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# The Mask and the Mirror: Facing up to the Past in Postwar Peru

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**Abstract:** In this article Theidon draws upon research conducted with communities in Ayacucho, the region of Peru that bore the greatest loss of life during the internal armed conflict of the 1980-1990s. The fratricidal nature of the conflict means that in any given community, former enemies live side by side. What is it like to live in such a context? What is it like knowing just who one lives with—and living with what oneself has done? As a way of thinking about these questions, Theidon focusses on a figure that appeared incessantly in her conversations: the masked ones. What lies behind the masks that haunt these narratives, particularly in those communities in which the “masked ones” were frequently neighbours and family members? Theidon demonstrates that talk about masks, faces and “facelessness” is talk about morality and immorality, and about the challenges of forging co-existence among intimate enemies.

**Keywords:** Peru, civil war, masking and unmasking, narratives, morality, immorality

**Résumé :** Dans cet article, Theidon rend compte de la recherche qu'elle a menée au sein des communautés d'Ayacucho, région du Pérou où les pertes en vies humaines ont été les plus élevées durant le conflit armé interne des années 1980 aux années 1990. Le caractère fratricide de ce conflit implique que, dans une communauté donnée, d'anciens ennemis doivent vivre côte à côte. Comment peut-on vivre dans un tel contexte, en sachant exactement qui nous entourent et la nature des actes que l'on a posés? Pour Theidon, une des façons de réfléchir à ces questions consiste à focaliser sur un thème qui revenait sans cesse dans ses conversations: les gens masqués. Qu'est ce qui se cache derrière les masques qui hantent ces récits, particulièrement dans les communautés où les «gens masqués» étaient fréquemment des voisins ou des membres de la famille? Theidon démontre que parler des masques, des visages et de l'absence de visage revient à parler de moralité et d'immoralité, ainsi que des difficultés émergeant d'une volonté de forger la co-existence entre des ennemis intimes.

**Mots-clés :** Pérou, conflit armé interne, masquer et démasquer, récits, moralité, immoralité

The *Senderistas* (Shining Path guerrillas) attacked at night. We'd be asleep. The smell of smoke woke us up, the roofs all in flames. Then the screaming. We'd grab our children and run toward the river. It was dark, but they wore masks. If they'd taken off those masks, we would have recognized them. They were our neighbors. *Dios Tayta*, we've seen what our neighbours can do.

—Interview, a community in the highlands of Ayacucho<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

On August 28, 2003, the Commissioners of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) submitted their Final Report to President Alejandro Toledo and the nation. After two years of work and some 17 000 testimonies, the Commissioners had completed their task of examining the causes and consequences of the internal armed conflict of the 1980s and 1990s.

Among the most striking conclusions in the Final Report is the number of fatalities—69 280 deaths, three times the number cited by human rights organizations and the government prior to the TRC—and the responsibility for these deaths. In the section of the Final Report regarding accountability, the Commissioners state that the Shining Path guerrillas (*Senderistas*) were responsible for 54% of the fatalities reported to the TRC (TRC 2003).

I would like to follow the implications of this statistic, which supports what campesinos have been telling me throughout my years of research in Ayacucho, the region of Peru that bore the greatest loss of life and infrastructure during the war. There is a lament in the communities with which I have worked: “*Jesús Cristo*, look what we've done among brothers.”<sup>2</sup> Although the *Senderista* leadership was composed of university-based provincial elites, the rank and file were peasants. Certainly I do not seek to diminish the atrocities committed by the armed forces; rather, I note the level of civilian participation in the killing. The forms of violence suffered *and* practised influ-

ence 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—and that sizeable segment of the population that blurs the dichotomy, inhabiting what Levi called the grey zone of half tints and moral complexity (Levi 1989).

What is it like to live in such a context? What is it like knowing just who one lives with, and living with what oneself has done? What are the social and psychological strategies that people use to address this reality and attempt to reconstruct social relationships?

As a way of thinking about these questions, I would like to focus on a figure that appears incessantly in my conversations with members of campesino communities in Ayacucho. I refer to the figure of the *mascarayuykuna*, the masked ones. Certainly there were masked people during the political violence; however, more than the physical presence of masked armed actors, what interests me in the insistent, reiterative symbol of the “masked ones.” What lies behind the masks that haunt these narratives, particularly in those communities in which the “masked ones” were frequently neighbours and family members?

In his study of public secrecy, Taussig asks, “[What] if the truth is not so much a secret as a *public secret*, as is the case with the most important social knowledge, *knowing what not to know?*” (1999:2). He suggests that such secrets are essential to everyday life. I believe there is a public secret at work in these communities, and the construction of anonymity and distance where neither of the two exists. It is to everyday life that I turn, convinced it is the realm in which people rebuild social relationships. As I will demonstrate, talk about masks, faces and “facelessness” is talk about morality and immorality. Local moral discourse is embodied, leading me to think in terms of a phenomenology of justice and injustice, as well as the complicated alchemy of remembering and forgetting that characterizes postwar social worlds. Indeed, morality is bound up with memory, forgetting and *remembering to forget*. In tracing a genealogy of the demoralization and “remoralization” of everyday life, I am also tracing what is at stake in forging co-existence among intimate enemies.

## Background

From 1980-1992, an internal war raged between the guerrilla group *Sendero Luminoso*, the *rondas campesinas* (armed peasant patrols) and the Peruvian armed forces. The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) began its campaign to overthrow the Peruvian

state in 1980 in a calculated attack on the Andean village of Chuschi.<sup>3</sup> Founded by Abimael Gúzman, this band of revolutionaries positioned themselves as the vanguard in a revolution to usher the nation toward an imminent communist utopia (Degregori 1990; Palmer 1994). Drawing upon Maoist theories of guerrilla warfare, they planned a top-down revolution in which *Sendero Luminoso* would mobilize the peasantry, surround the cities and strangle the urbanized coast into submission. However, the relentless march toward the future was doubly interrupted: The initial governmental response was a brutal counter-insurgency war in which “Andean peasant” became conflated with “terrorist,” and many peasants themselves rebelled *against* the revolution (Starn 1995).

