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‘The Eye that Cries’: The Politics of Representing Victims in Contemporary Peru

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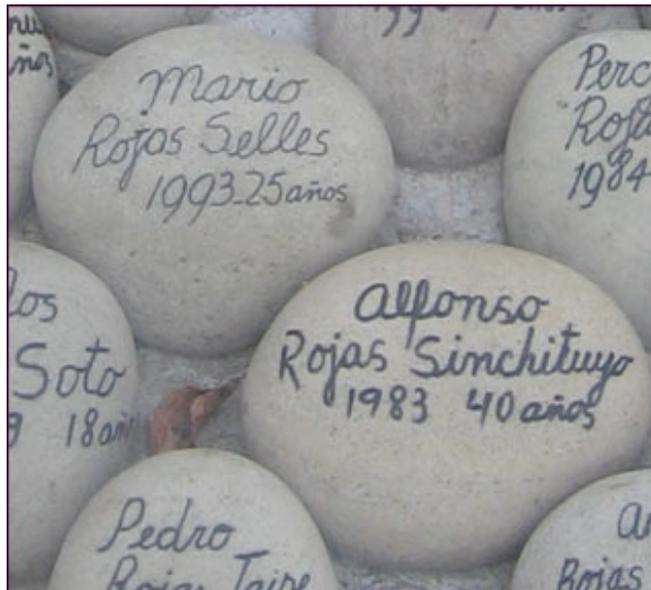
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Memorial Conflicts

In November 2006, judges of the Costa Rica-based Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a major ruling against the Peruvian government. The case centered on the 1992 military raid of Lima’s high security Miguel Castro Castro penitentiary, an attack that took place under the Alberto Fujimori government (1990-2000). The attack targeted Cell Block 1A, housing close to 100 of the jail’s female inmates. Peruvian military, police and security forces sprayed the area with bullets, threw tear gas into the compound, and bombed and dynamited the cells. Over the

¹ The author wishes to thank many who contributed to her learning and reflections regarding *El Ojo que Lloro* and the Peruvian context, particularly Lika Mutal, Rosario Narváez, Cynthia Sanborn, Kimberly Theidon, Renzo Aroni Sulca, Carlos Iván Degregori, and many Peruvians who generously shared their time with her in Lima and Ayacucho. She also appreciates the feedback on this article from Ricardo Sánchez, Light Carruyo, Himadeep Muppidi, Jenny Edkins, Elizabeth Jelín and the Núcleo de la Memoria of IDES in Buenos Aires, Felipe Agüero, Marcela Ríos, and a seminar of FLACSO-Chile, and the two anonymous readers. The Jane Rosenthal Heimerdinger Fund of Vassar College provided funds for this research.

course of four days, security personnel killed forty-one prisoners. Dozens of visiting family members were also subjected to the tear gas and bombings. Surviving former prisoners, including several women who were pregnant at the time of the attack, testified that they were brutally beaten and tortured.²



² Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Caso del Penal Miguel Castro Castro vs. Perú, Sentencia de 25 de Noviembre, 2006.

The Inter-American Court determined that the Peruvian government should pay the families of the dead prisoners and the tortured survivors approximately twenty million dollars in damages. The Court ordered the state to assume responsibility for the ongoing counseling many survivors sought for their traumatic experiences, as well as for the burial expenses and many legal, transportation and other costs incurred by the families. And in an unusual move, the Court also specified that the Peruvian government should add the names of the forty-one dead to the approximately 32,000 Peruvians commemorated in “The Eye that Cries,” a Lima memorial to victims of the political violence that wracked the country through the late twentieth century.³

The dead prisoners were organizers and militants of *Sendero Luminoso*, or the Shining Path, Peru’s notorious guerrilla movement. *Senderistas* waged armed conflict from the early 1980s until the mid-1990s. By then, the government had captured and jailed much of *Sendero*’s top leadership. The conflict claimed almost 70,000 lives and destroyed and displaced entire communities. Both *Senderistas* and the army conducted massacres. Peru’s 2003 official truth commission report estimated that the *Sendero* insurgents inflicted more than half the number of casualties.

Many Peruvians today consider those whom the government forces killed in Castro Castro to be terrorists responsible for ruthless killing and fear. As part of their assault on the Peruvian state throughout the 1980s and 1990s conflict, *Sendero* militants targeted popular local leaders and grassroots organizers who resisted their objectives. The insurgents used brutal tactics against a vast range of the citizenry. They tortured and executed their enemies in front of their children. *Senderistas* virtually enslaved remote indigenous communities in Peru’s northern Amazon. Peruvian politicians charged that the Inter-American Court could not somehow equate the *Sendero* militants’ deaths with those of tens of thousands of innocent victims, even if the government had violated human rights laws. To protest the ruling, Peruvian officials and others, including the well-organized Association of Families of the Victims of Terrorism, called for the Peruvian government to resign from the Court.

³ *Ibid.*, 149.

Yet in an ironic twist, Peruvians would soon discover that among those whose names were inscribed in “The Eye that Cries” memorial sculpture, several, if not all, of the dead *Senderistas* were already represented there. The sculptor intended the memorial to commemorate *all* the victims of the violence, and she reproduced all the names from the lists of tens of thousands of deaths and disappearances provided by the government truth commission. Dozens of artists, human rights activists, religious, and others had collectively participated in inscribing the names, dates, and years of births and deaths on the stones that comprise the monument.

Until the Inter-American Court ruling, the term “victim,” in relation to the “Eye that Cries” memorial, conveyed a generic quality, a remote, passive, depoliticized character. The ruling laid bare that the victims of the violence represented by the memorial included combatants, sympathizers, and resisters, as well as men, women and children in a time of terror. The victims included those assassinated in extrajudicial killings while under arrest, those who had been formally charged as terrorists, as well as those awaiting sentencing.

The revelation that the dead *Sendero* militants were inscribed at the site led to demands for the removal of the names, and among some sectors, for the demolition of the memorial altogether. Reversing an agreement from a year before under a previous local administration, municipal authorities of Jesús María, the middle class neighborhood in which the memorial stands, joined the call to remove the names.⁴ On January 6, 2007, Jesús María’s municipal council unanimously passed a resolution demanding that the Peruvian government order the removal of the names and re-direct funds away from plans for a memorial park that includes “The Eye that Cries,” toward children’s playgrounds instead.⁵ Some members of the press dubbed the memorial, “The Monument to Terrorism.”⁶

⁴ “Piden a PCM retiro inmediato de nombre de terroristas en monumento ‘El ojo que llora,’” CPN Radio, January 16, 2007, accessed through “NotiAprodeh,” carlosq@aprodeh.org.pe.

