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The Knowledge that Comes from Seeing: *Yuyanapaq* and the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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The war has used up words;
they have weakened,
they have deteriorated . . .
Henry James

In September of 2000, the Peruvian cable station Canal N released a video showing Vladimiro Montesinos, the chief advisor of President Alberto Fujimori, bribing Alberto Kouri, a congressman in Fujimori's party. For months to come, Peruvians would watch in astonishment as the same scene was replayed over and over as a vast array of personalities including politicians, judges, generals, owners of TV stations, were seen on video receiving money from Montesinos.¹ The revelation of the extent and depth of the government's corruption and its direct involvement in human rights violations led to the fall of Fujimori and Montesinos and the formation of an interim government presided by Valentín Paniagua.² In June of 2001, Paniagua established a Truth Commission to investigate the violence that had devastated the country for the last two decades of the twentieth century. Later on, President Alejandro Toledo, perhaps under pressure from different sectors of Peruvian society, added the term "reconciliation" to the title of the commission.³

Yuyanapaq: In Order to Remember was the title of a photo exhibit that resulted from the investigations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (from now on referred to as "TRC"). In the pages that follow I will examine the privileging of photographic images that the TRC chose as the most appropriate medium both to convey facts and to combat the indifference of the general public. This choice presents us with a set of assumptions about the epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic role of images that deserve careful

analysis. In the TRC's discourse, these photographs offer proof that these tragic events took place, and at the same time evoke an emotional response in those that did not have a direct experience of the pain and suffering so many others went through. This, in turn, creates a narrative that, in the TRC's view, should strengthen the social fabric of the nation, even if this narrative needs to acknowledge the horrors of the past. This essay will focus on one of the attempts by the Peruvian TRC to create a narrative of social trauma through a very specific aesthetic choice that privileges photography, and photojournalism in particular to create what the TRC terms a "visual legacy."

The mandate of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission included "investigating the truth, understanding the facts that originated the violence, and elaborating proposals for reparations and reforms to confront the consequences of the process."⁴ The TRC investigated the violent events that took place between May 1980 and November 2000. In their report the TRC states that the actions they investigated were "imputable both to terrorist organizations and to State agents."⁵ The beginning of this period was marked by the Shining Path's first operation to reach the national news: the burning of ballot boxes in Chuschi, a small town in Ayacucho, precisely when the country was holding its first democratic elections after thirteen years of military regimes. For twenty years Peru would be assaulted by subsequent Shining Path attacks and by the brutal response of the government. According to the findings of the TRC, the actions of terrorist groups and of the state during the two decades in question resulted in over 69,000 deaths.

Salomón Lerner Febres, the president of the TRC, repeatedly attempted to express his horror when delivering the results of the commission's investigation: the number is both overwhelming and inadequate (*Hatun Willakuy* 9–10).⁶ The reports and other documents by the members of the TRC reveal the difficulty of conveying their terrible findings. Lerner, a philosopher and former president of the Catholic University of Lima, does not question the possibility of establishing the facts, but two issues seem to stun him: the enormity of the losses and atrocities, coupled with the fact that the majority of Peruvians seemed oblivious to what happened. "This report presents, then, a double scandal: the scandal of assassination, disappearances, massive torture, and the scandal of indolence, ineptitude and indifference of those who could have stopped this human catastrophe and didn't" (*Hatun Willakuy* 9).

One of the goals of the Peruvian TRC has been to disseminate their findings in a manner that would communicate the dimension of the consequences of the violence and the circumstances that allowed it, and also to reach different sectors of Peruvian society in an effort to end repression and oblivion. The TRC became a "carrier group" in charge of articulating the history of trauma experienced by Peruvian society, and this implied a

series of aesthetic choices. Jeffrey C. Alexander uses the term “carrier group” to refer to those who elaborate the tragic events in a community’s history as a form of narrative which can articulate these events as trauma, and thus restore collective memory (Alexander 1). But this articulation will necessarily be informed by a set of aesthetic choices involved in the construction of this narrative. Collective memory itself is a contentious concept (Jelin) and since the establishment of the TRC Peruvian society has seen an explosion of attempts to confront the past.⁷ While television images prompted the scandal that resulted in the establishment of the Peruvian TRC, the use of photographs promoted by the commission seems to appeal to a different kind of visual knowledge. In the following pages I will analyze the epistemological, aesthetic, and ethical aspects of the TRC’s photographic project.

