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**Images of Truth:  
Art as a Medium for Recounting Peru's Internal War<sup>1</sup>**

**Cynthia E. Milton**

Université de Montréal

A lone woman walks as she wipes tears from her eyes with one hand. In her other hand, she holds absent-mindedly a wool spinner. One of her shoes is broken. Her back is slightly hunched forward, not from the weight of her satchel, but from her sadness. This drawing, done in either pencil or pastel, is entitled "Behind the shadow of pain" ("Tras la sombra del dolor").<sup>2</sup> While there are no direct scenes of violence, the pain of this woman and of her community is inscribed on her body. Her pain is visible

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<sup>2</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (Ayacucho: Colectivo Yuyarisun, Ministerio Británico para el Desarrollo Internacional, Organización Holandesa para la Cooperación Internacional al Desarrollo, 2004), 17.

to us, such is the capacity of art to recount experience. Art offers a powerful means of non-verbal expression. This article considers visual arts in the sharing of individual and collective memories of Peru's recent conflict. Two central premises underlie this investigation into art in post-Shining Path Peru: firstly, art acts as a mode of communication, and secondly, from this communication, we can complement our historical understanding of Peru's internal war. This study thus calls for an expansion of the archive to include other repositories of memory and history, beyond state-produced and written records.<sup>3</sup> Such an approach is all the more pressing for social groups for whom the written record may exclude their experience and where the presence of the state is weak—such as the Peruvian highland communities most heavily affected by violence from 1980 to 1992.

From 1980 to 1992, Peru underwent a grave civil war, referred to by many as the “armed internal conflict,” launched by a Maoist guerrilla group that wished to eradicate the Peruvian state, and exacerbated by the armed forces' ruthless and indiscriminate response. Looking at this period of conflict, including the years since the capture of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso, SL) leader Abimael Guzmán in 1992 until the end of Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian regime in 2000, the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, hereafter CVR) calculated 69,280 people dead or disappeared, over 43,000 orphans, and some 600,000 internal refugees in the preceding twenty years.<sup>4</sup>

The socio-political opening that gave rise to the CVR also created other spaces for public discussion that were previously unavailable, thus allowing for alternative media of “truth-telling”: for instance, visual and

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<sup>3</sup> For considerations of alternative sources and an expansion of historians' archives see Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Steve J. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London, 1998* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); and Fernando Coronil, “Seeing History” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84:1 (2004): 1-4. My first thoughts in this direction can be found in Cynthia E. Milton, “At the Edge of the Peruvian Truth Commission: alternative paths to recounting the past,” *Radical History Review*, 98, 2007: 3-33.

<sup>4</sup> CVR, *Informe final*, “Conclusiones generales,” <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index.php>.

performance art, memory sites, cinema, stories, humor, rumor, and song.<sup>5</sup> The CVR understood the importance of disseminating knowledge of these



Figure 1. *Tras la sombra del dolor*  
by Luis Cuba Arango (Pampamarca, Vinchos)

years through various media. In addition to contracting the assistance of the theatre troupe Yuyachkani to encourage witnesses to come and testify to the CVR commission, the CVR inaugurated the photography exhibition *Yuyanapaq. Para Recordar* (“In Order to Remember”) just prior to the

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<sup>5</sup> These eight modes of unofficial “truth-telling” are discussed for various countries (such as South Africa, Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and former Yugoslavia) in Ksenija Bilbija, Jo Ellen Fair, Cynthia E. Milton, and Leigh A. Payne eds., *The Art of Truth-telling about Authoritarian Rule* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005). See also Elizabeth Jelin and Ana Longoni eds., *Escrituras, Imágenes y escenarios ante la repression* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2005).

publication of their *Final Report*. The emergence of the CVR also signaled broadly the possibility to speak more openly about the past, giving important legitimacy to previously shunned or muted experiences. That is, “truth-telling” became part of the public domain, even at times at the national level, rather than an affair of individuals or groups. While cultural forms of knowledge had always been present—for instance, in regional artistic traditions such as painted wooden *retablos* and *tablas* by Ayacuchano and Sarhua artists depicting violence, or the lyrics of folk songs (such as *huaynos* and *pumpin*) that give testimony to abandonment of natal lands and the disappearance of loved ones—such forms had a saliency, immediacy, and a public recognition not before present. These modes adapted yet again in the post-war years and during the CVR.<sup>6</sup>

Through a consideration of a corpus of artistic works that emerged in the aftermath of the Peruvian truth commission, this article explores how art recounts the past and what past is told. In preparation for the findings of the CVR, and later as part of the symbolic reparations promoted by the CVR, a series of art contests entitled “Rescate por la memoria” (“Recovery of Memory”) were held in the Peruvian highland departments of Ayacucho (2003, 2004) and Huancavelica (2004).<sup>7</sup> A consortium of NGOs called Colectivo Yuyarisun organized these art contests as part of their efforts to

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<sup>6</sup> On *retablos* see María Eugenia Ulfe, “Representations of Memory in Peruvian *Retablos*” (Ph.D. diss., George Washington Univ., 2005); on *tablas* see Moises Lemlij and Luis Millones, *Las tablas de Sarhua: arte, violencia e historia en el Perú* (Lima: SIDEA, 2004). Jonathan Ritter studies the transformation of *huaynos* and *pumpin* in “Historia de una música testimonial,” *Cuestión de Estado* 32 (nov. 2003): 80-82 and “Music, Truth and Memory: Carnival in Rural Ayacucho before and after the Truth Commission,” paper presented at LASA, Montreal, September 5-8, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> For this essay, I am considering only two categories: *dibujos pintados* and *historietas*. In future studies, I intend to incorporate other categories. My exclusion of written entries (narrations, essays, and poetry) is not meant to perpetuate perceptions of highland communities as solely illiterate. The original contest in Ayacucho in 2003 and Huancavelica in 2004 did not have an “essay” category, which was offered in the urban Ayacucho contest of 2004, though the former had “historieta en texto” and the latter “narración.” All three contests had a category for song, and both Huancavelica and Ayacucho 2004 included a category for photography. A fourth contest was held in Sacsamarca to pay homage to the victims of this region in 2004.

diffuse human rights and to establish a collective memory project.<sup>8</sup> For the initial contest held in the department of Ayacucho in 2003, just prior to the publication of the CVR's *Final Report*, members of Yuyarisun had traveled to community fairs in the eight provinces of Ayacucho where they invited youth and adults who originated from these communities to express through art their thoughts about truth, justice, reparation, reconciliation, and the war years. Posters and radio slots advertised this and the following contests. In the first contest, 177 people submitted 175 different works in the categories of poetry, stories (both comics and short stories), song, and paintings.<sup>9</sup> Because of the success of the initial contest, upon the request of communities and with the support of international funds, art contests were repeated the following year in urban Ayacucho (receiving 301 entries) and in the department of Huancavelica (with 129 entries).<sup>10</sup> Subsequent spin-off regional art contests were held in Sacsamarca and Lucanamarca.<sup>11</sup>

A total of 607 artistic works submitted for the Yuyarisun contests in Ayacucho and Huancavelica recount the experiences of people in affected regions. In this article, the focus is on the visual entries, the painted drawings (*dibujos pintados*) and comic strips (*historietas*). Much of their content supports the CVR's conclusions in the *Informe final*. Yet, the testimonial framing and the visual impact of these works recount the past in a different way, and perhaps, in so doing, they offer divergent perspectives of "truth." The images of truth presented in the Yuyarisun contests place emphasis on collective memories of artists' communities, while naming specific and general, individual and community experiences of suffering. They further challenge the possibilities of reconciliation and make clear demands for recognition of continued plight in the affected

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<sup>8</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun was formed in 2002, composed of FADA, FEDECMA, CEISA, IPAZ and SER. Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (2004), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Two entries were excluded from the final contest because they did not meet the format of short stories or comics. Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria*, 2004, 8.