⁵ Municipalidad de Jesús María, Acuerdo de Consejo Número 010-2007/MDJM, January 16, 2007.

⁶ Mario Vargas Llosa, “El ojo que llora,” *El País.com*, January 14, 2007.

Human rights groups and prominent cultural and political figures, including most visibly the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, mobilized to defend “The Eye that Cries.” In an opinion editorial published in Spain’s national daily *El País* and subsequently carried in newspapers throughout Latin America, Vargas Llosa argued that the memorial was a beautiful, arresting sculpture that powerfully evoked the suffering of all Peruvians who continue to struggle through painful reconciliation in the wake of the terrorism and violence. Moreover, as an ardent defender of private and intellectual property rights, Vargas Llosa argued that because the memorial was a private effort erected with private funds, only the sculptor herself should have control over the aesthetics of the memorial.⁷ Vargas Llosa suggested that the sculptor consider turning over the stones of the Shining Path dead.⁸

On January 21, 2007, human rights activists and relatives of victims of the violence, including delegations from highland areas where the vast majority of the violence took place, marched in defense of the memorial. They carried signs with calls for reconciliation, as well as photographs of their dead and disappeared family members.⁹ Marchers included peasants from Ayacucho, the center of the worst conflict and a former *Sendero* stronghold. Some of the peasant marchers had served several months in prison and had been recently released after the government exonerated them from charges they were terrorists.¹⁰ For these many and varied defenders of the memorial, “The Eye that Cries” had assumed significant personal, moral and political meaning.

Ironically, the idea for the Court’s sentencing regarding adding the names to “The Eye that Cries” memorial seems to have come from the Peruvian government itself, then under the administration of Alejandro Toledo (2001-06). Back in June 2006, when the Peruvian state presented its version of Castro Castro before an arm of the Inter-American Court in El Salvador, the government acknowledged “partial responsibility” for human

⁷ Mario Vargas Llosa, “El ojo que llora,” *El País.com*, January 14, 2007.

⁸ “Entrevista Lika Mutal: No es un homenaje a los terroristas,” *La República*, January 18, 2007.

⁹ “Marchan en defensa de El ojo que llora,” *La Primera*, January 22, 2007, accessed through “InfoAprodeh,” carlosq@up.edu.pe.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

rights violations.¹¹ The government also responded to an earlier suggestion by the Court that in addition to a public apology to be printed in a national newspaper, which the State accepted, a memorial plaque in memory of those killed be placed at Castro Castro prison. Over the past several years, the Inter-American Court has increasingly recommended a range of symbolic reparations, including plaques and commemorations.

According to testimony submitted to the Inter-American Court by the Peruvian government, Peru opposed “the symbolic measure of placing a commemorative plaque in the Castro Castro prison, due to the fact that *there already exists a monument to remember all the victims of the armed conflict* and given that the [Castro Castro] prison is a center that currently functions with the presence of organized detainees [who are] militants of the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path, and a measure of this type would not be favorable to the prison’s internal security nor to measures aimed at Peruvian reconciliation” [emphasis added].¹² Apparently, then, in order *not* to rock the boat, the Inter-American Court heeded Peru’s concerns regarding symbolic reparations.¹³ Negotiating between state and inter-state bodies over symbolic expressions of the violence produced an unanticipated outcome, an unraveling.

What, then, are the politics of establishing a memorial to victims of a conflict when there are many layers and sites of conflict over time, and many who are implicated in and by terror? How do we define victims and perpetrators? International human rights law defines those killed extrajudicially, including convicted criminals, as victims. The majority of Peruvians view *Senderistas* as terrorists. Conscripted soldiers tortured, raped, and killed and were killed. Indigenous youth as young as nine or ten both willingly joined and were forcibly recruited into *Sendero Luminoso*. Communal civilian patrols beat twelve-year-old *Sendero* suspects to death.

¹¹ Transcript, Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Caso del Penal Miguel Castro Castro vs. Perú, Sentencia de 25 de noviembre de 2006, p. 19. Recently the government official representing Peru before the Court, Oscar Manuel Ayzanoa Vigil, was dismissed, due allegedly to this controversy.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹³ This point was later affirmed by Douglass Cassel, professor of human rights law at the University of Notre Dame and an attorney representing 200 of the 400 or more plaintiffs in the Castro Castro case. Poughkeepsie, New York, February 18, 2007.

Judging who is a victim can constitute a complicated political as well as moral project.

"The Eye that Cries" exposes a fraught, uneasy politics in Peru regarding the reaches and limits of understanding the trauma of "the other." The vast majority of those who lived in terror and with terror were indigenous peasants of the Peruvian highlands, physically and socially quite distanced from the dominant Peruvian metropolis of Lima. In many cases, violence emanating from both the military and *Sendero* destroyed collective organization, tore families apart, and left communities of widows and orphans. When individuals and families displaced by the violence in the Andes descended to Lima, they were often viewed with suspicion and fear. Drawing from both eastern and western philosophy and spirituality, "The Eye that Cries" seeks compassion for the descendants of those who are foundational to Peruvian identity yet who are structurally marginalized from power.

Finally, where does it all leave us with respect to historic and ongoing struggles for social justice? How can we work through memorials to think about distinct genealogies of trauma and violence, but also of struggle? "The Eye that Cries" borders uncomfortably upon a notion of a "post" violence and trauma. In fact, however, the families whose loved ones are represented come to the memorial to mourn but also to demand justice. Fathers of university student activists, wives of union leaders, children of soup kitchen organizers, grieve at the memorial but continue to evoke the memories of their loved ones' struggles for a just world, on university campuses, in union halls and neighborhood centers. The memories of their loved ones' politics are central to their struggle for accountability. If "memory" is indeed embedded in a memorial, then memory must be understood as the here and now.