***Yuyanapaq*: In Order to Remember**

The title of the photo exhibit *Yuyanapaq* is a Quechua word that means “in order to remember.”⁸ The subtitle, “A Visual Narrative of the Internal Conflict in Peru,” clearly states the intention of the exhibit: to tell the story using pictures. The original exhibit opened in 2003 in Casa Riva Agüero, a ruined mansion in Chorrillos, which used to be a resort town, and is today a densely populated district of Lima. The exhibit had over 200,000 visitors by the time it closed in March 2005. It reopened in July 2006 as a five-year exhibit in Peru’s National Museum in Lima.⁹

The whole photographic project includes an image bank with 1,700 photographs that will eventually be available through the TRC’s website, the book *Yuyanapaq* (which includes 104 photographs and a chronology of the 20 years under investigation) and a CD with a virtual tour of the exhibit, currently distributed by La Defensoría del Pueblo. The response to the exhibit was overwhelmingly positive. I have argued elsewhere that the exhibit successfully created an auratic space for the performance of memory focusing on the experience of the viewers at the photo exhibit, with their active presence and participation in the staging of memory (Saona). The questions I will try to explore now have to do with photography, and, particularly, with photojournalism as a medium. What is the relationship between photography and truth? How do images impact the viewers? Is it ethical to display images of pain and suffering?

Yuyanapaq, the exhibit, the book, the multimedia CD, and the photo archive constitute a choice to represent Peruvian’s violent past through photographic images. As the collection *The Art of Truth-Telling about Authoritarian Rule* shows, there are many ways to confront a violent past: testimony, graphic arts, humor and cinema, are just some of the ways

different societies have responded to trauma and authoritarianism. For the last decade, Diana Taylor has been theorizing the performative aspects of attempts to engage traumatic memories of the Argentinean “Dirty War.” In a different context, Rebecca Saunders and Kamran Aghaie reflect on non-narrative responses produced by societies in mourning (22), and Cynthia Milton’s work demonstrates how Peruvian society is addressing the past in a variety of media on the margins of the discourse of the TRC. In this context, the TRC’s idea of an image bank, and of constructing a narrative out of these images presents us with a set of particular questions about the representation of “truth” through photography, our role as spectators of violence, and the capacity of pictures to engage the viewer in what Marianne Hirsch, following Kaja Silverman, has called “heteropathic memory.” Silverman and Hirsch present this term as a way to express the idea that there are ways to recall experiences that are not my own. This is precisely the challenge that the Peruvian TRC is attempting to face: to convey the experience of trauma to those who did not experience it first hand.

In the prologue to the book *Yuyanapaq*, Salomon Lerner Febres states that establishing facts and presenting data seemed a limited way of conveying truth:

Soon we discovered that truth—a polyedric reality, irreducible to a single dimension—needs to be recovered not just in a discursive, intelligible dimension, but also in its demonstrative strength, in aspects that talk to our emotions and our sensibility and that cannot be exhausted in a reconstructed history, since it continues in human suffering and in the testimony of this suffering—past, but simultaneously alive—as it is preserved in the images of violence and human resistance. (17)

Lerner’s words coincide with Saunders and Aghaie’s idea that in dealing with a nation’s trauma there is a need for *affective* integration as much as a narrative or cognitive one (21–22). In Lerner’s discourse, images give testimony in two ways: they have a demonstrative, deictic function that presents evidence; but they also appeal to our emotions by representing suffering and resistance. In the prologue to *Yuyanapaq*, Lerner recalls the role public hearings had in the TRC’s work, reminding his readers that the oral testimony of witnesses was vital for the Commission. However, when he ponders the TRC’s duty to communicate their findings to the Peruvian people, he expresses the need to create a truthful portrait: “It had to be a portrait charged with symbolic density in order to restore the subjective drama lived by the victims of violence; it had to present the facts, but at the same time, it had to offer a moral commentary about them” (*Yuyanapaq* 18).