While some communities remained *in situ*, many others fled the region in a mass exodus. Indeed, an estimated 600 000 people fled from the sierra, devastating over 400 campesino communities (Coronel 1995). Although the guerrilla war spread from the countryside to the capital city of Lima, it was the rural population that suffered the greatest loss of life during the internal armed conflict. As the TRC's Final Report states, 75% of the dead and disappeared spoke Quechua as their first language, and three out of every four people killed lived in a rural region (TRC 2003). An epidemiology of political violence in Peru demonstrates that death and disappearance were distributed by class, ethnicity and geography.

As late as 1991 there were concerns that *Sendero* would indeed topple the Peruvian government. However, in September 1992, the Fujimori administration located the leader of Shining Path, who was hiding in a “safe house” in Lima. The arrest of Abimael Gúzman literally decapitated the guerrilla movement; although various would-be successors have vied for power, *Sendero* now remains an isolated group pushed into the jungles of the interior. Peru is a case of a triumphant state: unlike Guatemala, for example, there were no negotiations between the government and the guerrilla because *Sendero* had been largely defeated.

The man credited with “pacifying” the country was former president Alberto Fujimori. Elected in 1990, he campaigned on a platform to end hyperinflation and defeat the two guerrilla movements that had been waging war for a decade.<sup>4</sup> In fulfilling his promises, Fujimori used Draconian measures, staging a self-coup that shut down a recalcitrant Congress, rewriting the constitution and dismantling political parties and other institutional intermediaries in the development of his self-described “direct democracy.” Popularity and a vast patronage apparatus enabled Fujimori to handily win re-election in 1995; however, his authoritarian impulses increased during his sec-

ond term. To remain in power, he removed members of the Constitutional Tribunal who blocked his illegal run for a third term and reinterpreted the constitution to allow for the perpetuation of his presidency.

Following a highly tainted presidential campaign in 2000, Fujimori finally fled the country, faxing in his resignation from Japan. The massive corruption of his two administrations had become increasingly visible. Indeed, visibility was a key component in his downfall: thousands of videotapes were discovered, showing both Fujimori and his crony, former head of internal intelligence Vladimiro Montesinos, bribing a cast of characters that ranged from congressmen to talk show hosts to body builders. It was the corruption charges that forced Fujimori from office and provided the political opening for the establishment of the TRC. Interim president Valentín Paniagua created the truth commission by executive decree in 2001; it was his successor president Alejandro Toledo who added the word “reconciliation” to the commissions’ name and mandate. That mandate was to clarify the processes, facts and responsibilities of the violence and human rights violations attributable to the terrorist organizations as well as agents of the state.

It was within the context of collaborating with the Ayacucho office of the TRC that I directed a research project on community mental health, reparations and the micropolitics of reconciliation practised at the communal and intercommunal levels (Theidon 2004). In this article, I draw upon that research, focussing on four communities located in the department of Ayacucho. These four communities, Accomarca, Cayara, Hualla and Tiquihua, were support bases for Shining Path, in some cases until the mid-1990s. While members of these communities had different degrees of commitment to *Sendero*’s revolutionary ideology—and certain individuals may well have been in outright opposition to *Sendero*—the region was one of the guerrillas’ strongholds. Importantly, many of the Shining Path leaders were *lugareños*, people from the same communities in which they were waging war.

However, this history of militancy is only narrated in hushed conversations. At the community level, there is a discursive process of “exteriorizing” *Sendero*. When people speak about the *Senderistas*, it is common to hear the rhetorical questions, “Where could they have come from?” and “Who could they have been?”

I emphasize the importance of a cultural logic of exteriority, which is also reflected in theories regarding the etiology of illness and certain strong emotions (Theidon 2002). Villagers are “grabbed” or “seized” (*qapiy*) by an external agent, and this “grabbing” results in a variety of illnesses and unpleasant emotions. For instance, several

women spoke to us about the sadness (*pena*) that follows them, looming right over their shoulders, “just waiting until I’m alone to grab me.” Similarly, angry gods (*apus*) may grab the person who carelessly walks or sits where they should not. The punishment for ignoring one’s obligations to the gods can result in *daño* or *alcanzo*, a potentially life-threatening illness. This etiology is important: the harmful agent is not located within the person; rather, the “badness” enters and grabs hold of the individual.

The theory that “bad things” are exterior to and enter the person is reflected in the forms of treatment people seek. Many healing techniques emphasize cleansing or purgation, and have as their goal the extraction of the “evil” or the illness from the person. This etiology is important for a variety of reasons, among them the tendency to insist that “bad things” in general have arrived from elsewhere and should be purged. The logic of exteriority works at both the individual and collective levels. When I reflect upon how villagers exteriorize the violence (“the violence arrived here”) and the *Senderistas* (“where could they have come from?”), it seems people also locate the causes of sociopolitical problems outside the boundaries of the community. These ideas influence the processes of reconciliation, and the emphasis on exteriorizing harmful agents has psychological consequences: it permits villagers to more slowly assimilate just whom they are living with. Within the context of dangerous intersubjective worlds, there are useful social fictions that play a role in staying the hand of vengeance, a theme I will return to later in the text.

## Genealogies

It seems that during the violence everything was solved by death. Many things happened here, killing among families. Jesus, even now I still don’t understand.

—Maurino Vega, Tiquihua, 2003

Writing about violence in the sierra is a delicate task given the long history of presenting highland peasants as the “intrinsically violent Other” of the Andes. Whether invoking the “telluric environment,” the “violent nature of the Indians” or the “archaic culture” that ostensibly characterizes highland peasants, the literature has reflected the ethnic discrimination that molds Peruvian society.<sup>5</sup>

I have been concerned with *historicizing* the violence of the 1980-1990s, exploring the changing moral codes that shaped life before, during and after the armed conflict. I have attempted to trace a genealogy of morality and of the use of violence. As people told us, since the “time of the grandparents” there have been conflicts in these com-

munities. Throughout Ayacucho, campesinos described the bloody fights or “battles” that preceded the internal armed conflict. Within and between communities, villagers would fight each other with rocks, slingshots and sticks. These “battles” tended to coincide with fiestas—and heavy drinking—and could last for several days.<sup>6</sup>

For instance, in Tiquihua and Hualla people described “las batallas de los años atrás” (“the battles of years past”). As don Máximo Quispe explained, villagers from each community would meet in a large field called Matara-pampa: “We would all go, carrying ash mixed with garlic, slingshots, rocks and sticks. With all of this we would go fight. There were injuries, broken heads, blood, but there were no deaths.”

