succumb to death but in the wider sense the king, representing kingship, was still very much alive (The King is dead! Long live the King!)" (Fowler 2007: 43). A similarly excessive expressive inventory is customarily encountered among the loyal fandom of major rock artists, such as Kiss: "The world of Kiss fandom is marked by a particularly intense set of 'self-esteem' discourses, an almost ecclesiastical and heavily mythologized relationship to the band and a strong rooting in a utopian fantasy of superhuman empowerment" (Bailey 2005: 105).

"Death-ritual participation, then, indicates membership in and contribution to the community in general. The various exchanges that occur on the ritual grounds, such as sharing greetings and gossip, or giving gifts, reinforce specific bonds or the cohesion in the community as a whole." (Bonsu and DeBerry-Spence 2008: 705).

Nevertheless, memorials in general and Dio's memorial in particular also have a pragmatic value. This consists in the almost pedagogical opportunity such events offer for inculcating a fandom with an axiology or with reinforcing a latent axiology as "socially acceptable values and norms" (Bonsu and DeBerry-Spence 2008: 706). The textual ground whereupon such values are edified, as "actualized meaning potential" (Halliday 1979: 109) and that in turn cater for the building blocks of a collective identity in commemoration speeches, in ritual gazes, in the sheer being-with in commemorative places is dealt with in the ensuing section that concerns the textual metafunction.

#### **4. The textual underpinnings of Dio's memorial event**

As previously stressed, the textual metafunction essentially unites the interpersonal with the ideational ones. The textual structure of the concerned memorial event is uniquely multimodal, not just in terms of the modes and resources involved, but, above all, of their interaction. In this section the

memorial event will be dissected in terms of resources and modes with view to conferring a situated structure to the generation of meaning or to the representations that circulate among the fandom's members. To this end, the following will be considered: cultural artifacts, ritualistic gaze, ritualistic gestures, division of the memorial space, narrative and rhetorical structure of the featured commemorative speeches. But, first, a few words about the videographical methodological approach that has been adopted in this paper, whence stem the empirical data for the undertaken sociosemiotic analysis.

This study draws on available video materials pertaining to Dio's memorial, mostly available through the popular video-sharing platform of youtube, but also on relevant background information and post-event press literature. According to Jewitt (2012: 3) "the use of existing videos as data is increasingly common for research to be undertaken with videos that are already available rather than video generated by researchers for research." The videographic data that are utilized in this study stem from six videos (or one video in six parts) that captured the main episodes of the memorial (referenced as Dio 2010a - Dio 2010f). The videos include the entire content of the key commemorative speeches that were delivered on the site of the memorial, plus quality footage portraying all phases of the event, that is from the moment that fans started gathering on the memorial site up until their disbanding at the end of the event. "As a result of this quality video data preserve the temporal and sequential structure which is so characteristic of interaction" (Knoblauch et al. 2006: 19). Especially given the multiple modes and resources involved in this analysis, the videos turned out to be an invaluable source, "a fine-grained record detailing gaze, expression, body posture, gesture" (Jewitt 2012: 6). "Video shooting aims at documenting multimodal resources (language, gaze, gesture, body displays, facial expressions, etc.) as they are locally mobilized and attended to by participants. This means that the relevance of details is endogenously produced within courses of collective action as they are interactively and reflexively constructed moment-by-moment within the contingent unfolding of practices" (Mondada 2012 : 55).

#### **4.1 Cultural artifacts or iconic semiotic resources inscribed in external paraphernalia**

We may classify the expressive inventory of Dio's fans at the memorial event into two major types, viz., into iconic semiotic resources inscribed in external paraphernalia and iconic semiotic resources inscribed in bodily signs. "Both gestures and the displays of postural orientation used to build participation frameworks are performed by the body within interaction" (Goodwin 2008: 164). In this section we shall be concerned with the former type, while the latter type will be analyzed in the following sections. Iconic semiotic resources inscribed in external paraphernalia by fans comprise artifacts such as Dio t-shirts, hand-made icons featuring amply used symbols in Dio's iconography, such as crosses, dragons. "Rock culture has always been intimately connected with images-of styles, stars and attitudes" (Grossberg 1993: 162). Iconic semiotic resources inscribed in bodily signs comprise most eminently the 'devil horn' sign, while emulating Dio's corresponding gesticulating habits during live performances, but also in the majority of the photographic sessions where he was portrayed either alone or alongside other members from the bands with which he performed throughout his lifetime, such as Elf, Rainbow, Black Sabbath. Both types of iconic signs were eagerly projected by fans onto the cameras that were capturing footage at the event. Dio's memorial bespoke t-shirts were on sale during the event, even the security guards' t-shirts featured messages such as 'Dio Kicks Ass', while a Standup and Shout cancer fund banner was placed strategically at the entrance of the memorial's main hall. Dio photo albums were also distributed for free to the fans as tokens of appreciation for being present at the event.

The appropriation and reproduction of these indispensable signs from Dio's iconographic repertoire afforded to consolidate fans' individual situational identity as a reflection of a collective identity that is edified on commonly shared signs and symbols that are part and parcel of the visual narrative identity of a rock legend/idol. By analogy to what is called in pragmatics pragmatic markers of common ground I shall call the above artifacts memorabilia of common ground, that is tangible artifacts that function interpersonally as markers

whereupon a collective identity is edified, maintained and propagated in communicative re-enactments in discrete social settings.