Situating the Memorial in the Political

The Castro Castro prison massacre occurred in May 1992, two years into the presidency of Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) and a good ten years into the internal armed conflict and horrific brutality in the highlands. At that time, Fujimori enjoyed considerable popularity. He assumed the

presidential post in the wake of the disastrous first administration of Alan García (1985-1990), who exited the country amidst hyperinflation, a failure to stem *Sendero's* violent ascendancy in Lima, systematic human rights violations by both the Peruvian security forces and *Sendero*, and the president's own corruption scandals.

Fujimori immediately instituted economic "shock therapy," a major contraction of state spending that triggered greater unemployment but succeeded in halting hyperinflation. In addition, he implemented dramatic internal security measures that formalized and "nationalized" the Peruvian security forces' right to detain and hold citizens virtually at will – practices that had already been in place since 1982 in the declared emergency zone of Ayacucho, where *Sendero* was born. In September 1992, four months after the Castro Castro raid, the police captured *Sendero* leader Abimael Guzmán and several top leaders. By the mid-1990s, Peruvian military and intelligence effectively ended Shining Path's attacks in Lima as well as the insurgency's general strength in the country.

In April 1992, one month before Castro Castro, Fujimori orchestrated an *auto-golpe*, an executive shutting down of the national congress. This move quashed congressional dissent in the face of Fujimori's economic and security reforms. The *auto-golpe* would later be condemned as the first major sign of Fujimori's "quasi-dictatorship," yet at the time a clear majority of the country supported the takeover. In 1995, Fujimori restored the congress and was overwhelmingly re-elected president.

While Fujimori remained popular through the end of the 1990s, it was also beginning to surface that Fujimori's power rested in good part on a vast network of spies, bribes, and blackmail. In May 2000, Fujimori won a third term amidst charges of vote-rigging and massive demonstrations against him. Shortly thereafter he fled to Japan, as news broke that Fujimori's chief intelligence officer Vladimiro Montecinos had videotaped himself paying bribes to an array of politicians and other government officials. The interim government of Valentín Paniagua (2000-01) began a series of investigations into Fujimori's administration. In addition, the government heeded the recommendations of human rights organizations and proposed legislation establishing the Peruvian Truth and

Reconciliation Commission (CVR). Implemented by the Toledo government, the CVR was charged with investigating the mass violence of the past two decades and the corruption of Fujimori’s ten-year reign.

Dispositions toward Fujimori shifted markedly over the course of his presidency. At the time of Fujimori’s ordering of the 1992 prison raid at Castro Castro, Fujimori could viably claim he had a popular mandate to take dramatic action to defeat the Shining Path guerrillas. *Sendero* had arrived in Lima. However, since the mid-1980s, newly established human rights organizations and associations of families of victims had publicly called attention to the systematic human rights violations against peasant highland communities—the deaths, disappearances, and massive displacements that devastated highland regions throughout the 1980s, initially conducted by the military, subsequently carried out by the Shining Path as well.¹⁴ In small communities throughout the highland areas worst affected by the violence, the devastation was (and continues to be) palpable. By the late 1980s in southeast Ayacucho, entire villages were composed chiefly of widows and orphans.¹⁵ Yet despite the consistent efforts of human rights organizations to publicize and denounce the violence, it would take *Sendero Luminoso*’s gaining major ground in Lima to force what had been invisible or denied to become visible and undeniable.

Sources estimate that at its height, *Sendero* possessed some 7,000 militants. Unlike other 1980s guerrilla movements in Latin America, *Sendero* could also claim that none of its financing or military support emanated from beyond Peruvian borders, a claim the Peruvian military acknowledged. *Sendero*’s ability both to survive military attacks and to grow significantly over the 1980s raised important questions regarding the guerrilla movement’s strategic capacity, the military tactics that not only failed to end *Sendero*, but also arguably contributed to *Sendero*’s appeal,

¹⁴ For a rich, comprehensive study of the Peruvian human rights movement, see Coletta Youngers, *Violencia política y sociedad civil en el Perú: Historia de la Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2003).

¹⁵ See the case study by Renzo Salvador Aroni Sulca, “Aprendimos a convivir con los senderistas y militares’: violencia política y respuesta campesina en Huamanquiua, 1980-1993,” *Investigaciones Sociales X*, No. 17, (Lima, 2006): 259-283.

and the underlying historical-structural conditions that made a Maoist-inspired uprising against the Peruvian state not entirely surprising.

Nonetheless, most accounts portray *Sendero's* appeal in the countryside as temporary, as villagers grew wary of the guerrillas' directives and as communities were forced to endure the massive repression of the counterinsurgency. Based largely on previously existing forms of collective organization, communities formed *rondas campesinas*, or communal protection committees, to confront *Sendero*.¹⁶ Some *rondas* were created under orders of the Peruvian military, while others were more autonomous. *Ronderos* engaged in armed clashes with *Sendero* and captured and executed *Senderistas* and *Sendero* suspects, both in their own communities and in neighboring ones. *Sendero* massacred entire families associated with the *ronderos*.

In their studies of communities in Ayacucho, Peru, the region in which most confrontations between the military and the Shining Path occurred, Ponciano del Pino and Kimberly Theidon reveal a pattern of narration in indigenous accountings of the recent past they have termed "toxic memory."¹⁷ Toxic memory emerges from experiences of intense, direct violence within a community or between neighboring communities for which there is no recourse, no sense of the possibility of social justice, nor remorse from the perpetrators.

Theidon emphasizes the complexity of the legacies of violence: "The forms of violence suffered *and* practiced influence the reconstruction process when the fighting subsides. The fratricidal nature of Peru's internal armed conflict means that in any given community, ex-*Senderistas*, current sympathizers, widows, orphans, and veterans live side-by-side. This is a charged social landscape. It is a mixture of victims and perpetrators..."¹⁸

¹⁶ Carlos Iván Degregori, ed. *Las rondas campesinas y la derrota de Sendero Luminoso* (Lima: IEP, 1996). See also the Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, *Informe Final*, Vol. II, Chapter 1.5, section 2 (Lima, 2003): 439-452.

¹⁷ Ponciano del Pino and Kimberly Theidon, "Así es como vive gente: procesos deslocalizados y culturas emergentes," in Carlos Iván Degregori and Gonzalo Portocarrero, eds., *Cultura y globalización* (Lima: Red para el desarrollo de las ciencias sociales en el Perú, 1999).

