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**Fitful Transitions: Memory Politics in Perú and El Lugar de la Memoria, la Tolerancia, y la Inclusión Social**

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**Introduction**

This project will scrutinize the aesthetics of the recently established memory museum, El Lugar de la Memoria, la Tolerancia, y la Inclusión Social (LUM) located in Lima, Peru, as an entry point to discussing the era of political violence and constitutional crisis from 1980-2000. I focus on how the LUM narrates a series of fitful transitions in recent Peruvian history: from a Maoist insurgency helmed by Sendero Luminoso, to the state’s equally brutal counterinsurgency efforts, resulting in the authoritarian rule of President Alberto Fujimori, to the undoing of this regime in a transitional justice effort to reinstall democracy through a United Nations sponsored Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2003. The TRC’s final report called for the state to undertake “symbolic reparations,” which manifested in the construction of various memory museums and memorials throughout Peru, the LUM being the most recent with its official opening taking place in December 2015.

I approach this memory museum as a narrative system in its own right, which constructs a vision of a violent past, a tenuous present, and a redemptive future defined by a contradictory resolution in liberal democratic governance. My paper will largely be devoted to studying the techniques through which the museum constructs this vision. I begin by situating the LUM within the larger boom in institutional state memory initiatives within Peru, and an overview of critiques of human rights discourse. The following section turns towards a discussion of how the “inescapable materiality” of the LUM optimizes an “instituting imaginary” that legitimizes
memory making in accordance with a notion of human rights compatible with dominant tenets of neoliberalism. My analysis throughout draws from recent critiques of memory museums and human rights discourse, which call attention to the limitations and contradictions of capitalist-driven (neo)liberal democracies in these discourses. These contradictions, my paper ultimately insists, make themselves visible in the narrative apparatus of the LUM, in its design and its aesthetic choices.

A Brief History of the LUM: Liberal Human Rights Discourse and Memory Politics in post-Conflict Peru

The ninth and final volume of the nearly 4,500 page-long Informe final, the final report released by the transitional justice effort and the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2003 that documents the era of political violence in Peru from 1980-2000, declares: “…las reparaciones pueden ser de diversa índole y nivel, entre las que destacan las llamadas de carácter simbólico como, por ejemplo, los gestos de desagravio público por parte de la sociedad y del Estado hacia las víctimas, o bien museos, monumentos, plazas, publicaciones, y otras emblemas o instalaciones conmemorativos / … reparations could be of a diverse nature and level, among those that highlight the calls for those of a symbolic character, for example, the gestures for public redressal by both society and the State towards the victims, as well as museums, monuments, plazas, publications, and other emblems or commemorative installations” (Informe Final 99, my translation). The call for symbolic reparations formed a part of a broader reparations plan whose uneven and at times stagnated implementation has been widely critiqued by a bevy of activists, scholars, and thinkers. Nonetheless, the TRC siren call for “symbolic reparations” as public and state redressal gave rise to a boom in institutionalized memory
initiatives throughout Peru. These self-described memory initiatives range from the 2003 photographic exhibit Yuyanapaq: Para Recordar (Yuyanapaq: To Remember), a stylized curation of photographs taken from the TRC, to the construction of a variety of public memorials throughout Peru. Despite the national and international attention and funding for these initiatives, public acts of memorialization of the era of political violence within the Peruvian public sphere nonetheless remains contentious.

The history of this era of political violence is lengthy and complicated, and it is not within the space permitted in this paper to do justice to the number of scholarly and activist efforts taken to understand the complex convergences of historical forces that enabled the activities of Sendero Luminoso, state-sanctioned violence and forced disappearances, and

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1 Here I wish to gesture towards how the recent “boom” in memory initiatives in Peru may be inscribed within global and transnational discourses on memory. Such a consideration is justified, especially considering how readily the German government was willing to finance the LUM. A future path of study could look into Peruvian discourses on memory (in relation to historical atrocity) with other transnational or postcolonial traditions. See Michael Rothberg’s Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization (pg. 317, fn. 2) for a list of critical accounts on the transnational and global “boom” in memory studies in recent years.

2 It is not within the scope of this paper to thoroughly discuss the generative critiques of the Yuyanapaq: Para Recordar, an installation organized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2003, which was subsequently released as a “relato visual” or a “visual story” with financial support from German and Swiss governments (see the relato visual: http://idehpucp.pucp.edu.pe/yuyanapaq/), and is currently on permanent display at El Museo de la Nación (The Museum of the Nation) in Lima, Peru. I align myself with Deborah Poole and Isaías Rojas Pérez, who challenge the “dynamics of visual culture” in Yuyanapaq that “photographic images as self-evident, historical and perceptual grounds from which individual emotions and feeling can be interpolated as part of collective” (Poole and Rojas Pérez in “Memories of Reconciliation: Photography and Memory in Postwar Peru”).