Dio's fans' effervescent expressiveness is a direct reflection of the artist's iconography which constituted the figurative ground whereupon a dialectical belief system of good vs. evil was built and sustained almost obsessively throughout his artistic career. The semiotic resources of dragons, swords and crystal balls not only fuelled the consistently employed artistic imaginary of Dio, but furnished vivid lived metaphors and a symbolic (that is conventionalized and overcoded, rather than freely flowing, ephemeral and undercoded) armory of symbols that mediated between ordinary phenomena and their confrontation. Visual metaphors functioned as a symbolic vaccine for Dio up until his ultimate battle with cancer which he heroically confronted by performing imaginary battles with evil dragons: "We're gonna slay this dragon", he is most remarkably remembered to be uttering by the key host of the memorial event Eddie Trunk (of VH1 Classic's *That Metal Show*), in an attempt to envelop and transform the adverse facts of a cruel reality through his artistic vision, thus affording to circumnavigate the ravaging metastasis of a physically lethal disease through a parallel universe where cancer is just another visual signifier from an album cover (e.g., Dio's solo third album *Sacred Heart*) and the means for combating it a sword. In this manner, not only fans, but Dio himself symbolically and narratively negotiated and transformed his own natural cycle of birth/growth/decline/death as a series of narrative programs or episodes, each one coupled with different actors, helpers, opponents, friends. In the same manner that he sought to combat and fend off the certainty of death by transformatively sublimating it into a narratively mediated opponent with the employment of visual signs, he sought to expel 'evil' by introducing and most effectively affording to propagate the gestural sign of the devil horn.

#### **4.2 The ritualistic gesture of the devil horn**

"Gesture operates in a 3-dimensional "signing space" defined by reference to the signer's body and its parts, and movement within that space is entirely accessible to the receiver, thus in addition to succession in time (which is common to both), the gestural medium can exploit a number of parameters of spatial variation: the

"articulatory organs" (fingers, hands, arms, other body parts), their location, orientation, thrust (direction and speed of movement) and so on" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2006: 533). Gestural signs constitute "proto-signs" that enact social relationships (Matthiessen 2006: 612) akin to children's proto-language that precedes the entry to the symbolic and the use of symbolic expressions.

The key benefit that stems from the employment of proto-linguistic gestural signs as socially shared semiotic system, as Halliday and Matthiessen (2006) contend, consists in the superior iconic dimension of the proto-sign over the linguistic one. This does not imply that verbal signs cannot also have iconic status, but proto-signs are more directly inscribed in collective identity by virtue of their purely affective character.

Dio is officially credited with having introduced the sign of the devil horn that spiraled into one of the most recognizable and widely employed gestural signs of our times. It has been endorsed for various communicative purposes (regardless of the motivation of its originator) by a who's who of politicians, actors, music artists etc. Based on an interview with Dio (Dio 2010f) the sign originates from his grand-mother, a superstitious woman who used to be suspicious of strangers (apparently everyone she did not know). She used to give the 'evil eye' (another name for the devil horn) to strangers in an attempt to animistically negotiate her encounter with a potentially (and most likely) threatening unknown in the form of unknown others.

Dio's adoption of the devil horn as an integral aspect of his live iconography, a sign that spread virally among his fandom (and beyond) has been occasionally misidentified as being the sign of the devil and affirmative of devil-worshipping practices. Nowadays this may appear as a retro-criticism that was yet quite a hot discussion topic back in the 70s and the 80s, but also one of the main territories leveraged by the christian church with view to legitimating on the inverse its power and authority (that is by drawing on an outmoded dialectic that used to be appealing to uneducated masses and a key source for framing the popular imaginary in the Middle Ages).

Dio's reasons behind the employment of this gestural sign are in fact not very clear and certainly his allusion to his grand-mother is not very cogent, but also not particularly relevant for the sign's adopters who prefer to uphold its



pragmatic value, rather than engage rationally in a process of active disenchantment by recourse to an identifiable myth of origin. Regardless of such ambiguities as to how the devil horn came to be entrenched in Dio's iconography, its power as semiotic resource or as the textual substratum for the realization of the interpersonal metafunction is hardly contestable.

In pragmatic terms, the devil horn performs the function of a pragmatic marker of common ground as already noted. In psychoanalytic terms, it constitutes an overcatheted symbol (i.e., overinvested) with libidinal energy (cf. Rossolatos and Hogg 2013). In narratological terms, the devil horn constitutes a figurative ground for the deployment of a collective narrative, that of Dio's fandom (but also of a considerably diverse roster of fans and artists alike). However, the expressive manifestation of this gestural sign does not bring forth necessarily a semantic component, but constitutes a pre-linguistic and proto-affective articulation. It is a visual narrative component of an affective community that is edified on non-mythical grounds or where even if a sign was once rooted in mythic structures, it has been recontextualized and resemanticized in such a manner as to render any claims to originary mythical foundations defunct. In these terms, I would argue for the inappropriateness of appropriating this sign as a secular manifestation of a time-hallowed transcendental dialectic by an institutionalized belief-system (e.g., a church), inasmuch as for the irrelevance of anchoring narratively this sign in Dio's kinship system with view to disenchanting it by cloaking it with a mundane myth of origin. In short, either a God/Devil master-narrative or a granny next-door post meta-narrative mundane narrative are insufficient as explanatory grounds of the communicative appeal and force of the devil horn as pragmatic marker of common ground or as interpersonally binding visual semiotic resource. I find the argument for the proto-affective interpersonal function of the devil horn as most pertinent explanatory ground in accounting for its widespread adoption. The devil horns directed from and towards the stage as central staging of a collective desiring mechanism function as antennas that channel flows of desire bi-directionally, that is from lead singer to audience and from audience back to lead singer, thus creating a closed proto-affective communicative loop whereby intra-

collective identity is formed at the level of pure intensity and hence pre-rationally and pre-mythically motivated and articulated.

Cienki et al. (2014) sought to determine the modes whereby interactants' bodily behavior is aligned in processes of joint remembering by focusing on three types of behaviors, co-speech gesture, postural sway, and eye-gaze. They found that whereas alignment of co-speech gesture may serve a wide range of functions, postural alignment is a largely automatic phenomenon that is more likely to play a role in the establishment of mutual engagement in the joint activity of memory co-construction than to serve a particular symbolic function. The difference between their study and this one lies in the fact that the concerned gesture ('devil horn') does perform multiple functions (symbolic and affective), however it does not necessarily co-occur with speech and, in fact, it occurs more often in standalone mode.