¹⁸ Kimberly Theidon, "Justice in Transition: The Micropolitics of Reconciliation in Postwar Peru," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2006, 50, p. 436. Here Theidon provides a fascinating account and analysis of the ways villagers do work out the re-entry of ex-combatants into their communities.

Public memory debates in such settings are explicitly constrained by the knowledge of what violence particular agents are capable of exacting and by power dynamics that make no guarantees that such violence will be prevented in the future.

Establishing the Memorial

Fujimori fled the country in 2000. The interim government, led briefly by Valentín Paniagua (2000-01), took major steps to re-establish civil and political rights and the rule of law. Human rights groups were hopeful that a new moment had dawned, and the groups worked closely with the government for a series of measures to confront the abuses of the past twenty years and to seek redress for human rights victims. Several human rights leaders entered the new government.¹⁹

The Commission on Truth and Reconciliation (CVR) represented the major product of this collaboration between human rights groups and the governments of Paniagua and Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006). The Commission faced the formidable task of investigating a range of cases in which local and national elected politicians were implicated in repression and denial, and in which members of the indigenous communities collaborated in the killings. In addition, the commission was charged not only with investigating the abuses during the major internal armed conflict (1980-1993), but also with documenting president Fujimori’s increasing abuse of power after militarily defeating the guerrilla movement (1993-2000).

Influenced in part by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the CVR conceptualized its mission as one of promoting reconciliation through extensive documentation and analysis of two decades of violent conflict; close attention to communities that had been the most directly affected by the conflict; nationally televised public hearings (though unlike the South African process, no one could be granted amnesty in exchange for truth-telling); and detailed recommendations of

¹⁹ Coletta Youngers, “La promoción de los derechos humanos: las ongs y el estado en el Perú,” in John Crabtree, ed., *Construir instituciones: democracia, desarrollo, y desigualdad en el Perú desde 1980* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Universidad del Pacífico, e Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2006): 163-188.

the institutional reforms deemed necessary to facilitate reconciliation and prevent future conflict. Peruvian and international anthropologists played key roles in communicating the CVR's mission to indigenous villages and in gathering testimonies. To demonstrate their commitment to investigating abuses in the highlands, truth commissioners bore witness to several mass exhumations.

The CVR produced a nine-volume report that locates the emergence of *Sendero* in the late 1970s within the historical-structural inequalities of the highlands, as well as within local political power dynamics and an evolving regional educational system that produced *Sendero*-affiliated teachers in particular highland communities.²⁰ The report addressed the range of perpetrators and facilitators of violence at the national, regional and local levels, from state security forces to elected local and national officials, political parties, vigilante groups, and guerrillas – all implicated, according to the CVR, to one degree or another in the violence that had wrought the country.

Since the CVR report, human rights groups have focused on disseminating the findings and pressuring to implement the recommendations. Like many official truth commissions around the globe, the CVR recommends that as part of symbolic politics toward reconciliation, the government should sponsor memorials to commemorate the victims of the violence. Local and national human rights organizations have worked with local and national governments to establish memorials in communities throughout the country. And in 2004, a coalition of human rights organizations secured support from the Lima municipality of Jesús María for an “Alameda de la Memoria,” a Memory Avenue.

Municipalities of Peru function as independent legal bodies whose authorities have jurisdiction over the use of public space. Mayor Carlos Bringas, who preceded current Jesús María mayor Enrique Ocrosopoma, was a consistent supporter of human rights principles and maintained a close relationship with the national human rights organization Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH), whose offices are in the same

²⁰ Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, *Informe Final* Vol. IV, Chapter One, Section 3, 11-26 and Vol. V, Chapter Two, Section 2.1.3, (Lima, 2003): 17-19.

municipality. Local authorities and civil society groups negotiated the Alameda de la Memoria as a tract within Jesús María’s Campo de Marte, one of the central public parks of Lima. “The Eye that Cries” memorial thus represents the first seminal piece of a larger memorial project initiated by the Peruvian human rights community.

The Alameda de la Memoria was envisioned as a site for contemplation and education. Architect Luis Longhi designed a landscape of pathways and green space that brings together distinct representations of memory within the Alameda. Families who lost loved ones in the conflict find a space for mourning and reflection. The Alameda is also meant to educate visitors about the recent past and to infuse a human rights message of never again.

Lika Mutal, the internationally renowned sculptor of “The Eye that Cries” raised major funding from sources who were not known for their support for human rights initiatives. They included large Peruvian private conglomerates whose owners contributed money, engineering expertise and labor, and heavy machinery to excavate and prepare the site.²¹ When the controversy regarding the *Senderista* stones broke, they were outraged that terrorists could be represented in the memorial. One well-known industrialist who had helped fund the memorial had himself been kidnapped and held for six months underground by Peruvian guerrillas.

The Many Meanings of “The Eye that Cries”

The creator of “The Eye that Cries” memorial is Lika Mutal, a Dutch-born sculptor who has lived in Peru for forty years. When she read statements in local newspapers that claimed her monument was “an homage to terrorists,” Mutal felt she was facing “the most incredulous moment of [her] life.”²² Mutal wishes her memorial to be understood as a humanistic effort to awaken the consciences of all Peruvians to the violence

²¹ According to the sculptor Lika Mutal, the donors include: Ferreyros, S.A., Grana y Montero, Cementos Pacasmayo, Asociación Atocongo, Unicón, Química Suiza, Tekno, Firth, GTZ de Alemania, the Dutch embassy, the Municipality of Jesús María (which donated the grass for the hill), the architect Luis Longhi, Lika Mutal herself, and others. E-mail correspondence, July 27, 2007.

²² “No es un homenaje a lost terroristas,” *La República*, January 18, 2007, accessed through “InfroAprodeh” <carlosq@up.edu.pe.

and suffering of the recent past, as well as to encourage reflection regarding the relationships between painful memories and a more just, solidaristic Peru.²³ The idea for the artwork began “as a personal initiative for an interactive artwork and as a reaction to the way the CVR report was attacked by political, military, and church groups... [that] closed the door to a healing process and ignored the onset of the reconstruction of the country.”²⁴

Mutal also roots her inspiration for the memorial in her visit to the 2003 exhibit, “Yuyanapaq: To Remember,” a devastating, haunting display of 200 documentary photographs, organized by the Peruvian truth commission. The photographs provide a visual account of the gradual evolution of the conflict from the early 1980s through its escalation in the mid-1980s, to *Sendero*’s offensive in Lima that began in 1989. Several photographs capture the faces of families, despairing and uncertain, standing outside their destroyed homes. One photograph features a pair of small, weathered hands, cupped open to share a small portrait photo of a man. Other photographs show armed villagers. Another photo depicts captured *Sendero* militants training themselves in prison. One photo is of a group of men under arrest, seated in lines on the ground, with their heads bowed and their hands tied behind their backs. Like so many others who visited the exhibit, Mutal found herself both drawn into and intensely moved and saddened by the images of loss, mourning, conflict, and destruction.