3 During my research in Peru in the summer of 2017, I went to visit the public monument “El Ojo que Llora” in el Campo de Marte in Lima. However, the entire memorial site was inexplicably cordoned off by fences, and I could not gain access to the site. In a conversation with a graduate student from Lima, currently pursuing his doctorate in Spanish at the University of Colorado-Boulder and specializing the era of political violence in Peru, he had mentioned that the site had been closed due to protest led by supporters of Keiko Fujimori, daughter of Alberto Fujimori and right-wing politician in her own right. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find reportage from the press that corroborates this. There is, however, a long history of reportage on the controversies surrounding the monument. This news report surveys the history of debates that have taken place: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iLz0-3GmgA. This 2008 news report discusses how self-proclaimed Fujimoristas vandalized the monument with red paint, resembling blood: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olB5dl95kpM. I hope that my personal “unofficial account” and the official historical record demonstrates that memorialization related to the era of political violence remains a contentious issue for the Peruvian and Limeño public sphere.
constitutional crises under Fujimori. SL, under philosophy professor Abimael Guzmán from Universidad de Huamanga in the sierra Ayacucho region, announced the insurgency and mission to capture state power in 1980. Ironically, this immediately took place after the left-wing dictatorship came to a close and precisely during the reinstatement of democratic rule in Peru. SL, whose Maoist and sectarian position against parliamentarianism, went on to declare their “protracted war,” often forcibly conscripting indigenous peasants into their ranks. In its urban coastal insularity, the Belaúnde-led government from 1980-85 turned a blind eye to the brewing violence taking place in the sierra hinterlands until the insurgency, which followed classical Maoist revolutionary strategy, began to encircle and encroach the city. The heightening of the political violence created the conditions for political outsider Alberto Fujimori to win the 1992 election, who went on to run a corruption-ridden regime all whilst enacting brutal IMF structural adjustment on the economy run into extreme debt and ratcheting up the counterinsurgency efforts. The repertoire of counterinsurgency tactics included clandestine forced disappearances, mass displacement in both urban and rural zones, arbitrary detention, and sexual violence and rape. The state’s counterinsurgency program disproportionately affected the indigenous peasantry, mostly Quechua-speaking, and, as the President of the TRC at the time, Salomón Lerner Febres has said, three out of every four victims of the conflict were Quechua speaking.


5 See Jean Franco’s Cruel Modernity, especially chapters 2 and 3, for an incisive discussion of the ways in which the cult to masculinity and feminine denigration shaped Maoist subjectivity. Also see Alexandra Hibbett’s “El innombrable goce de la violencia: el testimonio de Waldo” for a Lacanian reading of the ways in which the uneven intersection between lettered, macho, consumerist discourses are constitutive to Sendero subjectivity. Lurgio Gavilán’s autobiography-testimonio, Memorias de un soldado desconocido, is a widely recognized account of child-conscription into Sendero Luminoso and the Ejercito Nacional del Peru.
peasants. Jean Franco insists upon the ways in which the coloniality of power and the “myths and prejudices inherited from the Conquest” regarding indigenous populations of Peru shaped the tactics of both the Maoist insurgency and the neoliberally-enabled state counterinsurgency (Franco 47). She writes that conceiving the indigenous as constitutively outside of the ontological boundaries of modernity made it “less problematic to torture, disappear, assassinate, and exercise different forms of violence and extreme cruelty against those who were considered not only as different but, more particularly, unreal – those whose lives have been negated.” These ongoing colonial epistemologies shaped how both SL and the Peruvian state understood Quechua-speaking peasants, and how those “especially…from rural, distant, and poor communities, became the principal victims of human rights committed in the name of the Shining Path’s armed struggle and in defense of the state” (Franco 56-57). The colonially-derived racial geographies of the Peruvian nation across the urbane criollo coast, the ‘primitive’ and ‘barbaric’ mountainous sierra filled with indios, and the remote selva or jungle shaped not only the disproportionate violence of the war, but also the politics of representation of and in the LUM.6

I align myself with critics who call this moment in Peruvian history the era of “political violence” rather than the “armed internal conflict.”7 I opt for the former term to foreground the fact that political systems and practices deliberatively shape the conditions of possibility for

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6 See Gareth Williams’s “Death in the Andes: Ungovernability and the Birth of Tragedy in Peru” in the Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader for further discussion of the racialized national imaginary of Peru across the coast, the sierra, and the jungle in relation to Mario Vargas Llosa’s novel Lituma en los Andes, set during the time of the insurgency.

7 See the introduction to Francesca Denegri and Alexandra Hibbett’s Dando cuenta: Estudios sobre el testimonio de la violencia política en el Perú (1980-2000) for further discussion on the semantic differences between “internal conflict” and “political violence.”
large-scale violence and atrocity. The latter language, I believe, risks suggesting that historical atrocity emerges *sui generis*. Additionally, understanding the conflict primarily as “internal” cordons off the conflict and Peru as a whole from global geopolitics, economic pressures, and other world-systemic processes. In this way, I hope to stand at a remove from the language and vocabularies of the TRC, which often uses the latter phrase to describe this historical moment.