There is a consensus that killing was not the objective of these battles. Indeed, in one community villagers recalled the year when a family exceeded the fighting norms and killed a young boy with a crushing blow to his head. The communal authorities rounded up the guilty and turned them in to the police in the nearest town.

These ritualized battles were finite in time and space and were part of maintaining the social order rather than posing a threat to it. I do not consider myself a functionalist, but the battles did afford a space for channelling and expressing accumulated envy and resentment.<sup>7</sup> I repeat that this violence was not outside the social order but rather one component in maintaining it.

Similarly, I was interested in exploring the use of lethal violence prior to the internal armed conflict. According to my oral and archival sources, killing prior to the war was quite exceptional. As Degregori insists, a leitmotif among the rural population was “punish but do not kill” (1990). Peña Jumpa confirms that the harshest punishment administered was banishment from the community and the loss of *comunero* status (1998).

However, even though killing was exceptional prior to the armed conflict, there were some cases in which the “death penalty” was applied. For example, in 1976, villagers in one community killed a family of cattle rustlers who had ignored communal authorities’ repeated warnings to cease and desist, and to move on to another zone. Following a common pattern, authorities had given the cattle rustlers three punishments and three opportunities to stop thieving before taking this fatal step. When an ex-president of the community told me about the Quispe family, he finished by shaking his head and thinking out loud: “Why didn’t they listen, being intelligent people?”

It is important to note that the decision to kill was made in communal assemblies, and the action was carried out in the name of the community. This was not mob hys-

teria, nor a personal act of revenge. Rather, punishment was a collective right and responsibility.

Thus something shifted during the war: people began killing one another, using rocks, knives and guns. Lethal violence became widespread as the local moral order deteriorated.<sup>8</sup> Campesinos have offered various explanations for the lethal violence that involved their entire communities. We were told that people were drugged when they were killing, or that the devil had taken possession of them. In other cases, people insisted the killers (always referred to in the third person) had lost their *uso de razón* (use of reason), a very important aspect of being fully human.

*Uso de razón* is a term that cuts across social fields: in the religious sense, it is the age at which a child can commit sin; in the political sense, it is related to accountability as a member of the community; in a legal sense, it refers to the capacity to discern right from wrong. Children are said to acquire the *uso de razón* around the age of six or seven; this is also the age at which children are said to remember things.

Identity is understood as fluid and mutable. Human status is achieved; thus it can be both lost and regained. Just as the *uso de razón* makes *criaturas* (infants and small children) more fully human, so does the accumulation of memory. When parents spoke to me about their children, they differentiated between the younger and older children by using *yuyaniyuq* for the older ones. *Yuyay* is Quechua for “remember,” and the older children were described as the remembering ones, in contrast to little children who are *sonsos* (witless, senseless). People with *mucha memoria* are considered better people, more intelligent—and they have more *conciencia*.

The question of conscience and culpability figures into national legal standards as well. In the *Diccionario para Juristas*, *uso de razón* is defined as: “possession of natural discernment that is acquired passing through early childhood; the time during which discernment is discovered or begins to be recognized in the acts of the child or individual” (Palomar 2001: 1597). *Discernimiento* refers to the capacity to judge, to choose, to distinguish. Thus *uso de razón* implies volition, memory and the capacity to judge right from wrong. This is a central phase in becoming a moral person and entering communal life as an accountable member of the collective. To lose one’s *uso de razón* implies that one cannot be held accountable for one’s actions, and neither is one fully human without this faculty.

Adding to the change in moral codes were the soldiers and the *Senderista* cadres. Both groups were indoctrinated into lethal ideologies that stressed “eradicating the

enemy,” the enemy being defined as anyone who was not on their side. This black and white morality was at odds with long-standing practices that emphasized the rehabilitation of transgressors, and the blending of retributive and restorative justice that characterizes communal mechanisms of adjudicating conflict.

Finally, there were other important changes within these communities during the internal armed conflict. In many cases, communal authorities were killed if they offered any opposition to Shining Path. In the four communities I am focussing on here, the authorities *were* Shining Path members who practised the lethal ideology they preached. Internal order was massively disrupted, latent conflicts were exacerbated and long-standing routes to adjudicating conflicts and settling them pacifically were abolished with the killing or co-optation of communal authorities. Magnifying the chaos within these pueblos was the absence of state institutions that might have intervened to re-establish order in a non-lethal manner. Aside from the soldiers stationed in the military bases, the state was absent. Between the abandonment of the state and the elimination of communal mechanisms of containing conflict, the alternatives were limited—and increasingly lethal.

### Living with Impunity

In these former *Senderista* bases, the military played a particularly repressive role during the internal armed conflict. In conversations with community members and in the *Actas Comunales* (notes from communal assemblies) that we were able to access, the role of misguided state policy is evident. During the first half of the 1980s, the Belaunde administration pursued an aggressive and lethal counter-insurgency campaign. However, Alan García was elected in 1985 on a platform assuring a new respect for human rights and a re-orientation of military strategy regarding *Sendero*. Although the massacres did not stop, there was a shift in counter-insurgency. In the four communities with which I have worked, people recall the military arriving in the mid-to-late 1980s to tell them “we’ve changed—we don’t kill anymore.”

Part of this new counter-insurgency strategy included rounding up entire communities, and allowing the Senderista leadership to “repent,” “name names” and be reintegrated into the community.<sup>9</sup> Importantly, this reintegration was decidedly top-down, as the following conversation indicates.

The soldiers brought them from the prison, brought those *terrucos* (*Senderistas*) so they would talk. They brought them and told us “Now you’re going to live as

a community. You’re going to pardon each other and reconcile. You’re going to reconcile and live like one community.” Those people (the *Senderistas*) are still here. If we say anything, they could come at night and slash our throats with a knife. They could make us disappear and no one would ever know. When I remember everything that’s happened, my heart hurts. It rises from my stomach to my chest, and I can’t breathe. It reaches my heart and it’s as though it wants to come out of my mouth. My eyes roll back, my heart aches, I tremble when I remember. Not even pills help me. What am I going to do? Sometimes I see them and I greet them. But I lower my head because I want to spit in their faces. But what if they come at night? What am I going to do? I can’t do a thing.