<sup>10</sup> A selection of the entries for the original Ayacucho and the Huancavelica contest are posted on the Yuyarisun website: <http://yuyarisun.rcp.net.pe>

<sup>11</sup> *Rescate por la Memoria, Sacsamarca: trabajos presentados en el II Homenaje a las Víctimas de la Violencia Política Mayo 2004* (Lima: Asociación SER, 2007). *Lluqanamarca: Ilaqtanchikpa yuyariynin*; *Lucanamarca: memorias de nuestro pueblo* (Lima: COMISEDH, 2007).

regions. And, for many of the images, it is the memories of childhood that are brought to light in this testimonial art.

### *Human Rights Art in the Highlands*

Government and human rights groups often use different media to encourage local residents to depict their communities and daily life. Agronomists in the 1990s would ask peasants to “map” their communities and agricultural practices (for instance, organizers from governmental antipoverty programs aimed at rural communities such as PRONAMACH). A decade later similar practices were employed to encourage participation in elections, and for community members to indicate potential problems such as distance between their homes and voting stations (e.g. the Institute for the Investigation and Promotion of Development and Peace in Ayacucho, IPAZ). Early maps might be “drawn” by placing beans while later techniques used pencils and paper. Groups also improvised plays for rural folk to indicate community relations and needs. More recently, in an attempt to ready communities to testify before the CVR, members of the Association of Rural Education Services (Asociación Servicios Educativos Rurales, SER) organized workshops with community members and leaders in which they “mapped” scenes of violence. While only a few of the original maps remain, a second workshop was held after the CVR as a means to record this information as collective memory.<sup>12</sup>

Encouraging expression through art dates back to at least 1984 when various non-governmental organizations with the support of Oxfam held a national drawing and painting contest for rural folk to illustrate daily life (Concurso Nacional de Dibujo y Pintura Campesina).<sup>13</sup> The first contest was held June 24<sup>th</sup> on the “Día del Campesino” (“Day of the Peasant,” also “Día de San Juan”) in 1984, followed by a contest each year until 1996,

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<sup>12</sup> Conversation with Ricardo Caro and Javier Torres, November 3, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> For the Concurso VII in 1990 over 50 groups participated. Comisión Coordinadora Nacional del Concurso Nacional de Dibujo y Pintura Campesina, *Imágenes y realidad a la conquista de un viejo lenguaje* (Lima: Comisión Educativa del Concurso Nacional de Dibujo y Pintura Campesina, 1990), 35. Youngers has situated well the importance of human rights groups in responding to the political crisis of these years. See Coletta Youngers, *Violencia política y sociedad en el Perú: Historia de la Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos* (Lima: IEP, 2003).

resulting in 7,004 works. One objective was to promote awareness and respect for diverse cultures. During the more than a decade that these contests lasted, there was a sense that a “creative meeting” with the “peasant population” was needed at a time of extreme inflation, growing poverty, and escalating violence.<sup>14</sup> A portion of this collection (3,500 works) is now held at the Centro Cultural de San Marcos where some have undergone a process of restoration and digitalization. These paintings have reached the status of folk art, “pintura campesina,” among *limeño* circles.<sup>15</sup>

The choice of privileging drawing and painting in the National Contests over more local and established art forms (for instance, *retablos* and *tablas*) posed some ethical concerns for the organizers. Organizers of the National Contests were aware that use of paper and pencil was connected to outside cultures, that of the “conquistadores,” while other art forms such as textiles and painted gourds were more established modes of highland cultural expression.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, one of the consequences of these art contests and other NGO workshops might have been the teaching of “Western” methods of representation and narrative structure, whereby the form of expression might also influence the content.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, while such technologies of expression might solve the ethnographic problem of how to promote auto-representation, the fact that these artworks are produced for specific consumers might in fact lead to the “exoticization” of participants and their work.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Comisión Coordinadora Nacional, *Imágenes y realidad*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> The San Marcos Cultural Center exhibited some of these works from June 23-August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005. A publication emerged from this exhibition, *Imágenes de la tierra: archivo de pintura campesina* (Lima: Museo de Arte de San Marcos, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Comisión Coordinadora Nacional, *Imágenes y realidad*, 31. Many entries came with written descriptions, either explaining the artwork, or for which the artwork was a further explanation. Ansión, “Presentación,” 22-3.

<sup>17</sup> Such assumptions about traditional artforms, however, do not take into consideration the work of Guaman Poma de Ayala. Karen Lizárraga, among others, places the tradition of drawing in a direct continuum with the sixteenth-century drawings of Guaman Poma de Ayala. Karen Lizárraga, “El registro andino: Constuyendo un modelo propio” in *Imágenes y realidad*.

<sup>18</sup> Gisela Canépa, “Representación social y pintura campesina. Reflexiones desde la antropología visual,” in *Imágenes de la tierra*, 8-15.

Each year brought greater participation in the national art contest despite economic crisis and political violence.<sup>19</sup> Participants were of all ages, from poor regions, and worked in humble professions: small-scale farmers, workers, temporary laborers, homemakers, carpenters, artisans, pastors, drivers, itinerate salesmen, domestic servants, small-scale businessmen, tailors, herders, knife sharpeners, bricklayers, carriers, fishermen, washerwomen, and green grocers.<sup>20</sup> Though a few prizes were awarded, the motivating factor for making an entry did not seem to be the chance of winning alone, but to have the opportunity to communicate knowledge, customs, problems, and hopes.<sup>21</sup> According to one participant from Ancash, “I want to make known the crucial moments through which we are living in our province and in Peru in general.”<sup>22</sup>

The national competitions are predecessors to the Yuyarisun *Rescate por la memoria* contests held the following decade in the postwar highlands. Indeed, some of the coordinating organizations overlap, for instance, SER and Oxfam. However, while the National Contests of Peasant Drawings and Paintings aimed at encouraging rural folk to depict their social, historical, and cultural reality—which included daily life, fiestas, political violence, changes in communities, and personal dramas—the contests held during and after the truth commission focused specifically on the war. In the National Contests none of the entries on the theme of political violence were awarded prizes, apparently because they did not meet the aesthetic criteria of the judges.<sup>23</sup> For the Yuyarisun contests, the winning entries were chosen not for their aesthetic quality alone, but also for their content. According to Raquel Reynoso, coordinator for an

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<sup>19</sup> During the first six years of the contest, 2,469 people participated. Since 1987, regional contests did a pre-selection of works to be submitted for the National Contests. For this reason, the actual number of participants and works exceeds this figure. Comisión Coordinadora Nacional, *Imágenes y realidad*, 37.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 42, n.3.

<sup>21</sup> Comisión Coordinadora Nacional, *Imágenes y realidad*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Ansión, “Presentación,” 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. Ramón Pajuelo analyzes some of these images in his essay, “Miradas del horror: La violence política en las pinturas campesinas,” in *Imágenes de la tierra*, 94-111.

education citizenship program, these contests did not seek to be artistic, but rather a “vision of events during the armed conflict.”<sup>24</sup>

### *Art as Testimony*

In the context of CVR truth-seeking, art changed from a means of communicating daily life in general to that of providing testimonies of violence specifically. The organizers of the Yuyarisun contest refer to the entries as “testimonios” by hundreds of people who lived the violence in one form or another.<sup>25</sup> In their entries, participants attest to what they witnessed, and they structure these memories into artistic narratives.

These pieces implicitly combine the primary experience of trauma with testimony. While there is a field of art that addresses traumatic memory, it is not clear from these art contests if the intention was to use art as a medium for overcoming trauma.<sup>26</sup> The title of the contests, “Recovered Memory”, may have been chosen because of a general awareness of a psychological condition, but it does not seem that the contest organizers had any intention to retrieve buried or suppressed memories, such as childhood memories that come to light in adulthood. Indeed, the entries suggest that these memories were never buried, but rather un(der)acknowledged by general Peruvian society.