The construction of El Lugar de la Memoria (LUM) marks a new and important phase in contemporary Peruvian memory politics for several reasons. While a good deal has been written on previous institutional efforts to memorialize the conflict, to my knowledge, substantial critical analysis devoted to the LUM is yet to be published. While previous memory initiatives were also funded transnationally, oftentimes through the German or Swiss governments, the amount of wealth funneled into the LUM surpassed all other initiatives. Together, the Peruvian Ministry of Culture and the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development financed consultative workshops, various commissions, and the construction of the LUM. The German proposal to fund the LUM was originally rejected by Alan García, the twice elected former Peruvian president from 1985-1990 and again from 2006-2011, which should indicate the original reticence of the state to acknowledge and account for this history. The state eventually

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8 The following texts discuss their anticipation for the construction of the LUM, but do not offer critical discussion of its aesthetics, its design, or its vision of history: Cynthia Milton’s *Art of a Fractured Past: Memory and Truth-Telling in Post-Shining Path Peru* (2014); the second edition of *El caníbal es el otro: Violencia y cultura en el Perú contemporáneo* de Víctor Vich (2017); José Carlos Agüero’s ensayo-testimonio about his Senderista parents, *Los rendidos: Sobre el don de perdonar* (2015); Alexandra Hibbett and Francesca Denegri’s *Dando cuenta: estudios sobre el testimonio de la violencia política*, and Joseph P. Feldman’s “Exhibiting Conflict: History and Politics at the Museo de la Memoria de ANFASEP in Ayacucho, Peru” (2012). My hope is that this paper will supplement—in the Derridean sense, so to both add and reconfigure—the larger discussion on memory, aesthetics, and histories of political violence in Peru.

9 See the “Historia” tab on the LUM webpage for further discussion about the trajectory of the founding of the LUM: [https://lum.cultura.pe/el-lum/historia](https://lum.cultura.pe/el-lum/historia). Also see the book-length pamphlet published by the LUM entitled, “Cada Uno, Un Lugar de Memoria: Fundamentos conceptuales del Lugar de la Memoria, la Tolerancia y la Inclusión Social,” which details the transnational financing and collaboration between the German and Peruvian governments. It also details the LUM’s institution of the participative process; in which the commission held
relented, and appointed Mario Vargas Llosa, the internationally recognized Nobel Prize winning novelist, to serve as the President for the initial commission to oversee the project. Vargas Llosa, a one-time runner for the Peruvian presidency during the height of the insurgency in 1990, had previously received a great deal of criticism for his investigative reportage on the massacre in Uchuraccay in 1983, and regularly advocated for financial deregulation and championing of the free-market. The LUM then organized a participatory process to garner feedback on how the LUM will be designed and what would be included in the permanent exhibits. This entailed setting up multiple workshops in zones historically and disproportionately affected by the violence, especially in the *sierra* and *selva* (jungle) regions. These were done in the interest of soliciting *testimonios* and to inquire if individuals or communities were willing to donate specific objects for permanent or temporary display. This marks the most elaborate and intensive effort by the state to publicly commemorate the era of political violence. Through these consultations, workshops on the design and scope of the LUM in Lima, Ayacucho (in the Andean region) and in Satipo in central Amazonian region of Perú: [https://issuu.com/cdilugardelamemoria/docs/256958696-cada-uno-un-lugar-de-memo](https://issuu.com/cdilugardelamemoria/docs/256958696-cada-uno-un-lugar-de-memo)

10 The limited space in this paper does not allow me to fully rehearse the several cogent critiques of Mario Vargas Llosa’s reportage on the massacre in Ucharaccay in 1983, in which 8 journalists were murdered by peasants in the highlands, yet I will briefly point towards them here in this footnote simply to underscore the crucial fact that Vargas Llosa rehearses colonialist tropes of the indigenous Quechua as figures of barbarity in his reportage and fiction, and to emphasize what is at stake in his appointment as commission president: see Enrique Mayer’s excoriation of Vargas Llosa’s reportage on the massacre in “Peru in Deep Trouble: Mario Vargas Llosa’s ‘Inquest in the Andes’ Reexamined” (1991); see Juan Carlos Ubiluz’s “El fantasma de la nación cercada” for a discussion of how Vargas Llosa’s reproduces the trope of a “divided Peru,” a racial geography that conceives of national space as a Manichaean division between the civilized criollo coastal region and the Andean sierras as the territory of barbaric indios (2008); see Kimberley Theidon’s “How We Learned to Kill Our Brother?: Memory, Morality and Reconciliation in Peru” on how Vargas Llosa ascribes violence to Quechua-speaking indigenous communities as a natural trait (2000); also see Jean Franco’s *Cruel Modernity* (2015), especially pages 56-76, for an extended critique of Vargas Llosa’s reportage and more broadly, his right-wing turn during his run for the Presidency against Alberto Fujimori, and the support he garnered from contemporary neoliberal ideologues such as Hernando de Soto. There is an installation in the LUM on the massacre at Ucharaccay, and it features a short video of Vargas Llosa speaking to his role in the investigative reporting in 1983 and his position as President of the commission to found the LUM. Neither the short video nor the installation responds directly to these critiques of Vargas Llosa or the commission. In the short video, he does not respond to these critiques, and understands the causalities of the massacre related to the lack of communication, “la falta de integración social” (the lack of social integration) of these communities, and offers the pieties of “legalidad, democracia, and iniciativas pacíficas” (legality, democracy, and pacific/peaceful initiatives) as necessary palliative measures.
the LUM has acquired a variety of objects, including weapons from the Ashaninka resistance movement against Sendero, Edilberto Jimenez’s lauded *retablos* that depict unofficial histories of the war, and wide range of other objects. In the LUM’s “Cubo de los Desaparecidos” installation, they feature select objects of those who were forcibly disappeared by the state or by SL, donated by family members. The LUM has also fashioned itself as a pedagogical institution, regularly holding open workshops related to memory, creating modules and regularly inviting local high schools and universities in Lima for tours and educational sessions, as well as organizing film screenings/series on legacies of political violence in Peru and throughout Latin America. The LUM represents perhaps one of the most well-funded and coordinated efforts within Peru to steer the official narrative of the era of political violence, which is also necessarily involved in the activity of redefining what it means to be a citizen of Peru in the post-conflict era.