#### **4.3 The mediatization of the ritualistic gaze**

"Commemorative rituals and embodied practices serve to sustain groups beyond the limits of psychic memory." They "serve the purpose of producing and maintaining an individual-collective in time through the actualization of history as memory-action" (Bollmer 2011: 459-460). The fans did not gaze at the deployment of the memorial event as unmediated spectacle in the same fashion that one may gaze at the performance of a singer on stage during a live-show. The social gaze during Dio's memorial was mediated by giant screens on which the actual commemoration that was enacted 'inside' the Hall was transmitted live to the 'outsiders'. "Communities of memory are not built on shared interpretations of particular past events, but on the shared experience of their mediatized representations" (Hajek and Dlouha 2014: 208). Fans' gaze was a mediatized one, thus the mode of transmission of the event afforded in parallel to legitimate the mediatization of rituals as the dominant mode of establishing contact with the living and the deceased alike. "Media are doing something more than simply reporting rituals; media are performatively enacting them" (Pantti and Sumiala 2009: 120).

The spectacle was coupled in vivo with its double, that is the memorial event was reduplicated not by being replayed in some temporally distant moment, but at its inception, just like a live report or, by analogy, just like attending a live-show, while gazing at the giant screens that are placed to the left and to the right of the stage. “What is known about any event which has been turned into a site of memory seems to refer not so much to what one might cautiously call the “actual events,” but instead to a canon of existent medial constructions, to the narratives and images circulating in a media culture” (Astrid 2008: 392).

In this manner, the screens functioned as a camera lucida insofar as they transmitted the ‘happening’ that took place on the same site. Only a few feet separated the inside from the outside of the Hall. What united the insiders with the outsiders was the screen, while the screen’s transmission could only be lucid and absolutely in correspondence with the happenings on the ‘inside’ as no other staging could possibly distort the reality of the transmitted images, given the spatial proximity of the inside with the outside. And the truthfulness of this absolute correspondence and lack of distortion or incidence of a double staging is fortified by the very thematic that circumscribes the transmission, that is death as absolute degree zero of existence. Thus, the meaning of the spectacle in the light of the combination of place plus medium plus thematic affords to transcend its situatedness and assume ontological value as non-spatially constrained, u-topian being-laden-to-full-view of the inner machinations of cultural production. “Mediatization designates the process through which social or cultural activities are to a greater or lesser degree performed through interaction with a medium, and the symbolic content and the structure of the social and cultural activity are influenced by media environments which they gradually become more dependent upon” (Pantti and Sumiala 2009: 120).

Complementary to its mediatized character, the gaze at the memorial event also has a phenomenological value, what has been called by Mitchell ‘ritual gazing’. “Ritual gazing is a form of spectatorship [...] through ocular introjections the object of the gaze becomes an object of identification” (Schwartz 1998: 15). Ocular introjection is a remarkable instance where the scopophilic drive is dislocated from the realm of desire (mere peeping) and reinscribed in the realm

of cultural Demand, that is sublimated to an ethical imperative of 'looking up to' (to one's ego ideal), where 'up' also lets shine forth a latent rhetorical topography in terms of a hierarchical stratification of 'human values' versus instincts. Thus, the ritualized gaze is always already semiotized, that is engraved in a ritual where what is gazed at (the object, in Peircean terms) through its sign(s) or its cultural representations has been invested with determinate interpretants as latent axiology. Gazing at a dead rock star evokes for a spectator multiple affective and axiological associations, from sheer admiration to representations of values of freedom, integrity, promiscuity, etc. The narratives that were deployed by significant others who were related in some manner to the deceased aimed at fortifying the pre-interpretive dimension of the ritualized gaze, while constraining semiotically the 'as' of remembrance in terms of a set of determinate interpretants. The rock star must be remembered as such and such. Hence, each time the rock star is gazed at what is re-enacted is not a fleeting encounter with a random visual stimulus, but a deeply held association with a cultural symbol, whose axiology outlives his physical existence.

#### **4.4 The memorial space as division of the mourning's labor**

Places are not just material loci, but fundamentally cultural spaces that are invested with cultural representations and hence always already semiotized. In the context of the possible meanings that may be afforded by visiting a cultural space, by tracing its multiple pathways and by reminiscing over past visits on the occasion of visiting anew, a cultural space is constantly and dynamically resemiotized. As Abousnnouga and Machin (2011: 187) contend in their sociosemiotic analysis of war monuments "there is a clear association of space with significance" (also see Hoppal 2014: 57-72 on the relationship between spatial/proxemic patterns and social structures). "Collective memory is *distributed* over a given population or set of places" (Casey 2004: 23). The place of a memorial site is a remarkable example of the power of cultural associations in transforming mere movement in space into meaningful resource. "These spaces of public display and ritual are what Boyer (1994) refers to as 'rhetorical

*topoi*" (Johnson 2002: 293). "The ordering of memory around sites of collective remembrance provides a focus for the performance of rituals of communal remembrance" (Johnson 2002: 294).

The spatial organization of Dio's memorial event had a special task. Not only did it function as site for collective remembrance and for proxemically sustaining a collective identity, but also as a marker of a latent hierarchical stratification between fans and cultural intermediaries or mediators of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993). The dividing line in this spatial organization between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' was the main Hall's entrance (where the memorial 'actually took place'- or, where, paraphrasing Baudrillard, "it never happened"). Insofar as "socio-semiotic constructions of places and spaces are multimodally accomplished and performed" (McIlvenny and Noy 2011: 147) the entrance to the Hall functioned as the ideational gateway to the inner machinations of cultural production. Guards may be seen in related footage to be actively barring simple fans from entering the actual Hall, while redirecting them to the 'lavish' public seats that were placed strategically facing the screens outside the Hall. Furthermore, given that "the interpersonal component of the grammar in many languages enacts networks of social relationships with varying degrees of inequality and of distance" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2006: 527), the event's spatial organization as 'spatial disjunction' afforded to demarcate a division of mourning's labor. This division surfaced in the differential consumption of the memorial discourse between insiders and outsiders, that is between the insiders that included the key speakers who performed the commemorative narratives and the outsiders who consumed them on the screen. It was just like watching TV, only outdoors at a graveyard. .