A subtle distinction needs to be made between what visual studies and trauma studies consider testimonial art and the artworks considered here.<sup>27</sup> From my readings into these two domains, visual and trauma studies consider literature and formal art—that is, art done by professional artists—as a means to bear witness to an event and to work through an individual or collective traumatic experience, such as the cases of Marcelo Brodsky in Argentina or Doris Salcedo in Colombia.<sup>28</sup> The Yuyarisun works

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<sup>24</sup> Raquel Reynoso R., “El Concurso y los participantes” in *Rescate por la memoria, Ayacucho* (Lima: SER, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> <http://yuyarisun.rcp.net.pe>. Accessed January 8, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Elaine Scarry *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> Guerin and Hallas discuss the nexus between visual studies and trauma studies in their “Introduction” in Francis Guerin and Roger Hallas, eds., *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Trauma art refers to professional artists who use art as “a vehicle for the interpersonal transmission of an experience,” an experience that the artist him or

differ, not only because the participants are not professional artists for the most part, but also because their aim does not appear to be to *work through* a traumatic experience (though the coordinators of the contests might have hoped for this outcome). Rather the participants' entries suggest an urgency to bear witness in the sense of *testimonio*, that of denouncing or condemning injustices (though professional artists may intend this as well).<sup>29</sup> Because of this emphasis on bearing witness in the face of indifference or censorship, the art forms studied here are similar to *hibakusha* testimonial art, that is, art by survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki whose recounting of experience was prohibited by the post-war state. Thousands of paintings and drawings, many on small scraps of paper, depict scenes and effects of atomic bombing.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the emphasis in the Yuyarisun works, it seems to me, is on the *testimonio*—bearing witness and narrating—and not on the trauma.<sup>31</sup> This distinction is not meant to downplay the severity of experience: the images show the unfolding of a human tragedy on a scale that is incomprehensible. Rather, this distinction points to the function of these artworks in recounting and denouncing experiences to specific audiences: the judges who evaluate the entries and the bystander community that was neither a direct victim nor perpetrator of violence.<sup>32</sup>

How subsequent viewers, whether judges of the contest, Peruvians, or researchers will interpret these works necessarily changes the meaning

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herself might not have had first hand. Jill Bennett, *Empathetic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 6-7. On Salcedo, see Edlie L. Wong, "Haunting Absences: Witnessing Loss in Doris Salcedo's *Atrabiliarios* and Beyond," in Guerin and Roger Hallas, eds., *The Image and the Witness*, 173-188.

<sup>29</sup> For a review of the origins and meanings of testimonial literature, see Florencia Mallon's "Editor's Introduction" in Rosa Isolde Reuque Paillalef, *When a Flower is Reborn: The Life and Times of a Mapuche Feminist* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 24-30.

<sup>30</sup> Kyo Maclear, *Beclouded Visions: Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the Art of Witness*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 190, n7.

<sup>31</sup> A powerful example of combining *testimonio* (bearing witness/denouncing) and art is the work of Edilberto Jiménez, an Ayacuchano artist and anthropologist. *Chungui: violencia y trazos de memoria*. (Lima: Comisdeh, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the intended audience for forms of retributive and restorative justice – trials and truth commissions—extend beyond that of judges and commissioners to include bystanders. Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 74-79, 146.

of this art's testimonial function. That is, judges (made up of local artists and musicians, NGO members, and academics) might assess the testimonial content and the aesthetic quality. A Peruvian viewing these works on-line might receive them as a "secondary witnesses" or a "listener" to the initial act.<sup>33</sup> And a researcher, like me, might try to "read" these works for their testimonial content in the construction of narrative understandings.<sup>34</sup>

There are constraints, however, to critically evaluating these works as *art* and as using them as documentary *evidence*. As John Berger has written in reference to *hibakusha* art, one cannot critique the artistic qualities of these haunting images for "one does not musically analyse screams."<sup>35</sup> There are also limits to analyzing art as documents that are authentic and accurate, a requirement that these images be somehow tethered to "truth."<sup>36</sup> The murkiness of memory and time, as well as the present political context in which the images were produced, contribute to distancing images from an uncompromised "reality." We should be further careful with any assumption that these images and the artists represent a "real subaltern voice" as though marginalized groups are somehow closer to "reality" in their "blunt, coarse, obvious, physical" depictions leaving

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<sup>33</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Testimonial art, according to Dominick LaCapra, is a kind of performative, "traumatized or post-traumatic writing ('writing' in the broad sense that extends to all signification or inscription)." LaCapra's conceptualization of testimonial art includes the functions of witnessing and working through trauma. (LaCapra, *Writing History*, 105.) An issue that I do not raise in this article is the question of whether one can represent limit events. Without addressing here the psychoanalytic or pedagogical functions of testimonial art, I share Felman and Laub's view that art can bear witness and provide historical tools for better understanding traumatic events. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Maclear, *Beclouded Visions*, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Guerin and Hallas, "Introduction," Maclear, *Beclouded Visions*, 23. In her study on trauma art, Bennett considers "trauma-related art" as transactive rather than communicative, in that it "touches us, but it does not necessarily communicate the 'secret' of personal experience." Trauma art, thus, conveys "truths" "because it reaches us through our senses." Bennett, *Empathetic Vision*, 8-9. The art in the *Rescate por la memoria* differs from "transactive," trauma art, from my perspective, because its primary goals are to communicate visually a personal experience and denounce injustices. This art may indeed, "reach us through our senses," but it does so in not necessarily obscure ways, but by directly recounting narratives.

aesthetic artifice as a capacity of urban, educated classes alone.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, central to interpreting these paintings is the tension created by the origin of their production.<sup>38</sup> These are not spontaneous works in the sense of *hibakusha* art. Rather, the participants are responding to a call for artwork on the theme of the internal war, contests sponsored by NGOs. There is also the problem of interpreting distinct cultural and historical referents: it is difficult to read intention into symbolic works without a certain level of immersion. For instance, a condor in a painting might just be a bird. Or it could represent a military helicopter, or something else all together.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these possible dangers of misinterpretation and overestimation of their potential to illustrate “reality,” I wish to read these artworks for their testimonial narrative (the representation and the content), without challenging the motives of the witnesses-artist or the completeness of their memory and depiction. Indeed, it is the framing and rendering of their testimonial narratives for a specific audience, and the tensions over their production and meaning at the heart of their academic and aesthetic value.<sup>40</sup> Yet, by looking at the testimonial narrative, I do not

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<sup>37</sup> At its cultural height, this work claims the status of “folk art” that represent a “reality,” while excluding them from aesthetic criteria. Maclear, *Beclouded Visions*, 21. On the pitfalls of asking testimonial literature to represent authentic subaltern voices, see John Beverely, “The Real Thing,” in Georg Gugelberger, ed, *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) and Mallon’s “Editor’s Introduction” in *When a Flower is Reborn*. There is also an unfortunate tendency to view “folk art” as somehow closer to a non-aesthetic reality, where individuals living on the social margins can only depict their world directly, bluntly, and without artifice. Maclear, *Beclouded Visions*.

<sup>38</sup> Gisela Cánepa makes this same point in regards to earlier National Contest works, “Représentation sociale,” 12-13.

<sup>39</sup> The symbol of the condor is a good example of the limits of interpretation. A select group of the armed forces wore black shirts with the image of the condor over their chest. Condors are huge carrion birds. Helicopters dropped bombs indiscriminately on communities. According to Arianna Cecconi, some highland *campesinos* dreamed of condors just prior to the arrival of military helicopters, premonitions of the violence to come. Arianna Cecconi conversation August 20, 2008. The common appearance of helicopters in the *dibujos pintados* is curious. Several of the artists are referring to the same event, for instance, military incursions into Parco Chacapunco in 1986. But as Ramón Pajuelo also notes for the National Contest *pinturas campesinasi*, helicopters were relatively rare in Ayacucho. The presence of the helicopter in these paintings may highlight the brutality of the military. “Miradas del horror,” 96-97.