—Sra. Angelina Pariona, Accomarca,  
November 15, 2002

Thus the armed forces imposed “peace” in formerly militant communities via the installation of military bases and the selection of local authorities who served as both “puppets” and informers. Serving as a communal authority under military control meant being at the beck and call of the officials in the base. In many conversations people told us the soldiers acted like *reyes*, *Dioses*, *mandamasas*, kings, Gods, omnipotents. Again, the order established blocked local processes: the *Pax Militar* silenced these pueblos, forcing the population to tolerate the presence of both the soldiers as well as the former *Senderistas*, both groups composed of “untouchables,” people located beyond the reach of communal law.

In Accomarca, Cayara, Hualla and Tiquihua, the population concurs there has been no sort of punishment for the ex-Senderistas at the local level. Various people talked to us about the amnesty the state had offered to the *arrepentidos* who “arrived here already pardoned” and rejected communal efforts to encourage them to apologize for their actions. There were no local processes of rehabilitation; rather, many comuneros expressed how frustrating it was to feel impotent vis-à-vis those they consider “the guiltiest.”

Living with impunity makes social life very tense, and the fear of violence at the hands of one’s neighbour is a constant. Indeed, the impact of living with impunity was made clear in a conversation with Mario Aquisé, a *curandero* working in Accomarca. Mr. Aquisé explained to us that he visits these communities in a rotating fashion, treating people in pueblos that were affected by the political violence. He told us that the most common complaint in Accomarca is ulcers.

Why ulcers? How might we understand the prevalence is this affliction? In Accomarca, our conversations

were punctuated with elbow jabs and whispered warnings to our interlocutors to “Shut up! You shouldn’t be talking!” Silence has been imposed, and there are (public) secrets that eat away at one’s insides. When we asked the women why they suffered from ulcers, they shrugged at a question with so obvious a response: “Of course we have ulcers. We’ve spent so many years swallowing our rage.”

My fieldwork has convinced me that a frustrated desire for justice is a *felt* grievance: nerves that open and throb, stomachs lacerated with ulcers and the “irritation of the heart” prompted by seeing “those people” (*huk kuna*, the perpetrators) walk through the streets “as though they had never killed people.” As Shklar as written in her work on injustice, “Is there nothing much more to be said about the sense of injustice that we know so well when we feel it? (1990: 16). The *sense of injustice* permeates the body as a politics of the senses is brought into play (Seremetakis 1994: 13).

## Doubling and Duplicity

We never knew who we were dealing with. I couldn’t talk—not with my mother, not with my brother, not with my neighbour. *Todos eramos doble cara*—We were all two-faced. —Anonymous, Accomarca, 2003

I mentioned that one of my interests was tracing a genealogy of morality, and the shifts in moral codes that characterized the *sasachakuy tiempo* (the difficult years). During ambiguous moral periods, many aspects of daily life are in flux, including one’s own identity. People became “two-faced,” trying to manage the competing demands of the military and of *Sendero*, as well as their own shifting allegiances. Still others turned to hiding their faces completely: The masked ones wore black woollen masks that left only the eyes and lips exposed.

In his work on masks, Napier suggests that masks are almost invariably related to transition, and that masking is a means of transgressing boundaries because it provides an avenue for manipulating certain paradoxes (1986). It is certain than ordinary daily interactions in these communities can be elaborately florid, leaving scant space for the expression of negative emotions (Allen 1988). So let me begin with a rather pedestrian observation, and then consider its inverse.

In various conversations with men in these villages, they told us “You change when you put on a mask”—that “I’m another person with my mask on.” In communities where social relationships are lived face-to-face and in which justice is administered face-to-face, one needs to think about what it means to mask oneself and change

identity. This process of doubling, of assuming a mask that permits the appearance of a shadow self, functions in two directions, hence my interest in the inverse. It permits aggressors to distance themselves from their own actions and delegate those actions to their doubles, *and* it permits others to maintain some degree of denial when interacting with the perpetrators among them—to not *face up* to the perpetrators, a theme powerfully expressed by don Feliciano Huamán.

### *Don Feliciano Huamán and the Masked Ones*

We had just returned from Tiquihua and were interested in locating a few Tiqueños who had left during the violence to settle in the city. Many migrants had decided to stay in the city and start new lives, some because their children were accustomed to the city life, and others because they feared returning to their pueblos. There were still others who visited each year during fiestas or to check up on family members who had stayed behind to watch the land or livestock.

We headed for the outskirts of Huamanga, following the map someone had sketched on a piece of paper so that we could find their relative’s house. We walked about utterly lost. It was almost impossible to find people in the barrios, a space not so different from the *campo* with children pasturing goats and sheep alongside their houses.

On one futile search we met up with an acquaintance and explained what we were doing. “Oh, I’m from Canaria, I was born there. It’s been a long time since I’ve been back there. I have family all over there—Tiquihua, Canaria, the whole zone. But I hardly remember anything because I was so little when we left. My brothers could tell you about it. I remember them telling me they escaped from the house to go to the classes the teachers were giving in the *escuelas populares*.<sup>10</sup> They were preparing them for the party.”

Her efforts to put us in touch with her brothers failed, but fortunately she recalled her uncle. “He’s sick because of the violence. It affected him so much that for years he was in bed. He lives on pills and tranquilizers. He never wanted to talk with anyone about his problem. I’m going to see if he might let you visit, but I can’t promise you anything.”

Fortunately, her uncle agreed to our visit, and it was in late December 2003 that we headed toward his house. A handwritten sign to the side of the doorway said “Injections given here.” Evidently don Feliciano was still working as a health technician.

We knocked on the aluminum siding that served as a door. A slender elderly man peered out. “Good morning. Are you Señor Feliciano Huamán?”

"Yes. You've come to talk to me, no?"

We nodded, and he swung the door open to let us pass. I realized he could barely walk. He dragged his feet behind him and his hands were trembling uncontrollably. I followed him into the kitchen, and he gestured toward a chair around the table. He sat across from us, offering us a glass of *chicha de cebada*.

Señor Feliciano Huamán was 69 years old and lived in Huamanga, returning to Tiquihua infrequently to check up on his land. Both his wife and children had tried to convince him not to keep going back, and they refused to accompany him when he did so. The motives behind their refusal became clearer when Sr. Huamán and his wife told us about how the war years had changed their lives.