The insiders are comparable to tribal magicians or to seers who have traditionally been conferred privileged access to the inner sanctum of mass supplication temples. In this incidence the space of the inner sanctum functions ritualistically as the 'abaton', a mysterious social space whose boundaries are not supposed to be transgressed by the uninitiated or, more prosaically, by non-authorized personnel. Of course, as amply attested by anthropological studies, it was this very discursive strategy of social spacing that produced the mysterious veil that divided insiders from outsiders and which was used as multimodal text

(without the prefix 'pre') for legitimating royal tribal members' unequal distribution of power. This text was mystified and reified by tribal members as in fact hiding something valuable (knowledge, artifacts, secret passages to the after-life etc.). It might be argued that such a nostalgic comportment towards 'sacred spaces' in the context of a contemporarily widespread attitudinal state of disenchantment is at best a (counter)intuitive response to films such as Indiana Jones. Yet, this latent assumption about the possession of secret/sacred knowledge of the machinations of cultural production by a group of cultural mediators afforded to disrupt the disenchanted landscape of post-industrial culture by virtue of an archaic spatial distribution strategy that favored the privileged access of cultural mediators to the inner sanctum where the coffin of the deceased was displayed.

#### **4.5 The narrative and rhetorical structure of the featured commemorative speeches**

"To speak of memory is to speak of a highly rhetorical process. Indeed, the study of memory is largely one of the rhetoric of memories. The ways memories attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories are essentially rhetorical" (Phillips 2004: 2). Since in this section we are primarily concerned with analyzing the commemorative speeches that were delivered on Dio's memorial day by friends, colleagues and family, with an emphasis on the speech of Dio's son (Dan Padavona), it is crucial to foreground the interpretation by reference to the key dimensions of discursive analysis, coupled with a brief exemplification.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2006), four key principles or types of transformation undergird discourse analysis or how discourse transforms and is constitutive of reality, viz., exclusion, re-arrangement, addition and substitution.<sup>13</sup> Exclusion concerns the selection of certain

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<sup>13</sup> Note that these principles are akin to the four key rhetorical operations of semantic transformation of addition, subtraction, substitution and permutation (see Rossolatos 2013) and hence attest to the deeply rooted in traditional formal rhetoric nature of discourse analysis, at least as propounded in this work by Halliday and Matthiessen.

elements of a social practice, such as actors and settings, in the formation of a textual representation at the expense of other potentially equally important features. This principle is typically encountered in memorial speeches which aim at highlighting the positive aspects of the deceased's life and personality, in a manner akin to a final judgment that will have exculpated the deceased from any wrong-doings or defects. In Dio's memorial speeches we encounter explicit references to 'greatness' concerning music compositional ability and personality, coupled with an utter exclusion of references to defects. Rearrangement concerns the restructuring of the sequential deployment of past experiences or the detemporalization of elements. In the case of Dio's memorial, detemporalization of events from the deceased's life is crucial in order to reinstate them in an achronic narrative, that is in order to embalm imaginatively the deceased in a narrative that is reflective of his magnitude and feats. The re-semanticization of life events in a discourse that screams for closure affords to transform ephemeral images into eternal icons, and hence the pictorial into the iconic. The rearrangement of events in the context of Dio's memorial speech affords to transform semiotic resources into building blocks of a narrative of life-long achievements. The speech acts that weave the narrative endow the deceased with positive properties. Whereas in life judgments of an artist may have been occasionally critical and negative, the output of the final judgment in the context of the transition to 'eternity' revalorizes events, thus transforming a life into a tapestry of triumphant actions whose meaning defies time and hence merits being looked up to. Addition concerns adding elements to the representations, mostly evaluations and properties. In our case, additions such as the embellishment of discrete episodes from the deceased's life with adjectives in repetitive structures affords to resemanticize and revalorize events, while highlighting their ethical value for the community of fans. "In this sense, cultural discourse is active in the communication practices that are circulated among a people, a set of texts in contexts, each being a situated performance related to ongoing cultural events and conversations" (Carbaugh 2001: 122). Finally, substitution concerns the transformation of concrete instances into general concepts or the transmutation of the deceased's life events into axiological components that merit emulation by his fandom.

Dio's memorial event was a veritable multi-act performance featuring four types of acts or semiotic resources of collective memory (i) live music (ii) commemorative speeches (iii) videos from Dio's live shows (iv) footage from Dio's interviews. (i) featured cover versions of Dio's songs from vocalists such as J. Belladonna (Anthrax), G. Hughes (Rainbow, Black Sabbath) and J. Payne (Asia), but also of other artists' songs by the likes of Queensrÿche's Geoff Tate who covered L. Cohen's *Hallelujah* and P. Shortino (Rough Cutt, Quiet Riot) who covered the Beatles' *In My Life*. (ii) featured speeches from Dio's friends (e.g., Harold Hyde, childhood friend, Eddie Trunk), colleagues (e.g., Simon Wright, Dio's drummer) and family members (e.g., Dan Padavona, Dio's son). The entire event was hosted by Eddie Trunk and lasted for about four hours.

In the remaining part of this section we shall be concerned mostly with analyzing rhetorically the structure of Dan Padavona's commemorative speech, mainly due to its being, apart from quite artfully crafted (in rhetorical terms), the most comprehensive among the discourses that make up the memorial's semiotic resources of collective memory as regards its ideational spectrum. Let it be noted that rhetoric constitutes an indispensable aspect of sociosemiotic analysis, at least in principle. As stressed by Halliday (1979: 110) "the semiotic structure of a situation type can be represented as a complex of three dimensions, the ongoing social activity, the role relationships involved, and the symbolic or rhetorical channel". It may be the case that formal rhetorical analyses (at least for verbal discourse) are rarely featured in sociosemiotic analyses which, to my understanding, constitutes a significant analytical opportunity going forward. To this end, the following formal rhetorical analysis of Dan Padavona's speech aims at complementing the by definition interdisciplinary toolbox of a sociosemiotician with the interpretive (but also, the other way round, compositional) tools of rhetoric. The analysis is intent on addressing three main research questions (i) how Dio's representations are produced through the employment of specific rhetorical figures, argumentation schemes and rhetorical appeals (ii) how the audience's collective identity is shaped as a projection of the rhetor's narrative? (iii) What kind of wider axiological implications emerge through this situated oratory? The analysis deploys in line with the speech and is not intended to be exhaustive as regards



the involved figures, schemes and appeals, but indicative of the potent nature of rhetoric as strategic ally of sociosemiotic analyses (for further rhetorical semiotic applications see Rossolatos 2013, 2014a, 2014b). The argumentation strategies/schemes that are employed in the analysis stem from Peleman and Olbrecht-Tyteca (1970), as portrayed summarily in Rossolatos 2013. The employed rhetorical figures (and their definitions) may also be found in Rossolatos 2013. Finally, as regards rhetorical appeals, they fall mainly into two types, viz., appeals to reason and appeals to emotions (passions) (certainly with nuanced ramifications) and they will be pointed out as such over the course of the analysis.