After viewing “Yuyanapaq,” Mutal returned to her studio and began to work through her own coming to terms with the enormity of the trauma represented. Mutal wished to create a “work of art that would go beyond words and perhaps create an alternative space for healing and introspection which was lacking on all levels.”²⁵ To center her piece, Mutal sculpted a representation of the ancestral goddess Pachamama, Mother Earth. Mutal shaped Pachamama from an ancient, pre-Inca stone she had found on a trek in northern Peru years before, and in the stone she affixed another

²³ “Memorial ‘El Ojo que Lloro,’” APRODEH, www.aprodeh.org.pe, accessed January 26, 2007.

²⁴ E-mail correspondence between the author and Mutal, July 27, 2007.

²⁵ E-mail correspondence between Mutal and the author, July 27, 2007.

rock as an eye. A trickle of water runs continually from the rock, as an eye that cries, that mourns the violence. The stone of Pachamama conveys a maternal quality of the familiarity and ongoing duress of suffering, implicitly against a notion of a masculine inflicting of violence. The representation also projects an eternal sense of victimization, neither periodizing nor romanticizing a “pre-violence” or “pre-conflict” historical moment. Mutal represents the genealogy of the victims as long and deep.

Encircling the stone is a labyrinthine path that consists of eleven thick bands of rock. Mutal drew the labyrinth concept from the thirteenth century Chartres Cathedral labyrinth of France.²⁶ The Chartres labyrinth is meant to be walked from the outside to the center as a pilgrimage, to seek repentance, as a quest to become closer to God. For Mutal, the labyrinthine path is also a pilgrimage, in which visitors walk “in search of forgiveness, cleansing, and reconciliation within themselves and with others.”²⁷

In “The Eye that Cries,” forty-two thousand rocks, naturally worn smooth by seawater, form the bands of the labyrinth. Of these rocks, 27,000 carried the names, ages, and years of the deaths or disappearances of victims of the violence, all in alphabetical order. Approximately eighty artists, religious and spiritual activists and others participated in the initial inscribing process, which took ten months and was conducted in a range of places approximately five times a week.²⁸ It thus became a collective art work, though Mutal recounted how she alone inscribed the name of a three-year-old girl on the last rock.²⁹ Visitors are meant to follow the rock path from outside in, contemplating the inscriptions, arriving ultimately at the center stone, face to face with the sorrow of Mother Earth.

Over the past two years since the inauguration of “The Eye that Cries,” the powerful rays of the sun have erased the inscriptions. Groups of people have come to re-inscribe sections of the rocks, but the majority of the stones are now blank, including those that carried the names of the

²⁶ Lika Mutal, “Las piedras que lloran,” *Caretas*, (January 25, 2007): 41. In our interview, Mutal also referenced the Reverend Lauren Artiss’ writings on labyrinths and spirituality, including *Walking a Sacred Path*.

²⁷ Mutal, “Las piedras que lloran,” 41.

²⁸ E-mail correspondence with Mutal, July 27, 2007.

²⁹ “Conversación con Lika Mutal,”

<http://www.agenciaperu.com/cultural/portada/cvr3/mutal.html>. Accessed February 14, 2007.

Senderistas killed in Castro Castro. Torn by the controversy, Mutal now weighs, discusses, and debates in her own mind and heart and with others, how to treat those stones. She condemns the terrorism and the terrorists, uncomfortable with the idea of re-inscribing the names of the *Sendero* militants, haunted by the acts *Senderistas* committed. “Nature has taken care of their erasure here,” she said.³⁰ Yet aesthetically, philosophically and spiritually, Mutal does not want the vast number of stones to remain whitened by the sun. “I want to remember and re-inscribe the innocent victims, and I cannot see how the terrorists can lie side by side with the innocents.”³¹

Yet how can we judge? If we explore what took place within Andean highland communities during the twenty-year conflict, we find that fabrics that had held these communities together unraveled, and that inter- and intra-village tensions and disputes that had been latent before the major conflict were manipulated in violent, destructive ways. Soldiers and civilians, combatants and non-combatants committed atrocities. Mutal described how a mother of a soldier who died in the conflict approached her to ask that Mutal inscribe a stone in his memory. While the soldier had received a military burial replete with honors and decorations for his service, the mother wished to have her son commemorated among the vast range of those who died, to be represented in a distinct collective sense.³² In this space, the mother can feel the son as a victim as well as a patriot.

On the other hand, some who visit “The Eye that Cries” may very well read this mother’s son as a perpetrator. Doris Caqui, whose husband was a labor leader taken away by security forces never to be seen again, claims that “The Eye that Cries” provides a space for her to mourn because there is no other space.³³ She knows that soldiers who killed as well as grassroots leaders who were killed share this space. “The Eye that Cries must be seen as a place that unites all the families without exception!” Mrs. Caqui says emphatically. “Victims are victims, and we are not in favor of excluding anyone.”

³⁰ Author’s interview with Lika Mutal, Lima, Peru, April 27, 2007.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² “Conversación con Lika Mutal,” *op. cit.*

³³ Author’s interview with Doris Caqui, Lima, Peru, April 27, 2007.

Mr. Roca echoes this sentiment, and like Mrs. Caqui, he marched to defend the memorial. Mr. Roca’s son, a university student activist, is also a *desaparecido*, abducted by security forces. “They say that we cannot have people who are terrorists here,” said Mr. Roca, “but when the government killed them like that, they are *victims*, they are *victims*! It’s as simple as that!”³⁴

On April 27, 2007, Mr. Roca and Mrs. Caqui met me in the offices of APRODEH to share their accounts of their loved ones and to answer my questions. Mid-way through our interview, we turned to the subject of “The Eye that Cries.” “For those of us whose loved ones are *desaparecidos*, who do not even have the remains of our loved ones, this is the space where we come together to remember them, to place a candle, a photograph, a flower,” Mrs. Caqui said. Until this point in our interview, Mrs. Caqui had been stoic, and her testimonial came at a rapid, forceful pace. Here, however, she broke down. “It is extremely important,” she said, fighting to hold back her tears.