<sup>40</sup> As Gisela Cánepa argues for the *pintura campesina* of the National Contests, if we look just at the figurative representations in these works, we will lose out on the possibility to see the “complex dynamics and cultural, social and

wish to entirely strip the sensual aspects of art nor art's ability to transmit meaning and emotion. For while art as a mode of communication might depict events with some accuracy, art can also draw us, as viewers, "emotionally and intellectually toward the unknown."<sup>41</sup>

### *Testimonial Framing*

The Yuyarisun entries depict and denounce the years of violence, and demand alleviation of continued hardship. Participants recount their stories. They do so by way of various framing techniques. In these works, the artist might employ a system of *A,B,C* or *1, 2, 3* in order that the viewer can follow the intended sequence of events, similar to the engraving techniques found on carved gourds. See, for instance, the winning entry for the first Ayacucho contest "La gran señal de nuestros recuerdos (El cementerio del horror)" ("The Great Symbol of Our Memories (The Cemetery of Horror)") by Manuel Huamán Gutiérrez from Quinoa.<sup>42</sup> Placed in the frame of a cross, scenes "A" and "B" depict the killing and rape first by the military, followed by Shining Path's brutal reprisal. Scene "C" illustrates survivors burying their dead. The last scene, "D," has community members embracing. My interpretation is that they are leaving the community to go to Lima, as suggested by the descending truck. A similar entry entitled "Realidad" ("Reality"), by Pablo Huamán Gutiérrez also from Quinoa (they are most likely related), shows the same events in a numbered format with some changes.<sup>43</sup> He adds a scene ("5") of the military returning after Shining Path.

In the last segment ("6") the community is rebuilding their houses, and community members greet recently returned emigrants. Flowers similar to those found on the doors of *retablos* adorn the edges of this work.

Some artists place emphasis on the documentary character of the paintings over artistic elements in their framing strategies by adding text. For instance, the painting "Sangre que corre" ("Flowing Blood") by

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political negotiations that are accomplished through visual language." "Representación social," 13.

<sup>41</sup> Maclear, *Beclouded Visions*, 24.

<sup>42</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (2004), 11.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Edmundo Soto Vásquez of Concepción Vilcashuamán, has written in pen above the scene of three dead men, a lone woman, two soldiers, and smoldering rooftops, “In the Plaza of Pirhuabamba in the year 1993, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, at five in the morning, they killed 15 *ronderos*. Burned houses.”<sup>44</sup>

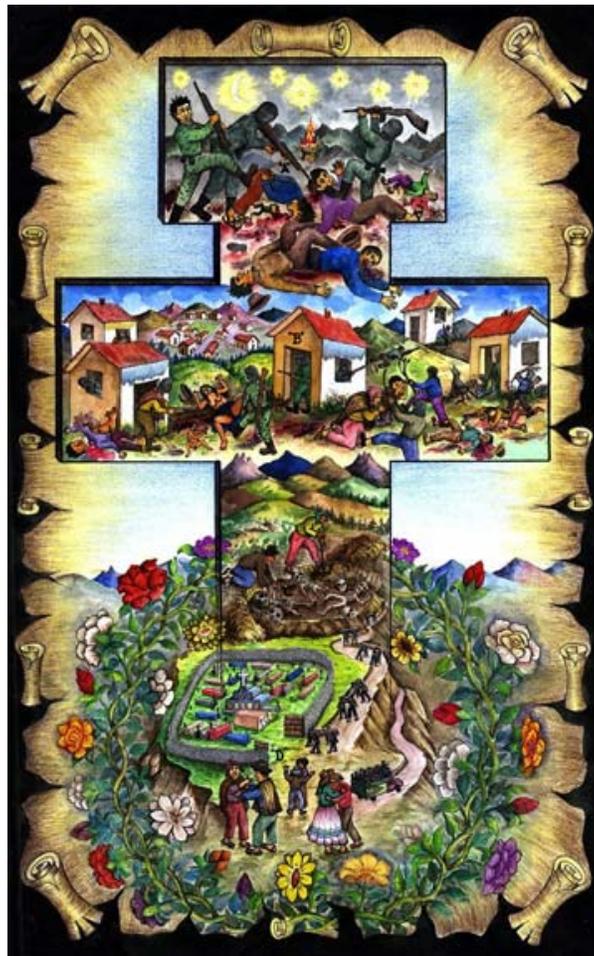


Figure 2. *La gran señal de nuestros recuerdos* by Manuel Braulio Huamán Gutiérrez (Quinua)

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 29.

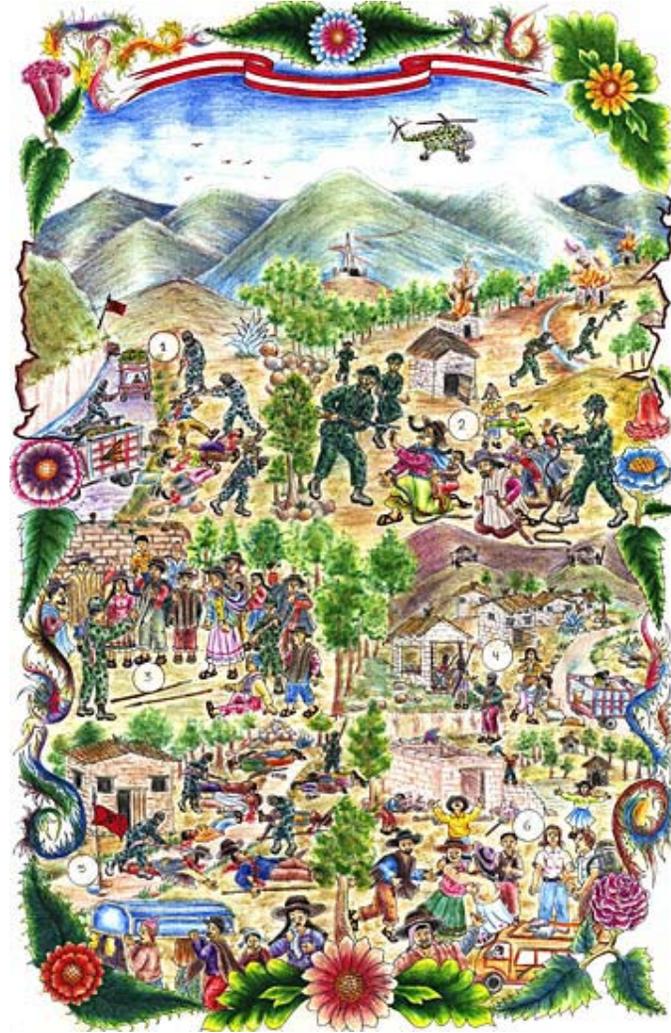


Figure 3. *La Realidad*  
by Pablo Huamán Gutiérrez (Quinua)



Figure 4. *Sangre que corre*  
by Edmundo Soto Vásquez (Concepción, Vilcashuamán)

In the case of the *historietas*, the framework of serial scenes ensures that readers follow the intended order. In the submission “Así comenzó la triste vida” (“So Began the Sad Life”), Gonzalo Fernández Condoray chronologically tells his story in five frames, using the first-person singular voice.<sup>45</sup> The sequences recount his life during the height of the violence from 1982-1984 when his community Viscatamapta Orccoahuasi was forced to hide in caves for more than a year from both Shining Path and the military. Eventually driven by starvation from the caves, they sought refuge in a military base in Putis. “Here died hundreds of people, men, women, and children, in this same year, after a short time with the military. Here ended my family as is: my grandparents, my uncles and aunts, and much of my community and other communities.”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 89-91.



Figure 5. *Así comenzó la triste vida*  
by Gonzalo Fernández Condoray (Viscatamapta, Orccohuasi)

Captions that accompany the pictures read as journal entries. Such descriptions that accompany the *dibujos pintados* might be used to clarify the context, but they also strengthen an artist's claim to veracity. The use of dates on the works further suggests a concern to pinpoint the specificity of remembrances. By placing a date, they argue that it occurred at a certain time, a certain place, and that despite the passage of time these events (and images) are "unforgettable." Such claims of veracity might be in response to the threat of forgetting, indifference, and skepticism by spectators. And indeed, by placing written text, the artists might be expressing an awareness of the primacy given to written texts over visual and oral, a powerful dynamic of exclusion. Veracity might be more easily established through written narrative than pictorial.