As an introduction and with view to effectively contextualize the offered analysis, it merits mentioning that Padavona's speech spans the following semiotic resources: discourse on music, discourse on sports, discourse on cancer. All three resources already constitute *loci communes* or common places between the speaker and his audience. What is interesting and in need of elucidation is how the speaker appropriates these *loci* and how he produces intended (and perhaps unintended, but traceable) messages for his audience.

Padavona's style of enunciation is half formal, half prosaic, ranging from formal modes of address ("I come before you today...", "the impetus on all of us...") to more informal and emotively laden ("And cancer this means war..."). An informal style is adopted mostly while reminiscing publicly personal experiences with his father, in an attempt to establish rapport with his audience, but also with view to making Dio's fandom feel that they are part of his extended family. The direct and informal mode of sharing personal memories essentially affords to facilitate a transition from the private to the public sphere, where 'my' memories are in fact 'our' memories. Dio's son's memories become part of a collective memory, a resource for future reminiscing among fandom members, thus continuing to enrich Dio's cultural machinery long after his natural death. This strategy is also adopted by Dio's widow, Wendy Dio, who has been repeating the structure of the memorial event on an annual basis ever since 2010, confined within a more closed circle, yet while ensuring sufficient coverage in terms of post-event publicity.

Padavona kicks off his speech by establishing his authority in his capacity as Dio's son.

- (1) "My father and I are very similar people..."
- (2) "We both love animals..."
- (3) "We are both stubborn, demanding, fiercely loyal to the ones we love..."
- (4) "And while I wasn't blessed with his musical talent..."
- (5) "He gave to me the love of music and especially the love for hard rock..."
- (6) "...which has enriched my life more than you can even imagine"

It is notable that in the three opening sentences Padavona employs the present tense when referring to the deceased. This temporal rearrangement of Dio's life events, as mentioned earlier, affords to highlight the symbolic status of the artist by freezing him as re-presentation in an ever-present 'now.' This speech is not about someone who has passed away, but about someone who has just started to live forever.

The speech continues by shifting from first-person to second person, thus moving from the territory of personal recollections to an impersonal experience or to a personal experience which, again, becomes public property.

- (7) "I guess it is inevitable when you grow up and the first bands you hear are Elf and Rainbow."

"The 'me' and the 'you' are of course constructed in language; they have no existence outside the social semiotic" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2006: 525). Padavona shifts constantly from first singular person to first plural and to second plural, according to the variable situational requirements of his speech. In this manner, he utilizes "an important mechanism to construct a collective identity by couching a personal voice as the voice of an imagined community while switching over from 'I' to 'we' " (Shahzad 2011: 382).

The process of construction of Padavona's audience in an unfolding narrative is intensified with the employment of a mixed argument from anti-model and by comparison (Rossolatos 2013: 177-178) in reference to new untalented artists (compared to Dio's talent), facilitated by the employment of

the pejorative noun 'posers', strategically placed at the end of the previous sentence and in the form of an elliptical noun-phrase (i.e., "All the new bands are posers because they are playing the first two strings on the guitar and making careers out of it"). The principle of substitution (as per above) is also operative in sentence (9) that appears to be transforming a concrete event into a general axiological judgment:

(8) "You know there was a time when I was losing my faith in hard rock several years ago... "

(9) "It seemed all the new bands were playing the first two strings on the guitar and making careers out of it [pause] POSERS"

At the hearing of the noun 'posers' the audience responds with laughter and cheering as an emotive marker of endorsing the speaker's propounded axiology. At that point a new narrative segment is introduced in Padavona's speech, concerning sports, while continuing creating common ground with his audience by appeal to *loci communes* (i.e., sports, perhaps the second most important leisure activity of the audience, next to music).

(10) "Whenever I would talk to dad over the years we would always move to sports because dad loved sports so much..."

(11) "Just like my dad, sports are always under my household..."

(12) "He'd always talk to me about the Yankees and I'd always talk to him about the Yankees because I tolerated his love about the Yankees".

(13) "We are a couple of typical macho sports loving guys"

The continued alternation between past and present tenses attests to the transformative potential of grammar in eternalizing a memorial structure into an ever-present now. The sports narrative segment culminates with the use of the present tense in a sentence that seeks to fortify the identification of father with son and hence further entrench in his audience's memory that whenever the son speaks, in reality it is Dio speaking through him. Sentence (13) re-enacts another common place, viz., that hard rock is a 'male thing' and, hence, this speech also concerns male bonding (in gender, not sex terms, as Lita Ford was also present).

The sports narrative segment marks the end of the first half of Padavona's speech which continues by introducing the narrative segment on cancer (sentences 14-36) that lasts until the end of the speech and which includes the following sub-segments: cancer-personal (sentences 14-19), charities/pharma companies (sentences 20-23), cancer-impersonal (sentences 24-26), cancer-personal II (sentences 27-31), battling cancer (sentences 32-36).

The long segment of cancer appeals to both emotions and to reason. This mixed appeal strategy is typical of sensitive health and societal issues, such as cancer and especially death from cancer. Padavona foregrounds his ensuing ethically oriented discussion by sensitizing his audience to the threat of cancer and by appealing to his audience's emotions while recollecting instances of death from cancer from his close social circle. In this instance Padavona adopts an argumentation strategy by example, but specifically nuanced to incorporate not only undeserved death (which is how he presents Dio's death from cancer), but in an even more accentuated fashion (hyperbolic by comparison- not in itself), death of children. The discursive staging of the battle against cancer that will be intensified later on begins with sentence (18) and the employment of the rhetorical figure of anthropomorphism while referring to cancer. Cancer is personified and thus enters the narrative trajectory of the speech as an opponent. The speaker pledges war against this enemy and, for, once more, the heart-felt response of his audience attests to an alignment with his cause. This instance marks a turning point in the deployment of the speech, a point that demarcates at the same time a common memorial structure as a pact and a promise between Dio, Dio's son and Dio's fandom. "The circumscription of the narrative is placed in the service of the identity defining the community. A history taught, a history learned, but also a history celebrated. To this forced memorization are added the customary commemorations. A formidable pact is concluded in this way between remembrance, memorization, and commemoration" (Ricoeur 2004: 85). This pact is rendered emphatically by the employment of a polysyndeton rhetorical figure (and/and) in sentences (18), (19) (see Kolln 1999, Rossolatos 2013).