In our interview, Mrs. Caqui and Mr. Roca referenced commemorative services and vigils in communities throughout the country. “We need other Eyes that Cry in other parts of the country, so that many will become involved, as our Eye that Cries has invited people here to become involved, to think and re-think our memories,” Mrs. Caqui said. When we finished the interview, Lika Mutal was waiting to accompany me to The Eye that Cries. Mr. Roca approached Mutal, and with tears in his eyes, he quietly implored her to re-inscribe his son’s name on the stone.

As “The Eye that Cries” tensions illustrate, traumas and the memories of politics must be spoken, they cannot be avoided if we are to imagine a pluralized or democratized politics of any sort. Traumas can be represented, voiced, and acknowledged, even if listeners cannot understand. This does not mean reconciliation is viable or achievable. But there must be space for voice, many voices. Often, ordinary citizens confront the state and one another, forcing the state to negotiate representations and creating unanticipated meanings that capture something of the pain of the trauma, the trace. As in rituals echoed at

³⁴ Interview with Mr. Roca, Lima, Peru, April 27. 2007.

memorials around the world, families from many walks of life come to “The Eye that Cries” to locate the stones that represent their loved ones, and they often leave flowers and other mementos of remembrance.

Citizens can make monuments their own. This can represent a distinct kind of tension between the memorial maker and those who come to find solace in the memorial and, ultimately, to claim it. Sometimes, and often in small ways, people can interact with one another at traumatic memory sites, to try to understand or contextualize the atrocities in order to imagine a different humanity.³⁵ Mrs. Caqui described the dialogue that has begun between herself and other families of the disappeared, on the one hand, and the parents of Mariela Barreto, an intelligence agent implicated in several kidnappings, including that of Mr. Roca’s son, on the other. Barreto’s name is inscribed on a stone at The Eye that Cries.

Memorials invite a tremendous range of engagement, from the intimately private identification with the representation that may emanate from victims and their families, to the less direct, less intense but nonetheless evocative, contemplative response a memorial might catalyze for a host of publics. “The Eye that Cries” reaches for a level of affect for the many visitors who are not the violence’s direct victims.³⁶ Mutal wishes that visitors think, feel, and experience the memorial.³⁷ She hopes that they experience how “everything becomes now – no memory, only consciousness.”³⁸ For Mutal, who is influenced in part by Buddhist philosophical traditions, the process of arriving at consciousness is also about a search for compassion.

Art that is too representative of the trauma risks laying a false claim to an experience “owned” by others. Effective trauma art is that which moves us to react and to feel, but perhaps in a less immediate, more contemplative way that recognizes our distance, that acknowledges that which we cannot really know or understand. Artistic representations of

³⁵ See Jenny Edkins, “Concentration camp memorials and museums: Dachau and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum,” in her *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 111-174.

³⁶ Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 2.

³⁷ Author’s interview, April 27, 2007.

³⁸ Author’s interview, April 27, 2007.

trauma need to be somewhat abstracted in order to confront the idea of, “It hurts. I can’t feel anything.”³⁹ Mutal’s visual representation of “The Eye that Cries” steers clear of “literal memory,” which may fold victims into themselves, as viewers shun the representations.⁴⁰ Art of trauma has to find an in-between.

Art historian Jill Bennett argues for art that evokes *empathic unsettlement*, that is, “to describe the aesthetic experience of simultaneously *feeling for* another and becoming aware of a distinction between one’s own perceptions and the experience of the other.”⁴¹ In a similar vein, Geoffrey Hartman, creator of the Holocaust testimonial collection at Yale University, warns that empathy is an indispensable response but one that must be checked: “Art expands the sympathetic imagination while teaching us about the limits of sympathy.”⁴²

Memorializing might therefore strive for a conjunction of affect and awareness or consciousness. Empathy should be a mode of seeing, yet not an over-identifying. Through artistic representations of trauma, Bennett is seeking “empathy not grounded in affinity (feeling for another insofar as we can imagine being that other) but on a feeling for another that entails an encounter with something irreducible and different, often inaccessible.”⁴³ We can explore Mutal’s subjectivity as a non-Peruvian who cannot *know*, who ultimately cannot make the monument her own, yet who can suggest through Pachamama’s eye that Mother Earth sees and, therefore, she cries.

Through the sculpting of Pachamama, Mutal found herself remembering traumatic experiences of coming face to face with violence and death as a young child in Holland during World War II. She remembered a boy being pushed by a German soldier into a truck and taken away. She remembered another boy running for his life, shot, and

³⁹ Hal Foster’s *The Return of the Real*, cited in Bennett, 5. See also Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁴⁰ For a discussion of “literal memory,” see Elizabeth Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo XXI, 2002), 59. This book has been translated as *State Repression and the Labors of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). See also Tzvetan Todorov, *Les abus de la mémoire* (Paris: Arléa, 1998).

⁴¹ In Bennett, 8.

⁴² In Bennett, 9.

⁴³ Bennett, 10.

lying in the snow. “I realized,” Mutal said, “that ‘The Eye that Cries’ was in part my search for personal redemption of my human condition.”⁴⁴

As “The Eye that Cries” demonstrates, the impact and intensity with which both the makers and the publics engage memorials can refuse neat chronologies through time. As a memorial site, “The Eye that Cries” initially received few visitors – human rights activists, families of victims, an occasional school group, and foreign tourists. The Inter-American Court decision brought unanticipated attention to the sculpture, and “The Eye that Cries” has now become a far more visible site of contestation and debate. In spite of the fact that to be able to enter the memorial requires making an appointment and being accompanied by someone from APRODEH or by the sculptor herself, more than 4,000 people have visited the site.⁴⁵

The Politics of Perpetrators, Victims and Trauma Time

Memorials must symbolize and enact traumas that suspend and transcend temporal conventions. Mutal’s representation of Pachamama locates time in an ancient and seemingly eternal place that is also very present, among the indigenous majority of Peru. Pachamama is like an historical conscience, an inescapable, powerful grounding force in the midst of trauma time. International relations scholar Jenny Edkins argues that trauma time challenges linear time, and that memorials may expose the disjuncture between an official temporal account and lived experiences. This also raises the question, how do we know when we are no longer in trauma time?