I took out my notebook and began to set up my tape-recorder when Sr. Huamán slurred to me, "Wait—don't turn the recorder on yet. Let's wait a few minutes until this passes. I took my pills half an hour ago—they're starting to calm me. Look, my mouth doesn't work, my hands tremble, my feet too. But I'm used to this, they say it's Parkinsons." He leaned over and began rubbing his hands together, trying to control their movements. "I have to take tranquilizers (*calmantes*) so I don't get like this." He sat back, and several minutes passed before his hands were still. "Now we can start."

"When did you start to have Parkinsons?" I asked.

"1982 when the Senderistas harmed me. August 4, 1982—since then."

"What happened? Can you tell me about it, don Feliciano?"

"Buena, the Senderistas arrived on August 4 at 12:30. Four masked people entered my house, pointing a machine gun at me. I had a dog, Rintintin. He lunged at them and they almost killed him. I held him back, thinking they were good people. But one of them pulled a machine gun out from under his poncho and yelled at me: 'Shut up, shit. Fuck your mother, damn it!'" Sr. Huamán shook his head. "He mentioned my mother that way. So I asked him 'What's wrong, friend? I haven't offended you—I don't know you. Why are you talking like that about my mother?' 'Shut up, damn it!' he shouted at me. They tied my hands behind my back. Kicking me they dragged me out the door to the church. My wife wasn't there. She'd gone to Huamanga to pay the rent on our house. My daughter was in the university. I was alone with my son. With my little ones, with my three kids. They were crying. They hit them and locked them in the kitchen. Well, they had me from one until six in the afternoon. From that moment until six in the afternoon I prayed 50 Our Fathers. I was there to die. I didn't even remember I was a person. Nothing. At six o'clock they came for me, for a *juicio*

*popular*.<sup>11</sup> They asked me, 'All right, little friend—talk, damn it!' So I asked 'what am I going to say? I don't know anything,' I said. 'Why are you doing these things to me? I haven't harmed anyone. Oh, I must have some enemy. Let him say it to my face. I haven't robbed, I haven't done anything. I've helped people in this community. Ask them,' I said. But there the people were, looting my store. My wife had everything, stacked in large quantities. Rice, sugar, noodles. They took everything. Everything. Damn it, they took everything, even our clothes. They even took my wife's underwear. There were no blankets left either. So at six in the afternoon they made me speak to the pueblo. They made me speak. 'Talk, damn it, talk!' they shouted."

And then, as he would at various points in our conversation, don Feliciano suddenly shifted into the present tense. "But I can't talk. I have no saliva. They're putting a red rag in my mouth...." Don Feliciano did not move for several minutes. The table began to shake, his trembling hands rocking it and the water glasses. He was staring intently toward a corner of the room.

After several minutes he turned back toward me and we continued our conversation. "So they put a rag in your mouth?" I prompted.

Don Feliciano looked at me intently and replied, "Everything. They made me open my mouth and put a pistol in it. I almost bit his hand, but I controlled myself. I had no saliva, dry, dry already. So I was there for a few seconds and I was a bit better. People knew me. There was a woman there from Canaria. A teacher, Morales. She spoke well. 'Why are you harming this man? He's a good person, he's cured me for free. Why are you doing this?' One of them said, 'Oh, damn it! You're his comadre!' It was just because I was an employee. They said, 'Pimp of the government, that's what these are. Have to kill all of them.'"

"So you were in the plaza?"

He nodded.

"And everyone was there?"

Don Feliciano continued. "They gave me a *juicio popular*. Everyone was there. They didn't talk. Some of them were drinking beer—I had about 40 cases. The store was full. Ask anyone. Everyone knows my house."

"Don Feliciano, was there a military base there in '82?"

"Not yet," he replied, raising his hand, palm facing me. "I'm going to tell you everything. They let me go and took me back to my house. 'I'm going to turn you over to your kids. You're saved. You have to fight with us, you have to take care of the flag.' They raised the *hoz y martillo* in the tower. 'You're going to take care of this. Make sure no one touches it. If someone does, you're going to tell me.' I said to him, 'But I won't be here. I'm leaving. You've

taken everything I have. My medicines—how will I settle my accounts?" He said, "Tell your boss the *Senderistas* took everything and nothing will happen to you. If they say anything, tell me." So they gave me 15 days to take care of the flag. I'm there for 15 days. My wife arrived: 'Enough. Let's get out of here.' So I came to Huancapi. That night they got an ambulance ready and brought me to Huamanga, they wanted my statement. Doctor Chino Lee was the director for Ayacucho. He was waiting for me in the hospital. That calmed me down. He asked me about it but I didn't tell him anything. If I'd talked, they would have killed my wife and children for revenge. All of them. That's why I didn't talk. The commandante said, 'Surely you know where they are from.'

Don Feliciano stopped talking. His hands began to tremble again, and he began staring at the dark room in the corner. His whole body trembled, and he was biting his lips to hold back his tears. He began repeating, "I can't talk, I can't remember more. I've forgotten." I nodded and reached out to console him. It was no time for questions.

A few minutes passed before Don Feliciano wiped his mouth. "I'm going to keep talking. It's already passed. For a few seconds I stopped existing. I lost my sight and died. Like at night when you close your eyes and you die in your dreams. At times it's like that, when I remember. But I'm a new man now. Those are the things they did to me. I'd prayed 50 Our Fathers and a creed to die. I prayed since one o'clock until six in the afternoon. I prayed 50 Our Fathers."

"Until late in the afternoon?"

He nodded. "They're giving me a *juicio popular*. That's what they're doing—what was I going to do?"

"And then what happened?"

"They wanted to kill me. They wanted to crucify me. But because I have *El Señor* here," showing me his crucifix, "that's why they couldn't. It's blessed and they couldn't kill me. Later I went to my house and my children were there. Little ones. They were in the kitchen. The *Senderistas* said to my son—the one that's an engineer now—'We're giving you back your father alive.' That's when they gave me the order to take care of the flag or they would kill me."

"Ah. Why did they do this to you, don Feliciano?"

"Because I was a state employee," he explained.

I was puzzled. "Just because you worked for the state?"