There is a critical consensus among scholars who agree upon the fundamental compatibilities between human rights discourse and the operations of capitalist-driven neoliberalism. Randall Williams’s in *Divided World: Human Rights and Its Violence* provides a brief yet powerful synopsis on the historical and discursive emergence of “human rights” in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights following World War II in 1948, W.E.B. DuBois’s dissatisfaction with its racially exclusive tenor, its affiliations with the bourgeois-imperial notion of “rights of man” reaching back into the 18th and 19th centuries, the uneven articulation of human rights initiatives with global decolonization movements throughout the global south, and its newfound role as the crucial lingua franca of politics of the global neoliberal order. In the

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11 An additional step in my research could entail deeper analysis of the objects held in the LUM, and how they were acquired.
context of post-dictatorial Argentina, Jennifer Ponce de León argues that “human rights discourse emerging from the framework of transitional justice has traditionally marginalized considerations of distributive justice, social and economic rights, and economic forms of complicity in rights abuses” (Ponce de León 2). She also notes how the historical narrative encoded in human rights discourse relies upon a “stagist, progressive script that structures representations of…Latin America’s…recent political history” and imagines a “separation of a time of dictatorship from a time of neoliberal democracy” and “attempts to represent systematic and politically repressive state violence as pertaining only to the authoritarian state of the past, while casting the neoliberal state as post-violent” (Ponce de León 6). While Peru’s historical trajectory within the continental epoch of the “dirty wars” diverges from its Latin American counterparts – for instance, the SL emerged out of the reinstatement of democratic law following a left-wing revolutionary military dictatorship under Velasco, and, while Alberto Fujimori’s *auto-golpe* (or authoritarian rule established under a ‘self-coup’) did inaugurate a constitutional crisis, it is not quite an analogue to a Pinochet or Videla dictatorial regime – the sense of a temporal “separation of a time of dictatorship from a time of neoliberal democracy” nonetheless structures how human rights discourses characterize post-conflict Peru (and, as I go to show in the next section, informs the intertwined material and imaginary elements of the LUM).

Ponce de León’s emphasis on the ways in which human rights discourse minimizes the role of the economic regimes of inequitable resource distribution dovetails with that of Susan Marks, who, by way of Naomi Klein’s rather well-known critiques of neoliberal policy in Argentina and Chile, argues that human rights discourse eschews any real reckoning with the

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“root causes of human rights violations” (Marks 59). Marks keys into how it is a structural tendency for these discourses to neuter the political imagination by characterizing the “state as the primary agent of change” that will confidently usher in equitable, yet abstracted, justice. This has the double effect of centering the state as the domain of politics that will faithfully orchestrate reparations and “domesticat[ing] more complex (and potentially more radical) demands on the social structure,’ and in the process brings about the ‘demobilization’ of social movements and other forms of emancipatory struggle” (Marks 59). These tendencies – the obfuscation of “root causes,” the centering of the state as trustworthy dominion of redistributive even reparative politics, and the foreclosure of radical avenues towards social and economic emancipation – intensify within the context of the institution of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Writing on how the legitimacy of the state must be reconstituted after periods of extreme violence, Randall explains how the institutional form of the TRC functions as something like a “therapeutic apparatus,” distinctly different than a “punishment machine,” but a “recording apparatus” that spectacularizes human suffering for a cathartic effect, which ultimately serves as a technique to restore faith back into the benevolence of the state (Williams 70).

Marks, still following Klein, urges us to not think of historical atrocity as deviations on the otherwise stable trajectory of history towards an ineluctable horizon of abstracted justice, but as events of “planned misery” that come into being as the result of conscious decision-making procedures (Marks 78). While the tendency for human rights discourse to miscomprehend and mischaracterize how historical, economic, and political conditions enable the organized violence of both state and non-state actors, Wendy Brown gives closer attention to its “discursive operation,” which oftentimes takes shape as a “a moral discourse centered on pain and suffering” rather than “a political discourse of comprehensive justice” (Brown 453). In response to Michael
Ignatieff’s defense of international human rights work in post-conflict societies, Wendy Brown argues that the “promise of [human] rights” is as much a “brief for capitalism,” especially in its “suggestion that national wealth is produced by rather than productive of civil liberties and constitutionalism” (Brown 456). The discursive operations of free market and civil liberties interpenetrate in their sanctification of the self-possessed willful individual as the ideal subject at the expense of a more radical critique, leading Brown to consider that “human rights as the essential precondition for a free-market order and for the market itself as the vehicle of individual social and economic security” (Brown 458).