Memorials to trauma must avoid over-determining or imposing closure --a “post” to conflict. Yet does Mutal’s memorial design effectively accomplish this? What are the politics of the “post?” “The Eye that Cries”

⁴⁴ Author’s interview, April 27, 2007.

⁴⁵ Author’s interview with Mutal, April 27, 2007. According to Mutal, initially the memorial “was open only by appointment—the former municipality was supposed to be informed of the visit and APRODEH, which since its inauguration organizes the ceremonies and school visits, complied. Beyond that it was closed partly for security reasons and mainly for lack of an association and of funds for a coherent plan of operation.” The sculptor hopes (as does this author and many others) that support can be secured to provide the protection and proper context to open the memorial to the public. E-mail correspondence with Mutal, July 27, 2007.

mourns a deep, painful past. Yet representing the stones of the dead as one overwhelming mass of victims may suggest some kind of monolithic closure and, therefore, may very well border on an erasure. And can we be comfortable attributing erasure to nature, to the sun's rays? While Mutal may capture a genealogy of victims, how does she represent a genealogy of struggle, of power dynamics behind the violence? While the mass killings have stopped, the killings themselves are all too recent, and the fear and distrust generated from the two decades of conflict are quite palpable. In short, there is no "post."⁴⁶

In contrast to inter-state conflict or war, the Peruvian case is one of internal conflict, where it was hardly uncommon for citizens from the same communities to land on or take different sides. What even to label the conflict varies from one political sector to another –terrorism of *Sendero*, repression of the state, internal armed conflict, are the most common terms. And unlike South Africa or Chile, for example, Peru experienced massive, systematic human rights violations under three democratically elected presidents from distinct political parties and alliances. No real regime change took place to end the major violence.

How to remember those who were brutalized is enormously complicated. In the discourse about victims of political violence, there is often a denial of agency or resistance rather than a recognition and respect for the fact that the brutalized were also social, political human beings. In the Peruvian highlands, local and regional indigenous communities organized self-defense committees –at times in collaboration with state security forces, but not always– who fought the Shining Path and killed suspected *Sendero* militants and collaborators. Other indigenous individuals, families and groups joined the Shining Path. Victims, perpetrators, resisters, and survivors come from many sides of the conflict and can often be read as all of the above and more.

⁴⁶ Mutal responded to my critique: "The post is in the people," she said. "We are all guilty, either by action or omission." Author's interview, Lima, Peru, April 27, 2007.

Instrumentalizing Victims

The process of establishing a memorial's design invites political and social actors' instrumentalizing memories toward particular political ends. Recently in countries like Argentina and Chile, for example, the political leadership has come to recognize that past traumas must be incorporated or integrated into a national identity that neither denies nor represses the trauma. For better and for worse, politicians across the spectrum have come to accept the inevitability of the continued unearthing of traumatic pasts, and they view it as politically strategic to take the offensive when it comes to symbolic representations of those pasts.

In an ongoing attempt to defend and bolster himself and curry favor with the Peruvian military and pro-Fujimori politicians, current Peruvian president Alan García continues to resurrect the all-too-recent memory of the militarily-defeated Shining Path as a haunting presence and ongoing threat. During his first term in office (1985-1990), García gave the military virtually unchecked authority to wage a counterinsurgency campaign against *Sendero*. In a rather miraculous comeback from his presidential record of gross economic and security mismanagement and corruption, García returned to the country after several years to reclaim his party's mantel and, ultimately, the presidency. He has asserted that to hold the armed forces accountable for their counterinsurgency tactics "plays into the hands" of the Shining Path.⁴⁷ García charged that *Sendero* might have been "militarily but not politically defeated and therefore looks for ruses to present itself as a victim."⁴⁸ This assertion exacerbates the anxieties that are clearly felt in many of the indigenous communities most hit by the violence of the 1980s.

Both Peruvian human rights groups and the Inter-American Court continue to press that García himself be held accountable for massive abuses under his stewardship, including the deaths of 118 inmates during a 1986 military action to re-assume authority after a prison revolt at *El Frontón* prison. While the ex-commander in chief of the armed forces

⁴⁷ Oscar Valderrama López, "Alan García: 'Al acusar a FFAA se cae en juego del senderismo,'" *La Razón* July 15, 2005. Posted on Asociación Pro-Derechos Humanos (APRODEH) website: http://www.aprodeh.org.pe/servicio/c_infoaprodeh.htm. Accessed July 15, 2005.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

testified that he received orders from García to attack the prison, the former president has yet to be prosecuted. Ayacucho special prosecutor Cristina Olazábal sought prosecution of García for the assassination of sixty-nine peasants in Accomarca, but Olazábal was accused of political motives for seeking the former president's prosecution and she was removed.

In separate cases before the Inter-American Court, the Court has weighed in against both Fujimori and García. In the mid-1990s, in the wake of an Inter-American Court ruling against him, Fujimori announced Peru's resignation from the Court. García has considered similar action, even though the Castro Castro prison case is another case implicating Fujimori.

Concluding Reflections

As the tension between the Peruvian state and the Inter-American Court decision attests, memorial forms, stagings, and sites are vessels for the multiplicity of representations, where individual and collective subjectivity can enter into dialogue with Otherness to help process and represent meaning. While the form of the memorial can provoke or invite, the actual taking up of the invitation requires human agency manifested in various and typically unforeseen ways. Distinct collectivities humanize and re-politicize the victims, at points producing a polarizing, angry, and very much alive conversation about who is a victim, who is a perpetrator. In an accordion-like fashion, the conversations spiral out from the memorial site, to El Salvador, Costa Rica, Spain, the US, and then fold back in to the body politic of Jesus María, Lima, Peru. Since its inauguration in 2003, the sculpture has taken on different meanings in distinct global-local political contexts. Through the memorial, we can read a broad and deep politics.

As Cathy Caruth has suggested, there is an undeniable literality to many memories of traumatic experiences.⁴⁹ Rather than exorcising their traumatic experiences, survivors must often find ways of integrating these

⁴⁹ Cathy Caruth, "Trauma and Experience: Introduction," in Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

experiences into their identities.⁵⁰ Finding points of encounter that allow individual and collective, victim and viewer “working through” thus becomes a central challenge.