## 5. Cancer (personal)

- (14) “Long before my dad was diagnosed with cancer ... my daughter’s classmate was stricken with cancer only at the second grade”
- (15) “A good friend of mine from high-school was not lucky and she lost her beloved son to cancer ... “
- (16) “the tragedy of losing your child something that I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy, something which I know all of us can’t even imagine”.
- (17) “Cancer when it took a child so young raised me so much that I took the fight upon myself that I would never give up hope on conquering this disease”.
- (18) “And now that it’s taken my father”.
- (19) “And cancer this means war...”

[crowd cheering and shouting]

The following narrative segment (charities/pharma companies) resumes the argumentation strategy from anti-model that was introduced earlier with the employment of the pejorative noun-phrase ‘posers’. This segment repeats the pledge that closed the previous sentence concerning the war-like situation between Dio’s fandom and cancer. Interestingly, Padavona does not seek to advertise Dio’s ‘Stand up and shout’ cancer fund by going through its mission and activities. He does not even mention it. On the contrary he seeks to devalue competitors (and, hence, indirectly valorize his initiative) by predicating *in abstracto* (i.e., without concrete references) the adverbial and adjectival pre-modifiers ‘sadly’ and ‘damn(ed)’ of the polemically employed adjective ‘dysfunctional’ and the noun ‘disease’ respectively in sentences (20), (21). The argument by anti-model leaves Dio’s fandom no other choice but to become evangelists of their icon’s fund-raising organization.

## 6. Charities/Pharma companies

- (20) "The truth is there are so many charities that purport to battle cancer are sadly dysfunctional."
- (21) "Inefficient conglomerates which spend almost as much time and money on administration as they do on fighting the damn' disease..."
- (22) "You'd like to believe that pharma companies are spending as much time behind the scenes as they are promoting hair-loss treatment and E.D. on television."
- (23) "But the battle begins with us no matter what."

The ensuing narrative segment continues the polemic against cancer, this time not as a recollection of Padavona's personal memories, but by further qualifying why the personified cancer is a treacherous opponent. This opponent's most secret weapon is a play of probabilities. Notice that Padavona does not lay claim to how cancer works, but opts for emphasizing the unforeseeability as to when it will start working. The weapons in the war against this opponent consist of medical checks and proper treatment of one's body. As the argumentation against cancer intensifies we experience frequent repetitions of strategically placed phrases in the beginning, in the end or in the middle of sentences, such as "it doesn't want me..." (24)/"it doesn't want you..", in which instance, for once more, the speaker urges indirectly his audience to identify with him through a shift in pronoun (me/you) in his march against cancer. The pronouns 'me' (24) and 'you' (25) are dialectically resolved in the synthesis of 'us' (26).

## 7. Cancer-impersonal

"Cancer, it doesn't want me to know the statistics..."

- (24) "It doesn't want you to know that most cancers caught early on are easily treatable".
- (25) "The impetus is on all of us to get screened regularly, to treat our bodies properly".

The ethical maxim that is formulated in sentence (26) marks the end of the narrative segment on the impersonal reference to cancer, at which point the

speech regresses to personal memories. This shift is coupled grammatically with the employment of a definite article when recollecting father's cancer, as against the lack of a definite article in cases of formulating maxims about battling cancer. The personification of cancer is still employed as dominant rhetorical figure that enables the narrativization of the oppositional structure. As the speech reaches its climax the appeal to emotion intensifies in tandem with the figurative investment of cancer. Not only cancer is personified in continuation of the anti-model argumentation strategy, but in this segment it becomes part of a heroic narrative as opponent and villain under the guise of a monster (29) and Dio, by comparison in a disjunctive structure, the hero who sets out to slay the monster. This narrative inscription is facilitated by referring to the deceased for the first time not as father or dad, but as DIO. The staging of the heroic discourse culminates in a bad ending as the hero succumbs to the monster (29). This emotively laden narrative segment, for once more, culminates in the speaker's plea for identification with 'his' (and his father's) memorial.

Notably, the argumentation unfolds in cumulative waves of emotion upon emotion. On a phenomenological note, it constitutes a series of protentions/retentions as earlier segments are carried forward and force the audience to evaluate the newly dispensed information under a different light. The retention of the memory of the male-bonding message that undergirded semantically Padavona's earlier sports-related memory is protained, that is carried forward as emotive substrate for the newly formulated emotive appeal to his audience for identifying with the subject of the memorial. The personification figure furnishes a powerful visual metaphor, in alignment with Dio's iconography, as noted earlier, an existential metaphor that transposes imaginatively the audience to the utopian space of a mythic battle. Thus, the narrative structure that invests this battle does not constitute merely an ornamental add-on to the argumentation, but its very existential underpinning. The commemorative performance is deployed under a narrative structure and it is this very structure that enables action by opening up a symbolic space that empowers and legitimates Dio's fandom to avenge his death.

## 8. Cancer-Personal II

- (26) “Many of you here today are musicians and love musicians and I beg you not to make the mistake that my father made
- (27) “For dad the show always had to go on.”
- (28) “He ignored the warning signs for years and all along the cancer was growing and mutating from something that is probably easily defeatable into a monster that even Dio couldn’t slay”
- (29) “So if not for you then for your loved ones.”
- (30) “Take a moment to think about the sadness you feel today and how sad your loved ones would be if this were your memorial”

The final narrative segment seeks to legitimate the need for conducting medical checks as a way of minimizing the probability of dying from cancer as succumbing to the unforeseen by employing an argument from probability. The speech ultimately does not suggest that cancer may be defeated, but that the probabilities of dying from it may be minimized. However, it also suggests that the unforeseen is sheltered in the least probable scenario. Pointing skywards in the closing sentence appears to be leveraging a theological topography (heaven), again in line with Dio’s iconography. “We also associate height with “loftiness” of ideals” (Abousnnouga and Machin 2011: 182).