He nodded. "I'm a sergeant with the Air Force. So they wanted me to teach people how to use weapons."

"Oh, so they were trying to force you to teach people?"

"Yes. I had argued with one of them—since then, they didn't like me," he explained. "Because I was an employee,

I travelled around. I had no enemies, no one. I didn't do anything to anybody. Everyone knew me. They just did this to me because I was a state employee and in the air force."

"Where were they from?" I asked again.

"They were from Hualla—in Hualla they were all together. Apongo, Asquipata, Apae—they all came to kill me."

His wife had just been listening without saying anything. But she spoke up: "They ran *escuelas populares* in Hualla, Tiquihua, Cayara. The people had been *concientizada* (literally "consciousness-raised," or indoctrinated) with all of that. But us, we didn't know anything. We didn't know a thing. People came for us—we didn't know them."

"But lots of people participated, no? Like in Accomarca, Hualla?"

"Oh, lots of them! Everybody. Yes, it must have been everyone. Everyone was afraid. Only I was against them." Don Feliciano began to describe his store and the merchandise he had. "That's where the *envidia* started. They swept my store clean. They didn't even leave a thing to eat. My children were so hungry! I looked everywhere and found some wheat in the kitchen, wheat we used to feed the chickens. I had to peel that and feed it to my kids. They were crying they were so hungry. I had to grind it. What else could I do? There was no one around to borrow anything from. There were no people. Everything was silent. Everyone had gone to the puna, to sleep outside in the puna."

"Don Feliciano, who did this? Was it people from Tiquihua, or did they come from somewhere else?"

"People came to incite them. People kept joining, *pues*" he explained.

"Of course," I nodded.

"He returned again to the theme. "They were all from Tiquihua. Everyone is coming."

"But people from Tiquihua—well, I imagine they knew you?" I asked, hesitantly.

"Yes," he replied slowly.

"Do you know who they were? And those who came.... Who put the rag in your mouth, don Feliciano?"

"The *Senderistas* were masked. I don't know who they were, *pues*."

"They were masked?"

Don Feliciano stared at the wall for several minutes before answering. "I can't see their faces. Well, more or less. I imagined who they were. Their faces are covered with masks. Some have guns, grenades—they have everything. That's how it is."

"And they are all masked?"

"The ones who took my statement, all of those, they're masked. The ones I don't know—they don't wear masks."

There was a pause before don Feliciano began to speak again. "People, I don't know, like ants they are taking everything. The community took anyway everything we owned."

His wife added, "How can it be that they did this to someone who helped so much in the pueblo? People don't recognize that."

Don Feliciano remembered. "I cured them. People got pneumonia. I cured them with injections. I didn't have a car, but I would travel with a burro, carrying medicines. People really liked that."

"They looked at him with such admiration," added his wife. "He cured people."

"Don Feliciano shook his head as he remembered. "They did these things to me in Tiquihua. I haven't been back since."

"You've never been back?"

"As an employee I never went back. As a *vecino* (neighbour) of the pueblo, yes. I went last year. Just recently, after all those years."

"And how did people act?"

"All the people who knew me came to visit. 'Don Feliciano, how are you?' But the people who harmed me—*no me dan la cara* (they don't give me/show me their face).<sup>12</sup> When I approached, they left immediately. They went pale, they're afraid of me. Back then, they thought I was going to denounce them. They thought I was going to put them in jail. But I didn't. Oh God, I know so many of them, about 30 authors (*autores*)."

"Did you note their names?"

"Every single one. They are alive now. Killing their own people—they killed."

"And don Feliciano, for you, what would justice be? What would justice be after everything that happened?"

"Among human beings, it seems there is no justice. There isn't. Only God makes justice."

## Past Present

If people here began to face up to everything they've done, there would be more problems. It would be impossible to live.  
—Anonymous, Cayara

Our conversation with don Feliciano crystallizes a variety of key themes, among them the "masked ones" who were not anonymous at all. Although he has a list of 30 "authors," don Feliciano has never said anything for fear of retaliation against him or his family. He lives trying to manage the images that torment him, erasing the

faces, insisting on the masks: "I can't see their faces. Well, more or less. I imagined who they were. Their faces were covered with masks." Evidently it is a bit easier to live with what he knows if he does not have to see the faces of his tormenters in his mind's eye. Anonymity, even when artificial, permits some distance between a painful past and a haunted present.

Additionally, I have noted the processes of exteriorization that operate in these pueblos, at the individual level with the *males* (afflictions) that "grab" the person as well as at the community level and the "violence that arrived here." Part of reconciliation is processing what people have done and *interiorizing who Sendero was*. People live seeing the "guiltiest ones" on a daily basis and these encounters are painful. Thus the masks keep covered a constant source of rancour: the faces of the perpetrators. I frequently heard that "we've grown accustomed to living with them"—but "they" are, to a great extent, the villagers themselves.

The insistence on "the masked ones" may be a form of "healthy denial" that has permitted people to process a bit more slowly the tensions between them. Slowly they are removing the masks, assimilating what they have done "between brothers." There is a liminal space between remembering and forgetting, and not putting a face to one's grief or loss may be a temporal strategy that stays the hand of vengeance in these communities. By not "facing up" to one another, the public secret is maintained—as long as one can remember what to forget.

In Cayara people spoke at length about the *soplón* (spy, traitor) who sold his own brothers and still lives in the community. As one man told us, "No one says anything to him because they're afraid that he might bring the soldiers again and kill them all. That's why they don't say anything. We were afraid of our own brothers. We weren't afraid anymore of the witches, the condemned. We were terrified of our neighbours. Everyone here dirtied themselves (*se han embarrado*) with that situation and now no one wants to recognize themselves because of shame" (*nadie quiere reconocerse de vergüenza*).

This was not an isolated reference to shame, which was coupled with guilt in many conversations. For most people, killing someone they know is not a trivial act. As David Apter states, "People do not commit political violence without discourse. They need to talk themselves into it. What may begin as casual conversation may suddenly take a serious turn. Secret meetings add portent. On public platforms it becomes inflammatory. It results in texts, lectures. In short it engages people who suddenly are called upon to use their intelligence in ways out of the ordinary. It takes people out of themselves" (Apter 1997:

2). And yet, at some point they have to “get back into themselves.”