Representations of what took place must strive for empathy, even if what in fact occurs through representations is the exposure of profound difference. Empathy can be understood as a relation among human beings that may, in fact, question the distance between those who were held and those who could have been held, those who killed and those who could have killed. This raises one of the essential dimensions of memorials: public recognition of the need for an environment in which to facilitate or contribute to an empathetic process.

APRODEH human rights advocate Rosario Narváez has organized a range of groups to come to “The Eye that Cries” to re-inscribe names. “Senior citizens are the best,” Narváez recalls, “but so, too, are the young people, or people who come in from the provinces to re-inscribe the names on the stones.”⁵¹ “We re-inscribe silently, and we find ourselves wondering, ‘Who was this person, who died in such-and-such-a-year?’ It’s hard work but it’s cathartic at the same time, claiming this space, mainly writing in silence.”⁵²

Within the Alameda, “The Eye that Cries” is designed to be joined by two other memorials. The first is the photographic exhibit that inspired Mutal’s piece, “Yuyanapaq: To Remember,” which is envisioned to be housed permanently at the Alameda some years from now. The second is the *Quipu* de la Memoria. Human rights groups retrieved the iconography of the Incas by creating a great *quipu*, a knotted rope in which each knot recorded a lost loved one. In 2005, four *chasquis*, who symbolized traditional Inca runners, carried the *quipu* throughout the Peruvian highlands to allow communities to add colorful knots in civic-religious ceremonies of mourning and remembrance. A coalition of human rights organizations continues to strategize to defend “The Eye that Cries” and to

⁵⁰ See Marita Sturken, “The Remembering of Forgetting: Recovered Memory and the Question of Experience,” *Social Text*, 57 (Winter 1998): 103-125; for a more elaborated exploration of the concept of integration, see Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic, 1992), 1-47.

⁵¹ Author’s interview with Rosario Narváez, Lima, Peru, April 30, 2007.

⁵² Author’s interview, April 30, 2007.

push the Alameda forward, albeit now amidst resistant local and national administrations.

Around the world, museums and monuments themselves have become battlegrounds, as artists, designers, states and societies negotiate how to convey, or evoke, or even shock, passersby into contemplation and reaction. Monument conceptualizers have come to appreciate the unknowable dimension of just how deeply a monument will be perceived and by whom, as well as how perceptions of the monument will change over time, in distinct political-historical moments. While memorials commemorate the past, they are inevitably also understood through lenses of the present. Memorials that represent past injustices invite those who mourn and those who contemplate the injustices to question what has changed, what has not changed, and what must change.

Epilogue, October 14, 2007

In November 2005, Chilean authorities surprised Alberto Fujimori. The former president arrived in Chile after five years of exile in Japan, whose government had refused to heed Peru’s request for Fujimori’s extradition. Fujimori seemed confident that the same would be true in Chile, which was not known for extraditing former heads of state. Imagining Chile as a strategic launch pad of sorts, Fujimori had hoped to stage a political comeback in Peru, where his daughter Keiko was becoming a popular politician and his political movement had regained strength. The arrest clearly caught Fujimori off guard. Several months later, the Chileans released Fujimori from arrest but ordered that he remain in the country pending the extradition hearings.

On September 21, 2007, after almost two years of judicial proceedings and deliberation, the Chilean Supreme Court ruled that Alberto Fujimori be extradited to Peru to face criminal human rights and corruption charges. The next day, Chilean police promptly returned Fujimori to Lima. The human rights community celebrated the Chilean court’s extradition decision as an internationally precedent-setting human rights victory.

The following evening, an estimated twelve men and women armed with *combas* attacked “The Eye that Cries.” The group beat and tied up the municipal policeman guarding the memorial. The injured policeman identified the attackers as both men and women. The attackers smashed several of the stones, damaged the central stone of Pachamama, and poured neon orange paint over Pachamama and segments of the stones that form the labyrinth. They left paint cans floating in the pool of water surrounding the central stone.

While no group claimed responsibility, most suspected this was the work of Fujimori supporters angered by their leader’s arrest. Neon orange is the color of Fujimori’s political movement. Most major media and several politicians, including Keiko Fujimori, publicly denounced the violent attack on the memorial. Yet some Fujimori supporters, including former presidential candidate Martha Chávez, applauded the attack, calling the memorial “garbage” (CPN Radio, September 25, 2007). “If civic leaders and defenders of the human rights of terrorists want to place victims and victimizers together, then let them make their monuments to terrorists in their offices, but they cannot use a public park” (Ibid.)

Lika Mutal, who had been out of the country until the evening of the attack, was clearly stunned by the brutality. The attackers used a heavy hammer to attempt to destroy the eye of the central stone. Mutal felt they took “special care to cover the names of the children [with the paint], the first stones that had been recently permanently engraved rather than handwritten.” (Email correspondence with Lika Mutal, September 27, 2007). Several days after the attack, APRODEH organizers, former Peruvian Truth Commission head Salomón Lerner, family members like Mr. Roca and Mrs. Caqui, Lika Mutal and others marched to defend human rights, denounce the attack, and demand a full investigation.

The attack certainly made the point that memorial representations can be evocative, provocative, in ways that reach beyond the contemplative. “The Eye that Cries” once again returns to the public as a site of contestation, this time defended by a range of sectors that do not agree on who should be recognized as a victim, who a perpetrator, but who

nonetheless hold the memorial as a beautiful, meaningful site of remembrance. In the aftermath of the attack, Mutal offers these reflections:

Being in front of the big stone now vandalized and mutilated, one is struck by an even stronger expression of horror than the photographs of the vandalism can convey. It looks, moreover, like Pachamama is crying blood, and this calls for reflection. This wound—impossible to restore—represents the wound which in Peru throughout its history was never healed and which during the years of terrorism represents the wound we humans inflict upon life and upon each other since the beginning of our existence. Looking into the eye of the Mother which I must admit exudes a lethal beauty I become aware that—especially through personal introspection—we could and must transform this into the opposite, admitting the splendor of the creation as central to our existence and activating the gift of creativity and generosity with each other and ourselves, which life—also through us humans—offers us. If not, for what will we have lived?

(Email correspondence with Lika Mutal, September 26, 2007.)