For the commissioners, photographs are invested with the capacity to affect the viewers on both the cognitive and on the emotional level. Photo

archives, according to Lerner, provide an “invaluable source of information,” and at the same time they allow for reflection on pain and hope (*Yuyanapaq*18). He grants photographs a twofold nature: they present evidence, and as such hold a truth-value, and they “move” us, and therefore have an emotional value. The potential of photographs to act at these two levels will be at the core of all TRC documents related to their “visual legacy.”

The manner in which the commissioners link photography to truth and knowledge carries a specific understanding of cognition that allows for a connection between the sensory and the emotional. Carlos Iván Degregori, also a member of the TRC, presents *Yuyanapaq* with these words:

Among the Yagua people of the Amazon Jungle, knowledge (ndatará) is first obtained visually. To know things, one has to see them in dreams or during a trance through which the shaman enters the spirit world to consult the spirits about the enigmas of the case he is handling. In learned societies, it is no longer through these means that knowledge is obtained. However, in recent decades, the rapid development of audiovisual media has obliged us to reconsider the relationship among seeing, knowledge and power. Knowledge which comes from seeing is primarily related to intuition, sensations, and sentiments, which are not necessarily irrational or unscientific, and can actually expand the scope of our knowledge.

An anthropologist by training, Degregori attempts to bridge the distance between “learned societies” and indigenous peoples, by acknowledging the role of vision in the ways we apprehend the world.¹⁰ But he also stresses the fact that images do not just provide information about the world: they affect us, they appeal to our emotions.

Rolando Ames Cobián, another member of the TRC who gives a historic overview of the 20 years of violence in his prologue to *Yuyanapaq*, calls the collection of images “a visual and spiritual journey,” painful but necessary in order to defeat oblivion (25). All of the commissioners refer to the twofold nature of the photographs: the visual and the spiritual, they depict the facts and appeal to the moral imperative, they provide information and they move us. In her last book, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), Susan Sontag explains this dual perspective by reflecting on framing and point of view. Even though photographs provide a record, they also imply the witness, the photographer: “This sleight of hand allows photographs to be both objective record and personal testimony, both a faithful copy or transcription of an actual moment of reality and an interpretation of that reality- a feat literature has long aspired to, but could never attain in this literal sense” (27).

The TRC's approach to photography relies primarily on the assumption that photographic images represent reality. The fact that they also have an emotional appeal does not deny the fact that there are actual objects, people, and situations depicted in photographs. This is not a naïve position. While the distrust of images and the representation of reality permeated postmodern theory during a good part of the twentieth century, the analysis of the photographic image is now recovering the ties between reality and its representation. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag revises her own distrust of images as formulated in her 1977 essay *On Photography*. The TRC commissioners show their awareness of the dangers implied in the use of images. But the choice to create a "visual legacy" assumes at least some degree of transparency in photography's power to represent reality.

Photography and Truth

In "The Ethics of Seeing," Marc Furstenau analyzes the ways postmodern theories understand visual culture as "a mere construct, as unreliable as any other medium" (91). Terms such as *simulacrum*, *hyperreality*, and *spectacle* assume that representation of reality is impossible, illusory. However, drawing on Sontag's own revision of her skeptical position from the 70s and on William J. T. Mitchell's ideas on visual culture, Furstenau concludes that one of the most important functions of the photograph is to witness. In Furstenau's words, "photographs have not distanced us from reality. They have, quite to the contrary, enlarged and expanded our sense of reality, and, at the same time, they have contributed to the production of a complex and subtle context within which we have to make judgments and determinations about that reality" (100).