While not speaking directly to the question of human rights, Cynthia Milton and Eugenia María Ulfe point to the compatibilities between post-conflictual efforts in Peru to memorialize in an institutional context and neoliberal marketing strategies. Commenting upon two important predecessors to the construction of LUM (which also grew out of the TRC recommendation for symbolic reparations), the memory exhibits-cum-tourist destinations Yuyanapaq: Para Recordar located in el Museo Nacional in Lima and the Museo de la Memoria de ANFASEP in Ayacucho (the historical epicenter of the Sendero insurgency), Milton and Ulfe write that “In what appears to be a strategic use of (rather than a deviation from) neoliberal government discourse to promote tourism for economic development, dating back to the Fujimori era, the managers of these memory sites seek the same audience to remember the past in post-CVR Peru. The development-through-tourism model inherited from Fujimori’s regime dovetails with the objectives of the Peruvian Truth Commission to reflect upon Peru’s internal war” (Milton and Ulfe 209). The LUM, too, functions as another node in the Peruvian tourist industry. While the ties between
memory discourses and ideologies of neoliberalism are well established\textsuperscript{13}, I hope to add to these critiques in another way, specifically by thinking through the ways in which the formal elements of the space and its exhibits powerfully reinforce the historical narrative the museum offers.

**Memory-Making in LUM: Transitional Justice, Human Rights Discourse, and the Horizon of Neoliberal Capitalism**

In an influential article, Achille Mbembe has insisted upon the mutually constitutive material and imaginary dimensions of state-led national archives. He accounts for how “the status” and the “power” of the archive rest on its “architectural dimensions,” and how the “physical space of the site of the building” articulates with its “instituting imaginary” (Mbembe 19). The composition of material space, “its motifs and columns, the arrangement of the rooms, the organization of the ‘files’, the labyrinth of the corridors” and the “half-light and austerity,” are not merely incidental to the production of history and its narratives (19). Rather, the material space encodes how archivists understand the histories contained within their archives and the kinds of stories they think the archive can produce. In other words, the configurations of the material space that houses an archive enable certain visions of history to take shape and legitimate historical narratives to which certain collectivities may imagine ownership. By alerting us to the collusions between the formation of the archive and the creation of the state, he invites us to be healthily suspicious of the “constitutive violence” that shapes them both and reminds us of irreparable “debts” that continue to haunt them (23). Mbembe’s insights on the entanglement between the “inescapable materiality” and the “instituting imaginary” of the archive and its necessary relationship to the violence of modern statecraft provide a critical

\textsuperscript{13} For more examples of these critiques, see the edited collection *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America*, eds. Leigh A. Payne and Ksenija Bilbija.
vocabulary for understanding the architectural design of the LUM in relation to its own instituting imaginary of memory-making, one that consecrates the pieties of liberal human rights discourse, sutures the fragments of the post-conflict Peruvian nation into an illusory whole, and naturalizes the neoliberal order of political economy as a post-violent, even inevitable, regime. Mbembe’s discussion centers on the formation of national archives, an institution whose intended audiences and degrees of accessibility differ from those of the memory museum. The memory museum, unlike the more restricted nature of national archives, fashions itself as a pedagogical and cultural institution that prizes open-access of documents, exhibits, and installations containing objects tied to an event of national tragedy. Yet, Mbembe’s reminder that the “archive” refers not only to set of heterogenous documents and “data,” but also processes of deeply uneven compilation that ritualistically imbues material objects and space with a peculiar “status,” allows me to stretch his theoretical ambit to speak to these historical particularities of the post-conflict memory museum in Peru.
The LUM is located atop a hill along the Pacific coast within the bounds of Miraflores, historically one of the most affluent districts in Lima, and is neighbor to a circuitry of tourist destinations, glittering shopping malls and stretches of sandy beaches. Entering the LUM is no straightforward task. Although the doors to enter the exhibits are located at the base of the hill, one must begin at its uppermost part and descend a steep set of stairs outside of the building to enter (see Figure 1). To my knowledge, there are no structural limitations inherent in the built

Figure 1. Photo Credit: Nick Millman

Figure 2. Image accessed through this link: https://elcomercio.pe/peru/hay-abrir-fosas-cerrar-heridas-peru-274688