While the entries themselves are based on individual memories, their perspectives often portray the community. In this way, individual and collective memory fuse in that these individual renderings of community experience may become the template for collective remembrance. The narrator takes an omniscient position (though seldom using the "I" form or making the artist-witness's presence explicit). The scenes rendered are of the pueblo or a group. Many include the central plaza or church. The perspective is that of a bird's eye view of the community. Indeed, a condor,

dove, or vulture may be present. In an entry for the Huancavelica contest, Santos Belito Unocc from Chacapunco, placed the sun and a condor in the top center.<sup>46</sup> He has written in between the bird and a mountain peak “Apu Echocallan de Parco Chacapunco in 1986, September 28.”



Figure 6. *Historia de 1986, matanza del S.L.*  
by Santos Belito Unocc (Chacapunco)

Distancing of the artist-witness from the events is ensured through the use of animals who explain to the viewer what is happening. In the Ayacucho 2003 contest, two *historietas* have birds and dogs narrating the comic strip. In the first part of the *historieta* “Una vuelta por el pasado y entre el esfuerzo” (“A Return to the Past and Amidst the Struggle”) two dogs converse, calling each other the by racialized terms “Zambo” and “Cholo,” about what happened in the now abandoned community.<sup>47</sup> They name specific individuals who were killed, and where their bodies can be found. They pose questions and provide answers such as “How can this be? Between human beings there is no pity.” Such narrative tricks allow the artist to make general comments and observations without taking an authorial stance as a first-person witness. The protagonism of dogs is

<sup>46</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria, Huancavelica* (2005), 24.

<sup>47</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (2004), 63-64.

further interesting, since witnesses to the CVR, at times, referred to how they were “treated like dogs” by the military and SL, or how cadavers were left to be devoured by dogs, or in other depictions where SL and the military refer to their victims as “perros”.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the symbol of a dog refers back to long-standing racial discrimination in Peru and the dehumanization of victims by Shining Path militants and the armed forces.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 7. *Una vuelta por el pasado y entre el esfuerzo* by Luis Ayala Mamani (Chiara, Huamanga)

Another noticeable aspect of these pieces is their specific placement of acts of violence. Many map past violence by placing spatial markers that indicate where events occurred. The use of maps to narrate the violence might be a direct legacy of earlier exercises with human rights groups such as earlier agricultural and electoral maps and the workshops in preparation for the truth commission’s arrival. The mapping techniques in the recent art contests suggest that participants in earlier NGO workshops might have

<sup>48</sup> For instance, a *senderista* shouts out “mueran como perros” (“die like dogs”) in the entry “Rescate por la memoria” that depicts SL massacring a village in Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (2004), 14.

<sup>49</sup> Based on her interviews with survivors, Kimberly Theidon recounts how community members described the war using dehumanizing terms such as “we lived and died like dogs.” *Entre prójimos: el conflicto armado interno y la política de la reconciliación en el Perú* (Lima: IEP, 2004), 60.

understood the mapping exercise as not just one of conveying information, but also as an artistic endeavor. Similarly, artist-witnesses may have understood the present contest as an artistic endeavor that included conveying information.

The Yuyarisun maps situate the violence by using physical markers of roads, buildings, central plaza, homes, animal corrals, mountains, valleys, and rivers. As different killings and massacres took place in different places, artists could indicate several temporal events on the same plane. Thus, Shining Path and the military are depicted in the same painting without necessarily meaning a battle between the two. In his painting “La violencia y la paz,” Leonidas Huamán Lolay, illustrated three different days: February 15, 1984 (Carnival), February 7, 1986 (Carnival), and April 9, 1990 (general elections).<sup>50</sup> In the works that map memories of past violence, the aesthetic appears secondary to what seems like an urgent need to document. For instance, Julio Gómez Aguilar of Churcampa has crudely drawn roads, trees, and buildings in his entry “Maraypata” (“Flat basket”).<sup>51</sup> He has written down the locations of where community members died: “Aquí murieron Gregorio Quispe y [illegible]” (“Here died Gregorio Quispe [and someone else]”). The roughness of his drawing suggests that he wanted to tell what happened, rather than make an artistic rendering.

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<sup>50</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria, Huancavelica* (2005), 29. Two descriptions accompany this work. One explains what happened on the days of massacres (*fiestas carnavales*, and a general election). Another text says “los compañeros (terrucos) daban charlas reuniendo a los comuneros de Chaynabamba con esto lograban formar lideres, ellos le entregan un libro que era como una credencial o una guía.”

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.



Figure 8. *La violencia y la paz*  
by Leonidas Huamán Lolay (Yaureccan)



Figure 9. *Maraypata*  
by Julio Gómez Aguilar (Churcampa)

In fact, surprisingly few of the submissions in the original Ayacucho contest (2003) and in Huancavelica (2004) seem to take a purely aesthetic or symbolic shape of one scene or one image. Some single-image *dibujos pintados* may still communicate a message or express a sentiment (such as

“Tras la sombra del dolor” that shows the sorrow of a woman, see Figure 1). This is not the case for the urban Ayacucho contest of 2004 where many participants give the impression of striving for symbolic *Art*. Perhaps the most marked difference between the original contests in Ayacucho (2003) and the following year in Huancavelica (2004), with the second contest in urban Ayacucho (2004) is that the *dibujos pintados* have lost some of their testimonial aspect in exchange for a more polished look. While most early entries had displayed specific scenes of violence, 44 of the 58 entries for the 2004 contest in urban Ayacucho present general paintings of suffering and violence without indicating specific events. One *dibujo pintado* is reminiscent of Jackson Pollock, with spattered paint.<sup>52</sup> A more polished look is also visible in the *historietas* category of the 2004 Ayacucho contest. With superhero-like figures and sound effects of “BLAM!,” and “BOOM!”, and “RATATATA,” these narrative sequences are closer to Marvel comic books in style than the *historietas* entries of the year before, though their content recounts similar tragedies.

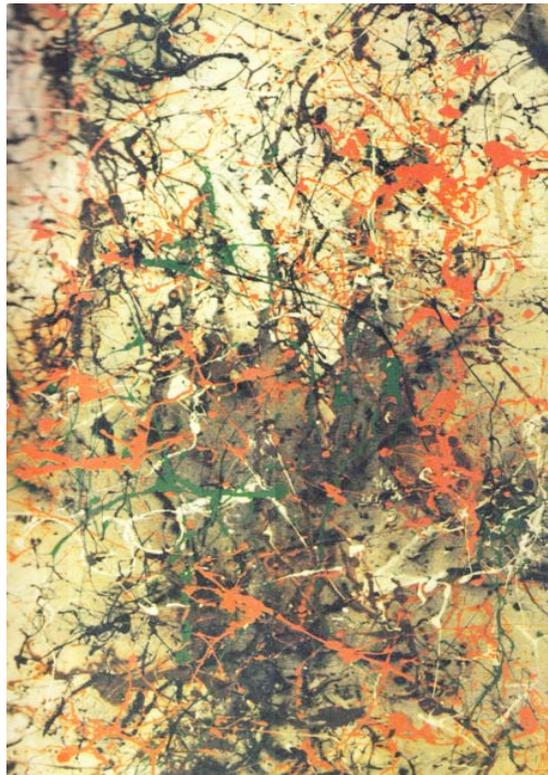


Figure 10. *Tiempos de sufrimiento y dolor* by Percy Lozano Vivanco (Ayacucho)

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<sup>52</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria, Ayacucho* (2005), 65.