Whereas framing, point of view, context, and even the possibility of alterations need to be considered when looking at photographs as representations of reality, in our daily practices we still rely on photographic images as evidence. The widespread use of camera phones, for example, attests to this use of digital photos as evidence: I was there, this really happened, and I can prove it. In the case of the Abu Graib scandal, the horrifying pictures that circulated among friends opened the worlds' eyes to the abuses perpetrated by U.S. military in Iraq. As Sontag noted in her New York Times article "Regarding the Torture of Others," the Bush administration initially appealed to the supposed distance between reality and representation: they said "that the president was shocked and disgusted by the photographs—as if the fault or horror lay in the images, not in what they depict."¹¹ Bush's comment reveals a postmodern sense of distance from reality that would be questioned by the testimonial power most of the

public attributed to the pictures. Those images became hard evidence that discredited the U.S. military in an unprecedented way.

The main objection to the truth-value of photography is not that photos can be altered and edited, even for digital photography (and let us remember that the *Yuyanapaq* originals come from archives that predate the wide availability of digital photography). Furstenau dismisses the allegations by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright that digital photography does not carry the same epistemological guarantee traditional photography had because even they recognize that “it has always been possible to ‘fake’ realism in photographs” (94). Instead Furstenau suggests that the issue critics find disturbing is the proliferation of images that can be endlessly reproduced, generating copies that are more and more removed from the actual event they are supposed to depict. And while he concerns himself with Sontag and recent theories on photography, this argument also recalls Walter Benjamin’s claim that in the age of mechanical reproduction the work of art is removed from the aura the spectator experiences in front of an original work. The discussion shifts from photography as a recording tool, to the reception end of the problem of representation. What do we see when we see the images in the photos? I will address this issue later when I reflect on the impact of the images on spectators.

The TRC members are clearly aware of the many risks of using images, and the saturation of images is also on their minds: Degregori, for example, speaks about the way the images had become “invisible” (20) in the sense that the public did not pay attention to them. This concern was very much on Sontag’s mind when she wrote *On Photography* in 1977. She saw the proliferation of images as a form of “mental pollution” (24). Sontag expresses concern that “[b]y furnishing this already crowded world with a duplicate one of images, photography makes us feel that the world is more available than it really is” (24) and she felt that “[t]he attempts by photographers to bolster up a depleted sense of reality contribute to the depletion” (179). In other words, Sontag feared what many others feared as well: a numbness to the very things the images are supposed to portray. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag revises her previous argument that our emotional and ethical senses are overwhelmed by appalling images, and considers her own previous position a conservative one: “I call this argument conservative because it is the sense of reality that is eroded. There is still a reality that exists independent of the attempts to weaken its authority” (108). Here Sontag stresses that reality is not a product of the media, stating that the assumption that everyone is a spectator “suggests, perversely, unseriously, that there is no real suffering in the world” (2003, 110). Thus, *Regarding the Pain of Others* deals with the manner in which we look at photographs when we invest them with the power of representation.

Interestingly enough, photographs are not the only medium that we attribute with this kind of power. In her paper presented at LASA2007,

“Behind the Visible: Secret “Truths” about Political Violence in the Peruvian Andes,” Olga González-Castañeda discussed the way scenes of violence are depicted in the board paintings of Sarhua, a small town in Ayacucho, a department where over a 40% of the victims of Shining Path and government sponsored violence were concentrated. One of González-Castañeda’s findings is that the people of Sarhua took the images of the paintings at face value, raising many questions about the manipulation of memory.

In “Standards of Truth: The Arrested Image and the Moving Eye,” E. H. Gombrich explores how we rely on the eyewitness principle: the visual image seems to turn the beholder into a vicarious participant of an event (209). This brings us back to the emotional and ethical aspects of spectatorship. Gombrich argues for the dramatic effect behind the eyewitness principle. He compares the imaginary eyewitness in front of a mosaic depicting the victory of Alexander the Great over Darius with the precise photographic shot of a war photographer:

In conveying the experience of the eye-witness the image serves a dual purpose—it shows us what happened out there but also by implication what would have happened to us, both physically and emotionally. We understand, without much reflection, where we are supposed to stand in relation to the event depicted and what moment we are made to share vicariously with the eye-witness. (191)

There is also something in the experience of visual images that promotes identification, and the materiality of photography only increases this potential for identification. We do assume the reality of the referent. We trust that mechanical, chemical, and now digital processes “capture” an image of something that is real. That is what Roland Barthes calls “photographic referent”:

Not the optionally real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph. Painting can feign reality without having seen it. Discourse combines signs which have referents, of course, but these referents can be and are most often “chimeras.” Contrary to these imitations, in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. (76)

That essential trust permeates the encounters with photographic images. In 1977 Sontag could not help but acknowledge, “Photographs furnish evidence [. . .] A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture” (5).