14 The “Cada Uno” booklet lists that “En tres de las cinco reuniones en Ayacucho se criticó que el Lugar de la Memoria se construyera en Lima y particularmente en Miraflores, un distrito identificado como “pituco” en palabras de la señora Dionisia, líder de la organización de afectados de Pampacangallo” or “In three of the five meetings in Ayacucho, they criticized that el LUM would be constructed in Lima, particularly in Miraflores, a district identified as “pituco” (a Peruvian vernacular or colloquialism to describe, in a parodic way, that which is “upper-class,” “snooty” or “posh”) in the words of la señora Dionisia, leader of the organization of the “affected” in Pampacangallo. (36, my translation). This fact foregrounds the politics of place, and is a record for the contestations over where the LUM is located. What is important to recognize is how museum does not necessarily forcibly excise or ‘silence’ dissenting voices from la sierra. Rather, the official discourse performs included exclusions, in which difference or dissent are taken given space, but in a controlled or managed way. This logic resonates with the precisely the kind of liberal ethos I argue undergirds the aesthetic logics of the LUM.
environment that require an outdoor staircase leading to the entrance below. Rather, this is an aesthetic choice that takes pains to dramatize downward descent, and to heighten the haunting sensation of going underneath the earth as a necessary experience before entering the museum. This descent downwards is a kind of spatial performance of elegy, perhaps even hearkening back to a classical topos of the mythic journey to the underworld or to the land of the dead. Related to the more immediate Peruvian situation, I see a visual affinity between the looming arcs of earth that border the downward descent and the mounds of excavated dirt that rest next to an exhumed *fosa*, a widely recognized symbol of post-conflict Peru (see Figure 2). The *fosa*, “trench” or “ditch,” is the name given to the unceremonious depository of the bodies of those forcibly disappeared and murdered by the state or by Sendero during the era of political violence, often Quechua-speaking indigenous or other political dissidents. The *fosas* are not tied to any specific region within Peru, but can be found throughout the whole country, and can be understood as a perverse icon of violence occurring at the national level. The official process for exhuming *fosas* to discover and identify the remains of bodies was initiated by the TRC in 2001, and the process is still ongoing, with many civil society groups exhorting the state to continue exhumations. The official human rights language attached to discussions of exhuming *fosas* often invokes the necessity to open old historical wounds to achieve healing or reconciliation. Take, for instance, the title of this article (the source for the image in figure 2), which comes from Ariel Dulitzky, former member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights who exhorted the Peruvian state to promulgate “La Ley de las Búsqueda de las Personas Desaparecidas”: “Hay que abrir las fosas para cerrar las heridas / One must open the *fosas* to close the wounds” (García Bendezú “Hay que abrir”). My point here is not that the LUM entrance merely replicates or reproduces a *fosa*, as it does in one of the permanent exhibits on display. Rather, the spatial and material
configuration participates in an existing visual discourse, a semiotic grammar of the conflict, which orients the visitor to the space in a way that accords with existing practices and discourses on memory in Peru. If entering an archive for Mbembe is akin to entering a “cemetery” of “interred…fragments of lives and pieces of time,” then entering the LUM is like descending into the grave itself, or, perhaps more precisely, into an open *fosa* (19 Mbembe).

What is at stake in the chain of associations between the LUM’s entrance as downward descent into a gaping chasm of earth, the exhumed *fosa*, and the figurative image of the open wound? Francesca Denegri and Alexandra Hibbett, in their edited collection on the aesthetics and politics of *testimonio* in post-conflict Peru, connect the image of the “open wound” to a practice of memory making that has structured TRC produced discourses, such as those in the *Informe final* and the previously mentioned visual *relato, Yuyanapaq*. The practice of “buen recordar,” or “good memory,” refers to “a notion of memory that conceives of the violent past as an open wound that is necessary to reopen, despite of the pain that the act produces, in order to achieve individual and collective healing it would bring, and at the end of this painful journey, a country purified of its errors and reconciled with itself” (Denegri and Hibbett 24, original in Spanish, my translation). The open wound is the central image that has governed the discourse on “buen recordar,” according to Denegri and Hibbett, it is the “wound opened by a violent and traumatic act, which ought to be attended to so that it closes and scars in such a way that the individual, or the society, could return to walk down a harmonious and productive path” (Denegri and Hibbett 27, original in Spanish, my translation). There is a linear teleology that structures this vision of “buen recordar” and the treatment of the open wound of history and memory. The reparative process of “buen recordar” follows a teleological evolutionism, “abrir la herida – cerrarla – curación – una nueva historia / “the opening of the wound – closing it – the
cure – a new history” that constitutes this TRC-enabled memory making practice (Hibbett and Denegri 28). This form of memory making aspires towards the full comprehension of the ethical valences of mass atrocity, and hinges on the possibility of a redemptive moment in which the historical antagonisms between the rigid binary of victim and perpetrator may be rectified. This is a horizon of abstracted reparation, a national reconciliation in which the jagged class, ethnic, and linguistic heterogeneities of the Peruvian nation are unified in a single, if impossible, epochal moment of absolution from the era of political violence, a dispensation of violence forever consigned to the past, unimaginable in the present or future.15

The material space of the LUM participates in a semiotics akin to “el buen recordar,” and incorporates this practice of memory-making as a structuring principle in the legitimizing mechanism of its “instituting imaginary.” I read the entrance (seen in Figure 1) as spatially enacting the first stage, the opening of the historical wound for the necessary act of healing. The LUM, I argue, continues to sustain the linear trajectory undergirding el buen recordar of a TRC flavor of human rights in the deliberate arrangements of its physical space throughout the building.