Numerous people I have spoken with refer to the war years as *huk vida*, “another life,” and to themselves during that time with the expression *hukmanmi karqani*—“I was of another form.” The masking, the doubling, the shadow self: there is a sort of dissociation, as if one had become unrecognizable to him or herself. People are distancing themselves from what they have done in the past, and expressing their reluctance to recognize their own actions, to look themselves in the face (*encararse*), in the present.

## Facing Up to the Past

*Hualla, field notes, May 2003*

We were headed to the cemetery when we met up with Feliciano Ipurre, doubled over beneath a heavy load of cornstalks. My friend insisted on carrying the load for her, and her heavily creased face folded into a smile. “Oh, which of the souls sent you?”

We fell in beside her, and I noticed she kept looking around, back and forth. I had also picked up the habit as everyone was so concerned with who was talking and with whom in this troubled pueblo.

“Oh, they say the *terrucos* are coming again. My niece was in the puna and she saw a group of armed men. Oh, during the *tiempo de muerte*, so many people died. We had to bury people as quickly as we could, their bodies still warm. We didn’t even have time to dig a hole. We just had to throw dirt on top of the bodies because if they found us they’d kill us too.”

We nodded, reflecting upon the number of people who shared her lament. As we rounded the corner, a drunken woman came staggering down from the cemetery. Feliciano shook her head, a murmur of disapproval escaping her lips.

“Did people drink before the *tiempo de muerte*?” I wondered.

She shook her head emphatically. “No, none of the women drank like that. We learned to drink during that *mal tiempo*. We began to drink while we waited for death. It was only with *trago* that we could sleep. We lived on fear. As soon as the sun began to set, we escaped to the hills. Everything was death here. More and more bodies appeared and we couldn’t even gather them up. They didn’t let us. The dogs and the pigs were eating our dead. *That life was like hell. No one could see each other face to face. Whether from shame or from fear, we were all running without seeing anyone. We lived without seeing anyone—we lived without being able to clearly see faces.*<sup>13</sup> We couldn’t even

*talk with each other—it was as though we were grabbed by rabia (rage).”*

We circled back around, arriving at mama Feliciano’s house. She grabbed my arm: “What I’ve told you—you can’t tell anyone because something could happen to us. We live with fear because those *canallas puka ullas* still live with us. They’ve never asked for forgiveness. Ha! They’re doing better than we are! They have everything, even stores. I think this pueblo is blind. They’ve never punished them—they should cry in front of us like we cried. Now it’s their turn to cry, to learn to suffer like we did. Then we’d feel better. How can we live well with them if they don’t ask for forgiveness (don’t apologize)? We’ll always be fighting, insulting each other. You can’t live well like that.”

I was struck by the insistence on “facelessness” in doña Feliciano’s description of the war years. “We lived without being able to clearly see faces.” Her lament was coupled by others who insisted “We want authorities with faces now, not like it was before. We want faces again.” What does the erasure of the human face mean? I began by noting that talk about masks, faces and facelessness is talk about morality and immorality, and that there is a phenomenology of justice and injustice in these pueblos. Local ethics are grounded in the lived body.

As I began my efforts to understand the complexity of postwar social life, I found the work of Emanuel Levinas profoundly useful. In his philosophy of ethics, Levinas insisted upon the primacy of the face of the other as the basis for any sort of ethical system. He argued that justice responds to a call: “The absolute that upholds justice is the absolute of the interlocutor. Its mode of being and of making its presence known consists in turning its face toward me, in being a face” (1998:22). The human face is thus the condition of possibility for ethics; indeed, “The face of the other who commands justice for others dwells itself on this side of right and wrong, of good and evil. The other’s face is not a case of justice, but its very source” (Waldenfels 2002: 70). Levinasian ethics is an ethics rooted in a phenomenology of the body, and an ethical relation is one in which we *face* the other person. Thus “ethics is *lived* in the sensibility of an embodied exposure to the other” (Critchley and Bernasconi 2002: 21).

Thus the paradox. While understanding how important the public secret has been to staying the hand of vengeance and permitting the resumption of social life with all of its tensions and discomfort, I also see the toll that impunity takes on people in these communities. How can there be justice when people cannot look themselves or each other in the face?

The team had barely arrived in Huancapi when the driver announced there would be a brief stop so that passengers could have lunch. We headed out in search of a restaurant, and crossed paths with Vladimiro, a young man we had met in Tiquihua. He approached us and we all headed off on the search.

Over plates of chicken with rice, Vladimiro began talking about a communal assembly in Tiquihua, and the ex-Shining Path leader who had asked for forgiveness.

This thing about apologizing, well we had something like that in Tiquihua. In a communal assembly, an ex-*Senderista* started to participate in making decisions and people began to reject him, to insult him. "*Ter-ruco! Malo!* You assassinated people here!" But his reaction wasn't what we expected—he didn't try to shut up everyone who was insulting him. Instead, he lowered his head and spoke so humbly, asking people to forgive him because he couldn't live with a bad conscience. "We all committed errors. Why did we act as we did? Was it the water we drank, or the blood that flows through our body? Maybe that's what made us so bad, so demonic. But I'm asking you for forgiveness so that I can live at peace with myself, my family, with all of you." He ended up crying, but some of the women didn't stop insulting him. They said they would never forgive him and would never forget what happened, that his presence made them remember everything, remember how they'd suffered. This was in 2000, when Alejandro Carhua arrived back from Lima. I tell you, that guy was macho to stand up and apologize because people were going to react. But the authorities calmed them down by saying that we can't continue to live with so much resentment in our hearts. We needed to learn how to forgive each other because all our lives we're going to be here and we can't keep hating, having so much envy and rancour. They told people we needed to try to forgive him, that at least he'd apologized. He was the only one, not like the rest of them who live without saying anything, acting as though nothing ever happened. At least he apologized.

Reconciliation is a long process and among the steps are apologizing, punishment and reparation. Retributive and restorative justice are not mutually exclusive: rather, they are two facets of the Judeo-Christian legacy that has greatly influenced legal consciousness in these communities. It is a constant affront to the moral economy that the "gUILTIEST" have not publicly apologized and that they have not assumed the forms of social reparation that constitute a central step in the rehabilitation of perpetrators.