And it was precisely because of this presumption that she wanted to prompt others to reflect upon the limitations and dangers of photographic images. However in 2003 her perspective had changed to the point of inviting the interpellation of images: “Even if they are only tokens, and cannot possibly encompass most of the reality to which they refer, they still perform a vital function. The images say [. . .] Don’t forget” (115).

Photography, Memory, and the Ethics and Aesthetics of Witnessing

When Walter Benjamin stated that “[i]n photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value all along the line” (224), he immediately reexamined his own premise: “The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty” (224). Even if Benjamin wanted to reserve the auratic power of photographs to portraits, the idea that photographs show us what is already gone, directly refers to their power to activate memories.

Photographs not only give testimony by offering proof that something happened. They also appeal to our emotions in documenting the passing of time. For Roland Barthes photographs are always, to a certain extent, *memento mori*: on the one hand, they extend “a sort of umbilical cord [that] links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze” (80); on the other hand, in freezing the subject of the photograph in an instant in the past, the photographic images attest to what is already gone: “Whether or not the subject is dead, every photograph is this catastrophe” (96).¹¹ Benjamin, Sontag, and Barthes, among others, refer to the ways in which photographic images “haunt us.” Survivors of those disappeared as a result of political violence in Peru as in other places have confronted the authorities and the general public with images of the dead. The Argentinean Mothers of Plaza de Mayo became an icon with the enlarged ID pictures of their disappeared sons and daughter, and relatives of the victims of political violence have repeated this gesture around the globe. However, the TRC’s use of photojournalism brings up specific questions about the ethical aspects of witnessing, and the aesthetic choices of a memorial of social trauma.

In her 1977 essay Susan Sontag bluntly referred to photojournalism as a practice of non-intervention in which, given the choice, a photographer would choose to take a picture instead of choosing to save a life (9–10). But this is also the position she most dramatically revises in *Regarding the Pain of Others*. In this essay, the photographer and the spectator cease to be voyeurs, and instead become witnesses, with witnessing becoming a moral

mandate. In her analysis of Sontag's latest book, Judith Butler sees an increasing frustration, and believes that Sontag would like to bridge the gap between the indignation felt by viewing harrowing images and taking action. Sontag's words recognize the limitations of photographs: "Such images cannot be more than an invitation to pay attention, to reflect, to learn, to examine the rationalizations for mass suffering offered by established powers" (117). However, she sees a new value in the photography's ability to make us feel and think:

It is felt that there is something morally wrong with the abstract reality offered by photography; that one has no right to experience the suffering of others at a distance, denuded of its raw power; that we pay too high a human (or moral) price for those hitherto admired qualities of vision—the standing back from the aggressiveness of the world which frees us for observation and for elective attention. But this is only to describe the function of the mind itself. There is nothing wrong with standing back and thinking. To paraphrase several sages: 'Nobody can think and hit someone at the same time.' (118)

Even if, according to Butler, Sontag expresses frustration that photography "arouses our moral sentiments at the same time that it confirms our political paralysis" (825), she also recognizes that seeing is connected to thinking, to reflecting about the violence depicted in the images of war.

The reservations regarding the depiction of violence are clearly expressed in the discourse of the TRC and of the curators of the photo exhibit. However, like Sontag, they find an ethical value in these images. The two main objections to photojournalism depicting violence are that the public becomes desensitized to the pain the images show, and that, in an ever growing hunger for images that shock the viewers, photographers end up taking a predatory role. Lerner recognizes that during the period of crisis some journalists attempted to profit from horrific images. However, he believes that the images chosen by the TRC reveal the professionalism of those who approached the victims with compassion, and who understood that their role was to denounce the tragedy the country was experiencing (*Yuyanapaq* 19).