15 Denegri and Hibbett contrast the practice of “buen recordar” with another practice of memory making, “el recordar sucio.” The “recordar sucio” is related to Primo Levi’s idea of the “grey zone,” in which the division between victim and perpetrator is destabilized and moral fixity is dissolved. El recordar sucio is often defined as the failure to achieve reconciliation, and urges us to be attuned to the conditions that make this so. Denegri and Hibbett limn the limitations and shortcomings of el buen recordar by putting it in conversation with notions of el recordar sucio, which opens up the productive space for ambiguity and a more critical effort towards securing justice that does not necessarily find recourse through juridical processes. The larger point in my paper is that the “inescapable materiality” of the LUM encodes the vision of reparations in el buen recordar. This is not to say that the stories, testimonios, and other story-telling objects contained within the LUM do not express the kinds of moral ambiguities reminiscent of el recordar sucio. Rather, my larger point is that the primary arrangement of space in the LUM contains those stories within a framing principle informed by the logics of buen recordar.
Like the linearity of the successive phases imagined in *el buen recordar*, the museum stages an unfolding sequence of three vertically arranged floors, divided thematically along three permanent exhibits, all connected by an unbroken zig-zag path that progressively moves upwards throughout the entire museum. The conceptual, historical and spatial ordering of these exhibits across the three vertically arranged floors loosely mimics the temporal trajectory outlined in *el buen recordar*. The first floor, “Afectaciones,” which one walks into immediately after descending the stairs at the entrance, narrates how the era of political violence affected individuals and communities throughout Peru by putting on display audiovisual *testimonios* and objects. The second exhibit is named “Acciones,” which narrates key national events that marked the final convulsions of the war – the public assassination of Afro-Peruvian activist

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16 It is not within the scope of this paper to exhaustively discuss the objects and installations in the permanent exhibits of the LUM. A future reworking of this paper will include an in-depth discussion of the “Una persona, todas las personas” installation located in the first-floor “Afectaciones” exhibit. This installation features several body-length screens that reiteratively play abbreviated audiovisual *testimonios* in which an individual recounts how their lives were implicated by the era of political violence. These individuals are often those who have been a part of national discussions around, including José Carlos Aguero, whose parents were Senderistas and were murdered by the state; or Georgina Gamboa, who was raped by el Ejercito Nacional but nonetheless decided to keep her child, and famously testified her case in las Audiencias Públicas sponsored by the TRC; or Angélica Mendoza Ascarza, a Quechua-speaking indigenous peasant woman from Ayacucho whose son was disappeared by the state, whose body has not yet been found. She founded the indigenous-led Quechua organization called ANFASEP, which historically protested the Fujimori regime and provided social services to hundreds of children orphaned by the war. The revision to this paper would discuss how these abbreviated audio-visual *testimonios* perform a new kind of interpellative function that hails the viewer as a subject charged with the responsibility of keeping alive the memory of past political violence as a necessary condition for the maintenance of the institutions of liberal democracy. This discussion will also point towards the potential “interpellative misfires” within these audiovisual *testimonios*, specifically Angélica Mendoza’s to borrow a phrase from María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo’s writing on *testimonio* and Rigoberta Menchú in *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development*. These interpellative misfires within the abbreviated audiovisulal *testimonio* offer the promise of bringing the discourse of human rights upon which the LUM relies into crisis, opening an aperture for a more expansive political imagination beyond appeals to reaffirm the sacred tenets of liberal democracy.
María Elena Moyano, Abimael Guzmán’s capture by Fujimori’s counter-insurgency forces and the subsequent fall of SL, the corruption charges placed against Fujimori and his seeking asylum in Japan, and the transitional justice efforts taken by the TRC – in the form of clips and text-heavy descriptions on panels. “Acciones,” frames the actions of the state as measures to maintain and protect liberal notions of citizenship, democracy and human rights. Consider, for example, one of the final panels located in the “Acciones” exhibit (see Figure 3). Its signage reads:

La democracia es el sistema político que ofrece los mejores canales para construir una sociedad justa. El respeto a la ley y a los derechos humanos debe ser asumido por todos. En ese sentido, nuestra Constitución establece que el Estado tiene como fin supremo garantizar los derechos humanos, proteger a la población y promover el bienestar general. La violencia nunca puede justificarse por la desigualdad económica o por las deficiencias en educación, salud o acceso a la justicia. La vida siempre debe defenderse frente a la muerte y el terror.”

“Democracy is the political system that offers the best channels for constructing a just society. Respect for the law and human rights ought to be assumed for all. In that sense, our Constitution establishes that the State’s supreme goal is to guarantee human rights, protect the people and promote general well-being. Violence should never be justified for economic inequality or deficiencies in education, health or access to justice. Life always must be defended in the face of death and terror” (my translation)

This language in one of the final panels in “Acciones” exclusively upholds the logos of democracy as a prophylactic to state violence, placing abiding faith in the hallowed institutions of liberal democracy to actively prevent violence in the interest of preserving life. This panel is interesting because as it refuses the possibility of a countervailing politics towards economic or
social egalitarianism that may deploy violence, it effaces the ways in which the Peruvian state – in its presence in some regions – (such as Villa San Salvador in Lima that contains a high number of Afro-Peruvian communities) and in its absence (especially in Ayacucho and throughout the largely indigenous Andean sierra) – has enabled those very inequalities itself as a form of violence. I have in mind Jo-Marie Burt’s discussion of ongoing racialized urban displacement in the barriadas (or slums) in Lima, a zone that has historically housed high populations of Afro-Peruanos facing urban displacement.¹⁷ The point here is that the memory museum exclusively constrains questions of “violence” to the spectacular convulsions of the Maoist insurgency and Fujimorista “violence.” The consecration of the memory of these historic atrocities implicitly exculpates the state from ongoing forms of violence wielded by the intertwined state and market agents in Peru under liberal democratic politics. To follow Susan Marks, this panel appears to obfuscate “root causes” of violence, and does so in the name of advancing human rights. While the panel likely means to refer to the rather sinister revolutionary violence of Sendero Luminoso, it nonetheless forecloses a spectrum of other creative politics that may attempt to challenge inequitable socio-economic situations. Eugenio di Stefano’s materialist and Marxist critique of the construction of memory museums and their relationship to neoliberalism in Uruguay following its own dictatorship is apt to remember here: “…if the central project of the Left today aims at producing spaces and citizens of memory, it does so at the expense of another project that functions to eliminate class equality” (Di Stefano n.p.). Di Stefano also writes that contemporary post-authoritarian memory making discourses tends to