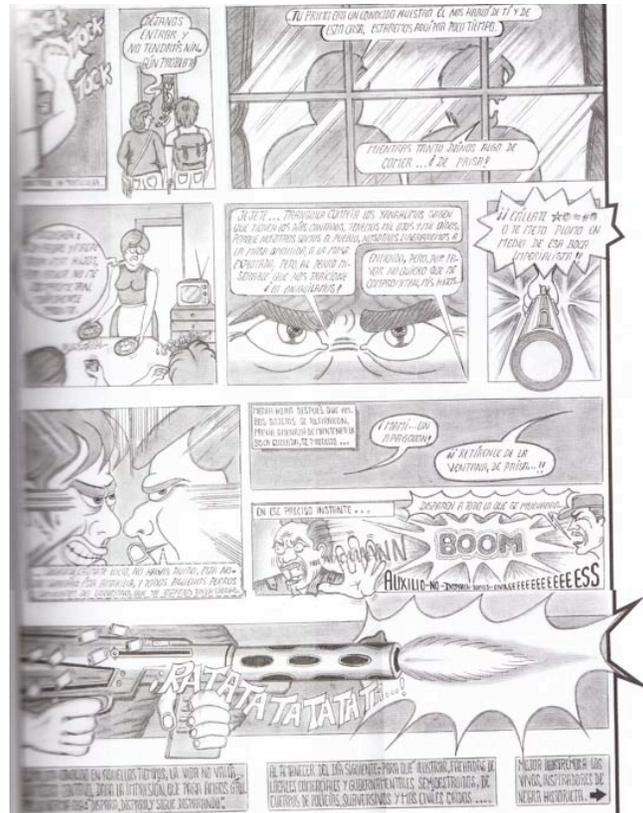


Figure 11. *Una tarde en particular* by William Escobar Córdova (Ayacucho)

The shift in artistic style of the 2004 urban Ayacucho from the earlier contest might be because the participants interpreted the contest as more about aesthetic rather than testimonial expression. They might also have been responding to what they thought might have better chances of winning.<sup>53</sup> Or established and budding artists might have decided to use this new art forum as a means to draw attention to their work. While we do not have the professions for participants in 2003,<sup>54</sup> the Huancavelica contest and the urban Ayacucho contests of 2004 demonstrate important differences: in Huancavelica none of the participants were identified as “artists” or “artisans”; in urban Ayacucho, these two categories account for

<sup>53</sup> Commentators of the National Art contests noted that the previous year’s winning entries would influence the following year’s submissions. One can see this in the Yuyarisun contests where the first place prize went to a stylized cross. The following year in Ayacucho and Huancavelica had similarly designed crosses.

<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the ages and occupation of the participants in the original contest in Ayacucho in 2003 are not included in Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (2004) volume.

11 of the 243 artists, in addition to some other participants who described themselves as as graphic designers. In both cases, students were the largest category (33 of 112 in Huancavelica, 29%, and 123 of 243 in urban Ayacucho, 51%). No one identified as “agriculturalists” participated in the urban Ayacucho contest, whereas 22% of Huancavelica’s participants laboured the land.

### *Youth Memories*

In summarizing the internal armed conflict, the former truth commissioner Carlos Iván Degregori refers to the victims as “poor, rural, indigenous, young.”<sup>55</sup> The same description could be used to describe the participants of the Yuyarisun contests. The majority of participants in the Yuyarisun contests were between the ages of eighteen and thirty years old, from poor, rural highlands, considered largely “indigenous/peasant” regions.<sup>56</sup> While the strong presence of youth in the Yuyarisun may indicate the target audience of the organizers, it also reflected who would be attracted to participating in such a contest, students. In Huancavelica, of the 97 participants whose age is known, 47 were under thirty years old (48%), of which 40% of female and 20% male participants were under twenty-five years old. In the urban Ayacucho (2004) contest, 91 participants whose age is indicated were under 30 (42%), with 56% of female and 37% male participants were under twenty-five years old. That is, during the militarization of the conflict, from 1983 to 1986, many *Rescate por la memoria* participants were between the ages of nine and twenty-one

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<sup>55</sup> Carlos Iván Degregori, “Heridas abiertas, derechos esquivos: Reflexiones sobre la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación,” *Memorias en conflicto: Aspectos de la violencia política contemporánea* (Lima: Embajada de Francia en el Perú, IEP, IFEA, Red para el Desarrollo de las Ciencias Sociales en el Perú, 2004), 81

<sup>56</sup> In Peru, geography “racializes” people. While “race” is not a specific category of analysis considered in this article, it was central to the findings of the Peruvian truth commission that highlighted racial discrimination by *mestizo* elite and governmental agencies against Peruvian highland and Amazonian lowland populations. While the military reforms of the Velasco regime (1968-1980) did much to replace the racial category of indigenous in the self-identification in the highlands for a class-based category “peasant” (*campesino*), heavily pejorative terminology and marginalization (terms such as *Serrano*, for instance) prospered, nonetheless. On the intricacies of race and racial identities in Peru see Marisol de la Cadena, “Discriminación étnica,” *Cuestión de Estado* 32 (nov. 2003): 8-9; *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

years old, while even more were infants or born just after this period. The contest participants were small children during the three worst peaks of deaths and forced disappearances in 1984, 1989, and 1990.<sup>57</sup>

As such, the Yuyarisun entries are memories of a generational experience. They are testimonial accounts by individuals who at the time were children or young adults who witnessed the violence committed by the armed forces and *Sendero Luminoso* in their communities: torture, rape, death, disappearance, massacres, executions, clandestine graves, and forced migration. For instance, one participant, Vicente Unocc Sedano, entitled his work “When I was a Child,” showing different violent events. In a separate description attached to the work, Unocc Sedano tells his age when these events took place: he was 9 or 10 years old when three women in his community were killed and three others hurt (in 1982); he was eleven years old when the army “mistreated” professors, students and community members, and “men, women and children [were] tortured in 1983”; fourteen when there was a battle between Shining Path and the military; and he was fifteen years old when “El Señor Satos Lara was assassinated in the mountains by three unknown *senderos* who placed on him a sign saying ‘informer’.”



Figure 12. *Cuando era niño*  
by Vicente Unocc Sedano (Unión Progreso)

<sup>57</sup> CVR, *Ayacucho, El Informe Final 1980-2000: Una compilación del Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, Tomo 1* (Lima: Oxfam-DFID and SER, 2003), 10.

As a consequence of these many years of violence “we are all traumatized.”<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps because so many of the works in the Yuyarisun contests are from individuals who were children at the time of the violence, there is a childhood nostalgia for the past before the war. For instance, in the *historieta* “Mi Familia” (“My Family”), Félix Chocce Belito describes in seven frames the happiness of his family in the community of Parco Alto, Anchonga where they had enough to eat and a cow to milk. Suddenly, in the eighth frame, the military appears and his father begs them to take pity on his family for whom he provides. In the ninth frame is a single grave.<sup>59</sup> This romanticization of the past might reflect a child’s perspective of childhood in peacetime, despite hardship. Chocce Belito, was 29 at the time of the contest, thus, he was 10 in 1984. However, this nostalgic return to the past before the violence erases the root causes behind the initial success of SL in Peru’s central-south highlands, and the endemic poverty that these regions suffered before and after the war. An adult looking back might also feel wistful for peacetime, but with more pronounced memories of the suffering that gave rise to the internal war.



Figure 13. *Mi Familia*  
by Félix Chocce Belito (Parco Alto Anchonga)

<sup>58</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria*, Huancavelica (2005), 23. <http://yuyarisun.rcp.net.pe/yuyarisun.php?id=catalogo-dibujo2>. Accessed January 28, 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria*, Huancavelica (2005), 82-83.

One of the heart-wrenching results of the internal conflict was the creation of a whole sector of orphans. According to the CVR, widows and orphans were the Peruvians for whom the violence left the most devastating consequences, not only in the loss of family, belongings and resources, but in the lasting psychological and social harm.<sup>60</sup> The former coordinator of the Mental Health Unit of the CVR, Viviana Valz-Gen describes the sudden transformation into orphan as a result of political violence as a “fracture in the life process” that “results in rage, rupture of world order, the loss of sense in the most basic of things.”<sup>61</sup> This experience of becoming an orphan is attested to in the works of Yuyarisun. Participant Rosario Milagros Laurente Chahuayo entered both a drawing and a photograph (the only one for the Huancavelica contest). The drawing “Huellas en el Alma” (“Traces in the Soul”) shows a young girl weeping. The hat of a loved one rests in her hands. She included explanatory descriptions with her works: “In the image [we] see a girl from Huancavelica with a hat remembering the pain and affliction of an unexplainable violence. Faces of pain and loss of innocent people. In the pain there is no difference between day or night.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Cecilia Larrabure, *Ciertos vacíos: un ensayo fotográfico sobre orfandad, violencia y memoria en el Perú* (Lima : PUCP, 2007), 15.