The work of photojournalists and reporters was not taken lightly by the TRC, especially since some journalists had been victims of the most horrifying violence at the beginning of the 1980s. The work of the TRC produced discussions and roundtables about the implications of witnessing and reporting.¹²

The TRC seems to weigh two possible outcomes of the use of photojournalism, a negative one versus a positive one: the dangers implied in looking at violent images, versus the potential of the images to ignite a cathartic process. Among the dangers, we can recall those mentioned by

Sontag, Butler, and others: becoming numb towards the myriad of images of suffering, experiencing reality as mediated by the image, dehumanizing the subjects of the photographs as mere objects of consumption, experiencing an outrage that results in a feeling of impotence towards a tragedy that overwhelms us. But the decision of the TRC to implement the visual project relies on the belief that, in the right context, the images will become part of a healing process.

Nancy Chappell and Mayu Mohanna, the curators of *Yuyanapaq*, find an aesthetic answer to a question of ethics:

How could we create a visual remembrance of the war without fostering more bitterness among this traumatized and wounded population? Peru did not need a photographic chamber of horrors, but a sanctuary of truth. Paradoxically, such a place would have to be both a repository of pain and a place that could attract visitors and sustain them during their confrontation with the terrors of the past. The situation called for art to serve as a palliative against pain; aesthetics and history would be combined to evoke a response of compassion, solidarity, and reconstruction. We felt that all this could be accomplished through the language of photography. (54)

Chappell and Mohanna not only have a clear awareness of the difficulties that arise from the use of violent images, but they also trust in an aesthetic solution: in the Casa Riva Agüero exhibit they created a sanctuary in which the ruined building contained the painful Peruvian history of the last two decades of the twentieth century. That context provided new meaning for the images, and context might well account for the interpretation that many critics of photography claim should always accompany such images (David Levi Strauss, Judith Butler, Susan Sontag). However, given today's free circulation of images, it is necessary to consider the ways in which the images themselves affect us.

Underlying the TRC's trust in the power of these images is the belief that "the knowledge that comes from seeing" (Degregori 20) allows us to connect to something beyond our own experience. When the TRC chooses the Quechua word *yuyanapaq*—in order to remember—for the title of the photo exhibit, the intention is to foster collective memory. Degregori addresses the fact that the images had been trivialized or overlooked in the past, and sees the visual project of the TRC as a way to appeal to memory (20). But his use of the term memory connects the recollection of those who had first-hand experience of the events, with the transmission of that knowledge to newer generations (21). The visual material would allow for identification and compassion. In Salomon Lerner's discourse it is clear that the TRC wants "memory" not just for future generations, but for those who

were not direct victims of the violence and whose oblivion prevented them from seeing what was going on in their own country.

The TRC's project seems to aim at what Kaja Silverman calls "heteropathic recollection." "'implanted' memories through which 'we might be given the psychic wherewithal to participate in the desires, struggles, and sufferings of the other, and to do so in a way which redounds to his or her, rather than to our own, 'credit'" (185). Silverman's concept has been incorporated into theories of loss and mourning through Marianne Hirsch's reflections on photograph and "postmemory." Hirsch, like many of those concerned with memorials of social trauma, tries to theorize the effects of that trauma in the generations that did not experience it directly, but grew up in its shadow. The insistence of the TRC on words such as "memory," "remembrance," and "legacy," indicate this preoccupation as well. Hirsch arrived at the notion of heteropathic memory through the idea of postmemory. For her, postmemory is:

a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation [. . .] Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that precede their birth, [. . .] stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. (*Family Frames* 22)

In a later essay, dealing specifically with photographs Hirsch speaks not only of identification with the suffering of one's parents or grandparents, but of ways in which "I can also 'remember' the suffering of others" ("Projected Memory" 9). Hirsch also points at forms of identification that do not necessarily interiorize the other within the self but dislocate the self to a certain extent. These are forms of identification that take the self out of its own cultural norms, displacing it, to align it with another: "Heteropathic memory (feeling and suffering with the other) means, as I understand it, the ability to say, 'It could have been me; it was me, also,' and, at the same time, 'but it was not me'" (9). She then goes beyond the idea of postmemory in which there is a temporal distance, but at the same time a close familial or communal connection, to the more inclusive idea of "heteropathic memory" in which the imagination needs to bridge a distance—temporal, spatial, or cultural—with the suffering of others (9).