## 9. Battling cancer

- (31) “The worst thing your doctor can say to you is not you have cancer...NO.”
- (32) “The worst thing your doctor can say is I wish you would have come in sooner cause we could have treated this.”
- (33) “You must defend yourself cause we’re at war.”
- (34) “Get yourself screened, eat right, stay active and live to see another day.”
- (35) “And dad [pointing with right hand skywards] I love you”

## **Conclusions: For a phenomenologically enriched sociosemiotic study of iconic artists’ memorials**



In conclusion, I would like to dwell briefly on the missing link that plagued Halbwachs' account of the formation of collective identity which, as noted in the beginning of this paper, has been variably tackled by different scholars, in the light of the preceding rhetorical analysis and particularly concerning the narratively mediated formation of a collective memory in the memorial speech of Dan Padavona. I will argue by drawing on Ricoeur's narrative phenomenology, or, rather, narratological answers to Husserl's phenomenological impasses concerning how a collective memory is formed, and as a nuanced understanding of the sociosemiotic interpersonal metafunction, that the imaginary and symbolic spaces that are opened up by narratives allow for the consolidation of a collective memory and identity. In the process I will also be offering answers to Donohoe's (2014) recent Merleau-Pontyan subversive reading of Ricoeur's narrative approach, in favor of Ricoeur.

Individuals commemorate what is narratively prescribed by freely floating narrative structures. It is thus that a collective memory appears to be exerting a binding force over individuals, not because of collective memory as an abstraction. In short, narrative is the missing link in adjoining the individual with the collective and, hence, of paramount importance both for rhetorical and for sociosemiotic accounts of the formation of collective identity.

We saw earlier that the most important tools in Padavona's discursive construction of his audience consisted of leveraging Dio's iconography with view to embedding Dio, himself and his audience in a common narrative lifeworld as symbolic space to which Dio's fandom is invited and from which the fandom ultimately draws its existential *raison d'être*. This narratively constituted symbolic space also furnishes the springboard for engaging in meaningful social actions. Insofar as sociosemiotics is concerned with semiotic resources and how such resources are leveraged interpersonally in meaningful social action, narrative structures should be seen as the textual backdrop of the interpersonal and ideational metafunctions. And insofar as a collective identity, as already argued, is the outcome of the interpersonal metafunction, managing the narrative structures of collective memory is equivalent to managing collective identity.

I will start by considering Donohoe's (2014) recent interpretation of Ricoeur's account on the formation of collective memory that was geared towards overcoming Husserl's implausible stratagem of intersubjective passive synthesis that appeared in his heavily criticized 5<sup>th</sup> Cartesian Meditation<sup>14</sup> prior to displaying Donohoe's Merlau-Pontyan response to Ricoeur and my attempt to reinstate the explanatory cogency of Ricoeur's approach.

"Ricoeur describes the overlap between individual memory and social or collective memory in terms of language" (Donohoe 2014: 29). "...memories are a kind of discourse that one initially has with oneself." "What is pronounced in this discourse occurs in the common language, most often in the mother tongue, which, it must be said, is the language of others." Moreover, this discourse connects one with the larger community giving one a sense of one's own history. As he suggests, collective memory "is held to be a collection of traces left by the events that have affected the course of history of the groups concerned, and that it is accorded the power to place on stage these common memories, on the occasion of holidays, rites, and public celebrations. In placing on stage the common memories, the identity and memory of any single individual is also affected" (Donohoe 2014: 30). "This focus on the narrative approach reveals a limitation in Ricoeur's approach [...] It arises from an inattentiveness to the bodily elements [...] that are in large part dependent upon material environment or place and are already intersubjective" (Donohoe 2014: 30).

Donohoe's criticism against Ricoeur's over-reliance on narrative structures as underpinning collective memory in favor of a bodily dimension that she considers to be, in turn, an underpinning of the narrativity conditional, does not do away with the question that emerges as to why individual memories are by definition and necessarily dependent on collective memory, but simply inherits this problem at the level of the body. In other words, the rhetorical

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<sup>14</sup> See Ricoeur 2004: 118: "The final paragraphs of the famous "Fifth Cartesian Meditation" do indeed propose the theme of the "communalization" of experience at all its levels of meaning, from the foundation of a common ground of physical nature (§55, 120-28) to the celebrated constitution of "higher intersubjective communities" (still called "personalities of a higher order"), a constitution resulting from a process of "social communalization" (§58, 132). We certainly do not encounter the word "common memory" in this broadened context of transcendental phenomenology, but it would be perfectly in harmony with the concept of "worlds of culture," understood in the sense of "concrete lifeworlds in which the relatively or absolutely separate communities live their passive and active lives" (§58, 133).

inversion from mind (Husserl) to body (Merleau-Ponty) does not resolve the aporia that emerges in the face of this axiomatic statement, but simply allows it to lapse even deeper into inscrutability. Nevertheless, Donohoe's remark that what is suppressed in Husserl's account of the phenomenological constitution of memory, even when importing the notions of inter-subjective synthesis and lifeworld into the picture, is the importance performed by 'place' in the constitution of common memories is certainly an element that must be incorporated in the wider argument for the primacy of narrativity in the constitution of collective memory. However, the incorporation of place in the account of the formation of collective memory does not concern merely the materiality of places, but their function as cultural spaces, as previously argued. The incorporation of place affords to augment the scope of narrative from merely textual features to encompass the materiality of signifiers that make up cultural artifacts that fuel collective memory such as the one at hand. However, this material dimension is simply an essential complement in a wider narrative trajectory, inasmuch as the plane of expression for Hjelmslev featured the dimensions of form and substance (without positing the latter as of greater gravitas than the former). "Commemoration is not simply a story. It is an event that transpires in a particular place which is itself important to the securing of the memory. Monuments as locations of commemoration involve us bodily as we move around them" (Donohoe 2014: 33). What is questionable, though, is whether places constitute a condition of narrativity, rather than aspects of the materiality of narrativity or of the substance of the plane of expression, which are essential complements of a more comprehensive conceptualization of the multimodal formation of collective memory, rather than conditions that may be perceived in themselves regardless of their function in the constitution of a place as plenum of signifiers. For example, Donohoe lays claim to the place of the old Trade Centre as conditioning the narratives that were constructed with regard to the 9/11 attacks. However, it may counter-argued that WTC in itself does not have any meaning outside of the wider narratives that include it. In these terms, I would argue contrary to Donohoe, and in line with Ricoeur, for the primacy of narrative in the constitution of collective memory, while, by extension, I am inclined to view any bodily dimensions, rather being pre-constitutive with