<sup>61</sup> Viviana Valz-Gen in Larrabure, *Ciertos vacíos*, 77.

<sup>62</sup> A similar caption accompanied her photographic entry, “el dolor desconsolado de una pequeña indígena huancavelicana. Tiene en sus manos un chullo (gorro), que al tomarla empieza a recordar a sus seres queridos. El llanto la agobia y la idea de quedarse sola es su única compañía. (Traducido de una plática con un indígena que fue afectada por la violencia política—Huancavelica).” <http://yuyarisun.rcp.net.pe/yuyarisun.php?id=catalogo-dibujo2>. Accessed 28 January, 2008.



Figure 14. *Huellas de alma*  
by Rosario Laurente Chayhuayo (Huancavelica)

Youth had a unique experience in the internal conflict. SL would “recruit” youth from communities, and if no volunteers came forward, they would intimidate them into joining. But youth were also subject to targeting by the military who held them in suspicion for being *senderistas* or at least sympathetic to SL. Official suspicion was cast on the student bodies of universities.<sup>63</sup> During the internal conflict, students could be rounded up and carted off to prison for no more reason than attending

<sup>63</sup> Universities enrollment boomed in the decades preceding the war. The Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga (UNSCH) grew from 228 students in 1959 to over 6,000 by 1980. On the role of politicization in UNSCH and SL, see CVR, *Ayacucho, El Informe Final 1980-2000*, 64-69.

class, or having suspicious reading materials.<sup>64</sup> Some youth never returned.<sup>65</sup> For instance, in the *historieta* “Un día cualquiera de 1990” (“Any Day in 1990”), by Paul Silvera Cuki of Huamanga, an undergraduate student asks where his classmates have gone. <sup>66</sup> Neighbors tell him that they were seized for being “terrucos” (“terrorists”). The protagonist asks himself how this could be when they are such good guys.



Figure 15. *Un día cualquiera de 1990* by Paul Silvera Cuki (Huamanga, Ayacucho)

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, the *historieta* “Sin título” in Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (2004), 97-99.

<sup>65</sup> One of the two cases of human rights violations for which Alberto Fujimori is presently being judged is the disappearance and death of nine students and one professor taken from Lima’s La Cantuta University in 1992.

<sup>66</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (2004), 96.

*Depicting Local Memories to a National Audience*

Certain visualized memories recur throughout the Yuyarisun works providing a pool of common symbols and referents. Many works show animals, birds, religious symbols, skulls and bones. Paintings of identity cards and passport-sized photos represent the disappeared.

These common symbols and referents mostly testify to human rights violations. They illustrate two agents of violence: the armed forces and Shining Path. Though some works show communities caught between two fires, such as the work entitled “Entre dos fuegos” (“Crossfire”), for the most part these works depict alone either the military or SL. It is noteworthy that participants made severe abuses by the armed forces the subject of their submission in the first *Rescate por la memoria* contest rather than those committed by Shining Path.<sup>67</sup> Of the 44 drawings and paintings in the Ayacucho 2003 contest, 32 depict massacres, torture, battles, or other human rights violations. Of these, 20 entries testify to abuses by the armed forces, five to SL violence, six to both agents, and one to *ronderos* (local defense groups). The remaining drawings are general scenes of suffering and community. The emphasis on the human rights abuses committed by the “forces of order” (a much-used euphemism for the military, navy, and police) stands in contrast to the findings of CVR. The CVR accorded 54% of cases ending in death or disappearance to Shining Path. The armed forces and police were found responsible for 35.6%.<sup>68</sup>

Why Yuyarisun participants would choose to depict more scenes of violence by state agents over SL is complicated, allowing for many possible interpretations. Maybe contest participants saw the Yuyarisun consortium and judges as agents that could transmit their grievances to the state. Participants may have considered the audience (including fellow community members) as more likely to hold the military accountable for their acts than trying to bring elusive SL to account. Perhaps the abuses at the hands of the armed forces remained sharper in their minds than those

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<sup>67</sup> Ramón Pajuelo similarly notes his surprise of the stronger presence of images showing counterinsurgent forces over Shining Path or other agents of violence in the National Contests. Of the 34 images he analyzed, the majority fell into the category “Military Incursion.” “Miradas del horror,” 94.

<sup>68</sup> *Informe Final*, Tomo II, “Los actores del conflicto,” [www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index.php](http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index.php)

committed by Shining Path. Or perhaps the violence committed by the state seemed a greater injustice since the armed forces were supposed to protect citizens rather than harm them. By documenting and denouncing state violence, the participants present the world upside down, where citizens are the victims of state repression.<sup>69</sup> The brutality of armed forces made them like Shining Path. Thus, in one *dibujo pintado*, a dark-hooded *Sinchi* soldier holds a *sendero* flag and shouts out “viva la patria, carajo” (“Long live the country, dammit”).<sup>70</sup> Such images of state violence challenge official discourses about the armed forces as heroic yet tarnished by some bad elements who had committed individual excesses.<sup>71</sup>



Figure 16. *Sin título*  
by Fortunata Yance Flores (Santillana, Huanta)

<sup>69</sup> The Yuyarisun contests in Ayacucho and Huancavelica differ from the the Second Homage to the Victims and Heroes in Sacsamarca (Ayacucho) where participants were asked to depict and reflect specifically upon the community’s victorious battle against SL in May 1983. Interestingly, as Ricardo Caro, a judge in the song competition, notes that though the police helped to route SL from Sacsamarca (and one policeman died along with 15 Sacsamarca community members), the police presence is noticeably underrepresented (if not entirely absent) in the paintings. Ricardo Caro, “Los caminos de la conmemoración: Sacsamarca, 2003-2007,” unpublished paper.

<sup>70</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria*, (2004), 38.

<sup>71</sup> *Informe Final*, “Conclusiones generales,” [www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/conclusiones.php](http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/conclusiones.php). Milton, “At the Edge of the Peruvian Truth Commission,” 11.

Another possible explanation as to why more of the visual entries portray state rather than SL violence lies in the category of “victim”—a category made all the more necessary to define since the subsequent implementation of an advisory committee for reparations in 2007. Participants may have interpreted who are “acceptable victims,” that is, victims worthy of sympathy (and perhaps recognition and reparations) in national and NGO discourse in a particular way. In post-Shining Path Peru, there is still little room for a “victim” who might have sympathized or engaged with Shining Path at one point or may have committed acts of violence against their own community members.<sup>72</sup> It is the trope of the “comunidad asaltada,” a passive community struck by Shining Path or by state agents, that is the strongest victim trope.

The entries also express to an extent gendered differences of the armed conflict. One of the “truths” of the violence upon which the CVR and art converge is the gendered experience of the violence. Men and women were affected differently by the violence: over 75% of the victims were men over 15 years of age (most between the ages of 20 and 49) and were local leaders targeted by Sendero Luminoso or “disappeared” by the military; most women who died were the victims of indiscriminate violence and massacres leveled against the communities. Because of their gender, women were subjected to rape and forced domestic duties (such as cooking and tending to injured members of the armed opposition and the military).<sup>73</sup> Sexual violence by the armed forces went underreported to the Comisión de la Verdad, a taboo truth made explicit in several of the entries to the *Rescate por la memoria* contest. But *Rescate por la memoria*

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<sup>72</sup> Kimberly Theidon recounts a heart-wrenching story of the “widow in the cave,” about a woman who witnessed her neighbors kill her husband. Out of fear for herself and children, she retreated to a cave. Later, when she wished to publicly recount her experience to NGO representatives, male community members quickly silenced her as not knowing about what she was talking. Theidon recounts some of this widow’s experience in *Entre prójimos*, 65. This story not only highlights who are “permitted victims” within communities, but also the gendered dynamics of who is allowed to tell local truths. I thank Steve Stern for sharing this idea of the “permitted victim.”

<sup>73</sup> Amnesty International, *Peru: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 17-20 and *Informe final*, Tomo VIII, 2.1, “Violencia y desigualdad de género,” [www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index.php](http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index.php)

submissions also demonstrate that women were not passive victims alone: women participated in Shining Path membership and also in the organization of communities against violence. They searched for their disappeared relatives and cared for their surviving families.