¹⁷ See Burt’s Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru: Silencing Civil Society (2007). Also see Mike Davis’s discussion of the production of slums, displacement, and the housing crisis in Lima at the nexus of structural adjustment, currency devaluation and state retrenchment in his landmark Planet of Slums (2004).
“take one type of conflict (between capitalism and communism) and redescribe it as another type of conflict (between human rights and authoritarianism)” (Di Stefano n.p). In this panel, we might glimpse precisely one of those moments that recodes the antagonisms of capitalism and anti-capitalist forces into an issue of human rights and, in this case, both the “authoritarianism” of Fujimori and the “terrorism” of SL. My larger point here is that, as a visitor in the space of the LUM itself, we arrive at this panel, and its exhortation for the visitor to reinvest their faith into the state’s promise to secure human rights, within a specific point on the unfolding narrative imagining a kind of reparative horizon of reconciliation.

Then the museum moves upwards to the third and final floor, “Ofrendas,” which is less information intensive than the two preceding exhibits. The exhibit conceives itself as an “offering” to the dead, designed as an enclosed contemplative and reflective space. The walls of this permanent exhibit consist of three commissioned murals, each one representing one of the tripartite regions of the Peruvian nation: la costa, la sierra, or la selva. The collage of these murals gesture towards the aspiration for a symbolic unification of the fragmented racial geography of Peru. This third and final floor leads to the only exit in the building, located at the rooftop, which unfurls into an idyllic panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean (see Figure 4 below for a view of the exit). I understand this moment in the spatial trajectory of the LUM, staged as constant upward movement towards the horizon of the Pacific Ocean, as paralleling the final scene in el buen recordar, the sublime arrival at the “end of the painful journey.” Like the dramatized entrance into the LUM, the momentous exit to the littoral vista incorporates the view of the Pacific almost as if it were an exhibit itself. The spatially arranged exit onto the rooftop panorama of the Pacific Ocean resembles the final stage in buen recordar’s “path” to healing, the
transcendent arrival at truth and contemplation on futurity. The final scene of the LUM offers a literal arrival at a horizon, evocative of futurity.

The view of the peaceful Pacific is not all that characterizes the horizon that the LUM directs us towards, however. The visitor also arrives at the view of the cityscape and skyline of Lima, which is itself a product of neoliberal development (See figure 5. Note the differences between the “official” image of this horizon from the LUM, figure 4, which only shows the view of the Pacific Ocean, and an “unofficial” image, figure 5, which shows the coexistence of the cityscape with the Pacific). For instance, from the rooftop exit of the LUM one can glimpse the stretch of newly constructed outdoor malls, a ritzy complex called the Larcomar, which has been hailed “the most emblematic architectural project of the neoliberal phase” (Ioris 1170). In order for Larcomar to be founded, it entailed the privatization of public space and even the implementation of “restrictions in the access of low-income people to shopping centers,” which resulted in several protests against both class and racial discrimination (Ioris 1171). Eugenio di Stefano writes, in the context of the construction of a memory museum in Uruguay, the importance of the neoliberal cityscape in managing the forgetting and remembering of historical atrocity. Di Stefano writes that the creation of a “cityscape aims at interpellating a new type of consumer-citizen as constitutive of the city's forgetting of the recent past” and that indeed, the "neoliberal city" of the 80s and 90s is now giving way to a new phase in the development of cityscape and citizenship, “one…committed to human rights, justice and democracy; in short, we are witnessing the rise of "citizens of memory." (Di Stefano n.p.). For Di Stefano, “the foundation of the neoliberal city fully embraces citizens of memory, but also, and more importantly, the emergence of this citizen has proved central to the consolidation of the neoliberal city and neoliberalism more generally” (Di Stefano n.p). The Limeño cityscape,
particularly how the LUM positions the viewer in relation to it, also enacts an interpellative function by hailing its visitors as “citizens of memory,” or, better yet, as “citizens of *el buen recordar*.” It is the newfound task of the national citizen to internalize the history of Peru’s era of political violence as a “citizen of memory.” Yet, this keeping of the memory is only to prepare them as citizens that accord with a horizon of neoliberalism. The spatially arranged exit from the museum and arrival at the panoramic view of the Pacific and the Limeño cityscape literalizes the coinciding horizons of human rights discourse on reparations and that of neoliberalism.

*Figure 4. The Exit of the LUM. Photo accessed here:*
https://www.archdaily.com/584927/plac

*Figure 5. Southern view on the rooftop/exit of the LUM. Photo Credit: Nick Millman*
Works Cited