Still photographs are in Hirsch's words "stubborn survivors of death" ("Projected Memory" 10). And this is where Hirsch finds the ethical dimension of still photographs. The fact that we look always in the present at something that represents something always in the past, always already lost, gives photographs the potential to displace the self, "to enter the image, to imagine the disaster" (10) without an overappropriative identification.

The TRC demanded reparations for the victims, and Fujimori's current trial is just a token of the labor of justice that might take decades to achieve. But in the discourse of reconciliation and recovery, the need to build a successful imagined community seems to underlie the TRC's efforts. The scandal of the indifference of those who were not directly affected by the violence permeates the commissioners' work, and one of their goals seems to be to awaken Peruvians to the suffering experienced by their fellow citizens. The TRC presents the photos as a way to create heteropathic memory, a way for all Peruvians to identify with the suffering of others.

The Photographs Are Us

The TRC's use of photojournalistic archives to create a narrative of recent Peruvian history is an attempt to create a portrait or a mirror and to say "this is who we are." In Chapell and Mohanna's words: "The exhibition helped to redefine and construct a common, shared memory that would motivate Peruvian society to confront and talk about its past" (60). In the documentary *State of Fear* by Peter Kinoy, Pamela Yates and Paco de Onís, we see the photographer Vera Lentz return to Ayacucho after 20 years to share her pictures with those she photographed. This is an extraordinarily moving scene. *Yuyanapaq* also had regional exhibits in locations that were central foci of violence, such as Huamanga, Huancayo and Abancay. However, the main intention of the TRC is to create a collective consciousness that reaches out to those who did not experience the traumatic events themselves so that they will identify with the victims instead of seeing them as Other.¹³

The tragic irony of *Yuyanapaq* is that its portrait of Peru is not that of an imagined community, but of its opposite. The social, racial, and regional divide becomes explicit in images in which the victims are indigenous and poor, the soldiers are young and dark-skinned, the authorities are always light-skinned and seeming to belong to a different universe. The crisis of the state that led to unjustifiable levels of death and destruction is visible in national symbols like flags or uniforms that seem absurd and useless when juxtaposed against the extreme poverty and despair. However ironic, the visual evidence of this divide, the confrontation with this uncomfortable image, is presented to Peruvians with the hope that they will acknowledge the part they play in this community. The photographs are us: we are part of this history, with its racism and its violence, with its incongruities, with its poverty, with losses that might never be recovered. Still, this is Peru.

Four years after the TRC published its findings, political analyst Martín Tanaka wonders why the TRC's agenda seems still marginal for many Peruvians, and why those who chose to ignore the TRC obtain popular

support in the political arena. Tanaka points out important issues to consider, like the blurry line between ‘perpetrators’ and ‘saviours’ in some communities, or the lack of boundaries between political militancy and human rights activism. It is evident that many of the TRC proposals will be difficult to implement. The path for truth and reconciliation in Peru is going to be long and hard.

However, the testimonies left by those who visited *Yuyanapaq* clearly speak of an eye-opening experience.¹⁴ Visitors to the exhibit left messages such as “Where was I?” or “Was it that I didn’t care because the victims were *serranos* (Indians)?” or “From now on I look at my country with new eyes.” The TRC’s visual narrative successfully presented Peru a portrait of itself. Lerner said that the TRC not only wanted to present a truth that needed to be acknowledge and understood, but a truth that had to be felt as our own truth in order to build a more peaceful and humane country. The knowledge that came from seeing the suffering of others taught many Peruvians a truth about themselves.