Gendered differences are evident in the choice of contest categories. Interestingly, while women only made up a quarter of the participants in the original *Rescate por memoria* contest in the province of Ayacucho (2003), they accounted for nearly half of the entries in the song category and many also submitted pieces of poetry, perhaps reflecting the strong oral and lyrical tradition of the region.<sup>74</sup> The following year, poetry accounted for more than a third of women's entries (36%) in urban Ayacucho where women made up a fifth of the participants. In Huancavelica, poetry accounted for just under a third of the entries by women, who represented a quarter of the participants.<sup>75</sup> In all three contests, men disproportionately outnumbered women in the "narration" category.

What is perhaps most striking in the Yuyarisun contests is the near absence of the theme of reconciliation. In the original contest in Ayacucho, only three works make an explicit overture to reconciliation, the winning entry [Fig. 2], a similar entry by most likely a relative [Fig. 3], and a pencil and paper drawing with the title "Verdad, justicia, reparación y reconciliación" ("Truth, Justice, Reparation, Reconciliation").<sup>76</sup> One other submission has a dove of peace in the center entitled "Yuraq urpicha" ("Little White Dove").<sup>77</sup> The following contest in Huancavelica a year after the CVR is perhaps more pessimistic about the chances of reconciliation. Not a single work raised the possibility. One painting repeats the message of remembering, "Recordando para no volver a vivirlo" ("Remembering So As Not to Live It Again") where a woman, with a young child in her arms, is surrounded by her memories of suffering which stand in stark contrast to

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<sup>74</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria*, (2004), 7.

<sup>75</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria, Ayacucho* (2005), s/n. Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria, Huancavelica* (2005), s/n.

<sup>76</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria* (2004), 35. In the section *historietas*, the submission by Rubén Gómez Carrasco, "Antes...después" portrays a very optimistic happy present. Ibid., 101.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 22. <http://yuyarisun.rcp.net.pe/yuyarisun.php?id=catalogo-dibujo2>. Accessed January 29, 2008.

that of her daughter who was born after the war and thus thinks only of crops and school.<sup>78</sup>



Figure 17. *Verdad, justicia, reparación y reconciliación* by Gabriela Amorín Martínez (Huamanga)

One painting describes moving on, not because of having reached a kind of reconciliation, but by growing crops on their dead, “Sembrando sobre nuestros muertos” (“Planting Seeds on Our Dead”).<sup>79</sup> One entry rejects the possibility of repair. The work entitled “Desgarros irreparables” (“Irreparable Tears”) shows a man with a tears in his eyes (perhaps a self portrait) a weeping woman, a coffin, and MRTA initials.<sup>80</sup> The submission “Huérfano de Dios y entenado del Diablo” (“Orphan of God, Stepson of the Devil”) by a possible family member is very similar.<sup>81</sup> It shows the same

<sup>78</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria, Huancavelica* (2005), 12.

<sup>79</sup> Colectivo Yuyarisun, *Rescate por la memoria, Huancavelica* (2005), 25. The Yuyarisun website provides a different title for this work, “El Agricultor.” Félix Chocce Belito also entered a *historieta* “Mi familia” and a poem “Mi familia y mi hogar.”

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 28. A description accompanies the internet version. I assume that the artist included this description in the original: “Expresa el Perú desgarrado ante la pérdida de un ser querido, muerto injustamente en la guerra del MRTA, Sendero y el Ejercito, también expresa el dolor y llanto de una madre y un niño campesino.” <http://yuyarisun.rcp.net.pe/yuyarisun.php?id=catalogo-dibujo2>. Accessed January 29, 2008.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

weeping woman in the bottom right. But in this painting the artist has included rape, torture, and executions by the armed forces.



Figure 18. *Yuraq urpicha*  
by Silvestre Pacheco Arce (Vinchos)

In the background are the electric towers that provide electricity to Lima, targeted by SL. Graffiti of MRTA and SL are painted on the walls. In the bottom left, sharing the foreground with the weeping woman, is a small malnourished boy with an amputated leg (a self portrait?). Over him is draped a torn Peruvian flag with the inscription “Forjemos un Perú de paz sin violencia” (“Let’s Build a Peru of Peace and Without Violence”) a call for peace, but not necessarily reconciliation.



Figure 19. *Recordando para no volver a vivirlo*  
by Zoraya Zevallos Delgado (Lima)



Figure 20. *Sembrando sobre nuestros muertos* by Félix Chocce Belito (Parco Alto, Achonga)



Figure 21. *Desgarros irreparables* by Zósimo Montañéz Ángeles (Lima)



Figure 22. *Huérfano de Dios y entonado del diablo* by Edwin Montañez Ángeles (Lima)

The dissonance between local memories and official narratives is apparent in communities' frustration over the continued experience of marginalization and stymied hopes for developmental aid, and in the rhetorical aim of reconciliation espoused at the national level. This dissonance is also played out with similar resonance in the different meanings attributed to the symbols and images portrayed in the Yuyarisun visual entries. While the symbols and referents in these works are emblematic—that is, representative and recognizable—at the level of the community, they may take on the quality of “lore” at the national level, something that by-standers have heard about, but do not necessarily believe. These concepts of “emblematic” memories and “lore,” as coined by Steve Stern, refer to specific memory struggles in post-Pinochet Chile.<sup>82</sup> They are useful, however, for considering battles over Peru’s recent past. A dramatic example of such a memory struggle is the massacre of 123 men, women, and children who had taken refuge in the military base at Putis only to be murdered by their hosts in December 1984 shortly after their arrival. Though depicted in the Yuyarisun contest and attested to at length

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<sup>82</sup> Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile*.

in the CVR *Final Report*, this massacre did not gain national recognition until the recent exhumation of mass graves in May and June, 2008. Now Putis has become an emblematic case of the internal war, “showing a reality beyond that which one [untouched by the war had] imagined.”<sup>83</sup>

### *Concluding Thoughts*

Many of the memories rendered recur throughout the three Yuyarisun contests. They recount childhood and adolescent experiences and the way that participants survived the internal armed conflict. The participants demand recognition and alleviation of ongoing hardship. These artistic responses to mass atrocity explore the possibilities of provocation and disturbance, and they denounce human rights abuses and injustices. By way of visual images, participants give their testimony and present versions of “truth” to the viewer.

Where these memories fit into a national narrative of the years of violence is unclear. The repetition of themes in these works speaks of common experiences and collective memories. They do not reveal “secrets,” an unfortunate characteristic attributed by some researchers to *testimonio*. They are known experiences. Yet these artworks and the memories that they represent have not contributed to a sustained national discourse. This may reflect the lack of a national narrative of the war years. The Yuyarisun memories are held by individuals, communities, NGOs, and the CVR. Even though they present images of truth that complement other truths in circulation about the years of violence, like those published in the CVR *Informe final*, they continue to be marginalized and pushed to the edges of public discussion. It is not that they are forgotten. Rather, they face indifference. In the present political atmosphere of governmental and elite ignoring the internal conflict, individual and collective memories remain loose, scattered, without large-scale resonance. While the images of memories portrayed in these artworks might be “emblematic” at the level of the community, they are “lore” at the level of national discourse. Human rights groups continue to struggle to keep the internal war a subject of

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<sup>83</sup> Isaías Rojas, “Para comprender Putis y Cabbitos: Sueño con serpientes,” *Ideele*, 187 (2008), 77.

public discussion, against at times fierce opposition.<sup>84</sup> These artworks challenge indifference. They acknowledge the humanity of the artists and their communities, and denounce the utter wrongness of the violence committed. They act as a bridge between the past and the present, hopefully one day contributing to the creation of inclusive national narratives of the war years.

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<sup>84</sup> For a discussion and examples of opposition to human rights narratives, see Cynthia Milton, "Public Spaces for the Discussion of Past Violence: the Case of Peru," *Antípoda. Revista de Antropología y Arqueología* (julio-diciembre 2007), 143-68.