regard to phenomenological experience as essential complements in terms of the materiality of the signifier rather than as conditions of phenomenological experience. Any argument to the contrary, to my understanding, not only lacks any possible verification, but is by default prone to the criticism of the inscrutability of meaning.

A further interpretative treatment of Ricoeur that is contestable in the light of Ricoeur's original argumentation is Donohoe's positing of individual memory as being absolutely dependent on collective memory which is conceived as being identical with historical memory. Such a universally and necessarily binding lifeworld as common historical predicament is diametrically opposed to Ricoeur's argumentation. Ricoeur (2004) was clearly aversive to Husserlian phenomenological psychologism (cf. Ricoeur 2004: 92) inasmuch as to historicism. He approached historicity as being the product of the same narrative structures as fiction "to the extent that the historical and the fictive participate in the same narrative structures" (Ricoeur 2004: 247), while he aligned explicitly with a basic structuralist tenet that was inaugurated by Barthes and later bequeathed to Greimas and other contemporary semioticians, viz., that history is a referential illusion (cf. Ricoeur 2004: 249).

Now, an aspect in Ricoeur's pro-narrativity approach to the constitution of collective memory that understandably is not part of Donohoe's argumentation, but is integral to the argumentation that is pursued in this paper, concerns Ricoeur's appreciation of the semiotic rhetorical mode whereby narrativity is fleshed out. Not only is the import of this unaddressed aspect in Ricoeur's analysis of the modes of constitution of individual and collective memory instrumental in elucidating what is at risk of obfuscation under the veils of the inscrutability of meaning, but it paves the way for its operationalization through a sociosemiotic lens. This aspect concerns the function of ideology and the semiotic rhetorical modes whereby it is manifested in reducing individual to collective memory or an individual stream of consciousness, in Husserl's terms, under the rubric of a uniform kaleidoscope of syntagmatically ordered images (in Ricoeur's terms) as the iconic content of a commemoration process (certainly to be enriched by recourse to other than visual modes, wherein Ricoeur's exemplification is constrained).

Ricoeur stresses explicitly that “at the deepest level, that on which Clifford Geertz works, the ideological phenomenon indeed appears to constitute an unsurpassable structure of action, to the extent that symbolic mediation marks the difference between the motivations of human action and the hereditary structures of genetically programmed behaviors. A remarkable correlation is established at this fundamental level between a symbolic synthesis and a semiotic system, some of this belonging clearly to a system of rhetorical tropes. Considered at this deep level, the analysis of the ideological phenomenon is obviously part of a "semiotics of culture" (Ricoeur 2004: 82). Not only this passage affords to set Ricoeur’s reflections apart from Husserl’s allusion to some sort of inter-subjective passive synthesis whereby culture appears to different subjects as historically uniform, but the emphasis on semiotics and rhetoric transpose the problematic of collective memory on a wholly new plane. Let us now attend more closely to the details of Ricoeur’s argumentation prior to considering issues of narrativity (as essential aspect of the textual metafunction), in greater detail.

The vantage point (or one among many vantage points) for understanding Ricoeur’s argumentation in favor of symbolic narrative structures or what he calls the “deepest level” in the formation of collective memory is summed up in the passage “It projects us well beyond a simple phenomenology of memory, and even beyond an epistemology of history, to the heart of the hermeneutics of the historical condition” (Ricoeur 2004: 86). This passage affords to distantiate Ricoeur’s argumentation from a phenomenological perspective and subsequently from any paradigmatic shift that would seek to transpose the explanans from mind to body (from Husserl to Merleau-Ponty) in favor of a praxiological perspective that pays heed to situated action as the locus whereupon a hermeneutical endeavor may be deployed. Ricoeur’s emphasis on radical situatedness as a condition for the deployment of a narrative affords to disentangle memory and by implication the meaning of a commemorated event from any aprioristically imposed ideological meaning, in favor of potentially equally valid interpretations. In the light of this principle let us now revert to the consideration of the main problematic, that is the ideological asphyxiation of memory.

On the deepest level, that of the symbolic mediation of action, it is through the narrative function that memory is incorporated in the formation of identity. Memory can be ideologized through the resources of the variations offered by the work of narrative configuration. “And, as the characters of the narrative are emplotted at the same time as the story is told, the narrative configuration contributes to modeling the identity of the protagonists of the action as it molds the contours of the action itself” (Ricoeur 2004: 84-85). In these terms, collective identity emerges as such not due to some sort of passive inter-subjective synthesis (the Husserlian perspective) or to some inscrutable bodily co-belongingness in non-semiotized space, as Donohoe contends, but because of an ideological discourse that models its subjects as the subjects’ actions deploy in space and time. The emphasis on narrativity, from this point onwards, is simply a matter of mapping the trajectory of this modeling path whereby subjects recollect jointly and about the uniform contents of their recollection. We are concerned with a technology of collective remembrance, while semiotics may account for this sort of technological manipulation. “As regards narrative intelligibility, it would be necessary to bring together the still too intuitive considerations of the narrative school and the more analytic work of narratology on the plane of the semiotics of discourse” (Ricoeur 2004: 243) or, while updating Ricoeur’s mandate, and this constitutes our concluding remark as area for further research, furnishing sociosemiotic accounts of memorial events of iconic artists, informed by phenomenological narrativity, as modeling blueprints for interpreting and constructing memorial events.

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