Notes

1. For some, Vladimiro Montesinos has become the embodiment of the corruption ingrained in Peruvian society, and Peruvian intellectuals struggle to understand what seems to be a perverse personality. However, for them, as for the general population, the lingering question is why he made the videos that would end his reign of corruption and fear. See Portocarrero; Ubilluz.
2. As I write these words, Alberto Fujimori has received a first sentence of six years in prison and \$400,000 in civil reparations as part of ongoing trials on charges including breaking and entering, phone tampering, kidnapping, and assassinations, among others. See “Histórico.”
3. Besides adding the term *reconciliation* to the title of the commission, Alejandro Toledo also increased the number of commissioners, including a retired member of the armed forces and the secretary of the National Coordinator of Human Rights. See Cynthia Milton’s article “At the Edge of the Peruvian Truth Commission: Alternative Paths to Recounting the Past,” which examines the different ways in which Peruvians are exploring memory, and also includes a very thorough account of the history that lead to the establishment of the Peruvian TRC.
4. See the website for *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* at: www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/lacomision/balance/index.php. Translations of the TRC documents not available in English are mine.
5. www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/lacomision/cnormas/convenio25.php
6. For information regarding the findings of the TRC, see Lerner, *Hatun Willakuy. Version abreviada del informe final de la comision de la verdad y reconciliación.*
7. Cynthia Milton deals specifically with artistic and performative manifestations of the reconstruction of memory that are alternative to the TRC’s discourse. The panel “Truth-Telling and Memory in Peru beyond the Truth Commission” in the LASA XXVII International Congress 2007 in Montreal presented an array of attempts to recover memory through music, regional museums, and traditional art forms.

Panelists included Cynthia Milton, (Chair), Maria Ulfe, Jonathan Ritter, Richard Kernaghan, and Olga González-Castañeda. Important debates on the topic have been collected in Carlos Iván Degregori's *Jamás tan cerca arremetió lo lejos: Memoria y violencia política en el Perú* and in the volume edited by Marita Hamann et al., *Batallas por la memoria: antagonismos de la promesa peruana*.

8. The use of Quechua in the titles of the photo exhibit and in the abridged version of their final report, *Hatun Willakuy*, is a symbolic gesture on the part of the TRC. Although Quechua appears in the Peruvian constitution as one of the official languages of the country, it continues to provoke controversy when a congresswoman addresses the floor in that language, since there are no translators at hand during congress sessions. Spanish is *de facto* the only language accepted in the national debates (See Zavala). According to the findings of the TRC, only 20% of the country's population are not native speakers of Spanish. However, the percentage of victims whose native language was other than Spanish amounts to 75% (*Hatun Willakuy* TRC 23). Peruvians still debate the policies regarding Spanish as an official language, and the need to integrate the speakers of Quechua and other native languages.
9. Fragments of the most important reviews can be found in the CD *Yuyanapaq: Para recordar*. Centro de Información para la Memoria Colectiva y los Derechos Humanos. Distributed by Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación / Defensoría del Pueblo.
10. www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/apublicas/p-fotografico/index.php.
11. It is important to note the efforts of the TRC to address cultural differences in their work. They appear intent upon reminding urban, "learned" Peruvians, that the poor, marginalized indigenous peoples who constituted the majority of the victims of the violence, were part of a society they call their own.
12. For a beautiful analysis of the photograph as *memento mori* in Benjamin and Barthes see Kaplan's "Lo que queda de la catástrofe: Buena Memoria de Marcelo Brodsky" in her book *Genero y violencia* (105–107).
13. Testimonies of journalists and analysis of their experiences can be found in the collected papers of the roundtable Witnesses of the Truth: Visual Memory of Political Violence, www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/apublicas/p-fotografico/testigos.php. This should not be interpreted as a repetition on the part of the TRC of the problem they try to denounce. The commissioners seem overwhelmed by the fact that the city chose to ignore the tragedy that assaulted the Andes. The fact that they want to direct their message to those who remained oblivious to the violence does not mean that they are not seeking reparations for the real victims.
14. Transcriptions of the testimonies left by visitors can be found in the CD-ROM *Yuyanapaq: Para recordar*. Centro de Información para la Memoria Colectiva y los Derechos Humanos. <http://www.memoriaparalosderechoshumanos.org/pedido/index.jsp>.

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