The desire for justice has prompted many people we spoke with to demand that the ex-*Senderista* leaders apologize for what they have done. Why are apologies so powerful? Why the insistence on an apology from the ex-*cabecillas*?

In his work on war and apologies, O'Neill has written, "Face involves the group's common belief about how much deference will be given to someone, especially in interactions that are face-to-face and publicly known. It sets behaviour toward the individual by giving each group member expectations about how others will behave and what the individual will accept" (1999:139). He also suggests that face is involved in making a credible commitment, and that apologies grant the other person face, and thus the promise of better treatment in the future (ibid.: 191). Apologies work in two directions: they grant face, dignity, to the other, as well as allow the perpetrator to regain face—moral standing and accountability—vis-à-vis those they have wronged. An apology engages the interlocutors in a moral discourse and, as Tavuchis has suggested, calls for apology are conspicuous in ongoing moral projects (1991).

There is also a temporal aspect to these demands. Defarges has argued, "Only the losers repent, those who see that history is not on their side" (1999:35). If indeed repentance is a gesture of the vanquished, then the refusal to repent or to apologize has various implications. I have been told the ex-*cabecillas* continue to be very *ideolizados*, referring to their continued embrace of *Sendero's* revolutionary ideology.

I suggest that campesinos are distinguishing between military and moral defeat. Despite a few overwrought reports from the US State Department, *Sendero* no longer represents a credible threat to the Peruvian state; however, this reality does not reflect local experience. Without local level juridico-religious rituals designed to administer both retributive and restorative justice, these campesinos have not had the symbolic closure that could frame the atrocities in the past tense. The lack of apologies means that these ex-*Senderista* leaders are not sorry for what they have done, nor have they had the "change of heart" that accompanies moral conversion. Consequently, the refusal to apologize implies that history is still in the making, echoing the *Senderista* refrain, "the leadership never dies." The past continues to be very present in these pueblos, personified in the faces that slip out from behind their masks.

## Conclusions

Truth is not a matter of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation which does justice to it.

—Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*

My aim in this article has been to explore how people “remoralize” their social worlds following lengthy periods of intimate violence. My research demonstrates the centrality of interpersonal processes and issues of justice to postwar reconstruction. Rama Mani has written, “Justice is at once philosophical and political, public and intensely private, universal in its existence and yet highly individualized and culturally shaped in its expression” (2002: 186). The “cultural shape” of justice in Ayacucho is embodied, and emphasizes forms of social reparation that grant dignity to those who have been wronged and the possibility of rehabilitation to the transgressors. Engaging with the elaborate talk about masks, faces and facelessness permits us to enter into the ethical discourse that circulates in these communities, and illustrates the need to conceptualize non-medicalized approaches to “recovery” in postwar contexts (Kleinman 1998).

I began this article with the idea of the public secret. I want now to return to Taussig and his work on defacement (1999). He suggests that through a “drama of revelation...unmasking amounts to a transgressive uncovering of a ‘secretly familiar’” (51). The secretly familiar in these communities is a recent history of fratricidal violence. While I believe co-existence is based upon a complicated alchemy of remembering, forgetting and remembering to forget, I am equally convinced that co-existence is impeded by the sense of injustice that permeates these communities. If unmasking implies a confrontation with what is secretly familiar, it also implies some sort of reckoning. That reckoning—that “settling of accounts”—will at some point require that people can look themselves and one another in the face. Co-existence will thus involve both the mask and the mirror.

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## Notes

- 1 This paper is based upon research conducted in Peru from 2002-2003 in collaboration with the Ayacucho office of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and from 2003 to present with support from the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs.
- 2 I use the term community in two senses. Campesino communities are rights-bearing entities, recognized as such in the Peruvian Constitution. I also define community as a historically situated, strategic collective identity.
- 3 For detailed ethnographic accounts of Chuschi, see Isbell 1978 and 1994.
- 4 The other guerrilla movement was the MRTA, Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru. MRTA was always considered a lesser threat, although the group succeeded in invading of the Japanese Embassy and holding dozens of hostages for several months. When government troops stormed the embassy, members of MRTA were killed after they had surrendered. One of the images repeatedly shown in the media was Fujimori strutting through the rubble in a flak jacket.
- 5 The “archaic culture” argument infused the *Informe sobre los Sucesos de Uchuraccay*, a product of the government appointed commission sent to investigate peasant violence in 1983. This report, under the direction of Mario Vargas Llosa, reveals his flair for fiction. For an astute analysis of the environmental arguments, see Poole 1987. The best critique of the “archaic culture” framework is Mayer 1992. This same author also offers an important analysis of the “endemic violence” arguments (1993).
- 6 The literature regarding these “battles,” which have different names, is vast. See Villalobos 1992. For an insightful critique of this literature and its tendency to construct the “exotically violent campesinos,” see Remy 1991. For an analysis of *tinkuy* (one name for these ritual battles) that focusses on the role of *tinkuy* in affirming both group identity and complementary opposition, see Allen 1988.
- 7 When I speak of envy and resentment, I am reflecting on the seemingly eternal conflicts over boundaries as well as the economic stratification within and between these communities. Although macroeconomic indicators correctly capture widespread poverty throughout the department of Ayacucho, the difference in wealth within these communities can be substantial. For instance, the poorest community members may have an average of eight to 10 livestock, while the wealthier campesinos have between 100 and 150 (Theidon 2004).

- 8 I have benefited greatly from Kleinman and Kleinman 1993 and 1997 in thinking about these processes.
- 9 These processes preceded the National Repentance Law that was in effect from May 1992 to November 1994. See Tapia 1997 for an analysis of this law.
- 10 Shining Path infiltrated communities via the education system because many rural teachers received their training at the provincial Universidad San Cristóbal de Huamanga, where Shining Path began. The *escuelas populares* were meetings in which Shining Path doctrine was taught.
- 11 *Juicios populares* ("popular trials") were held by Sendero members and usually resulted in summary executions of the accused.
- 12 *Dar la cara* is literally "give the face." It can mean showing one's face; it also implies having the courage to face up to someone.
- 13 "Nadie podía verse cara a cara. Habrá sido de vergüenza o de miedo, todos corríamos sin ver a nadie, vivíamos sin ver a nadie, vivíamos sin vernos bien la cara."

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