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Women, War, and Social Memory in Peru: The Posthumous Careers of Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano

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Women, War, and Social Memory in Peru
The Posthumous Careers of Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano

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Chapter 1

Remembering Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano

From 1980 to 2000, Peru experienced two decades of political violence, beginning with the decision of the Maoist insurgent group Shining Path, or Sendero Luminoso, to launch a war against the Peruvian state. Led by Abimael Guzmán, Sendero's explicit purpose for the armed struggle was to dismantle both Peru's government and its society in order to reconstruct a revolutionary, Communist state on the foundations of what remained. Believing that Peru's state and society were both irredeemably corrupt, so much so that any nonviolent reforms were inevitably doomed to failure, Sendero's decision to take up arms coincided with the first national elections held after twelve years of military rule and prompted two decades of armed conflict and political violence in which the civilian death toll was staggeringly high; an estimated 69,000 Peruvians were killed or disappeared, primarily by the Shining Path and the armed forces.¹

Initial attacks by Sendero were followed by a counterinsurgent reprisal from both the police and the military, prompting the continued escalation of violence from each side. The Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR) found that rural, indigenous peasants bore the brunt of violence throughout the war; forty percent of those killed were from Ayacucho, the rural department where Sendero initiated its war, and seventy-eight percent were native speakers of indigenous languages.² These dynamics of violence reflect the contours of entrenched inequality in Peru, which were factors in shaping the war and remain intact today.

¹ Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación [CVR], *Hatun Willakuy: Abbreviated Version*

² CVR, *Hatun Willakuy*, 14-15.

During Peru's twenty years of violence, women participated in the conflict a variety of important ways, enlisting in Sendero Luminoso and forming civil society organizations in both Lima and rural departments to advocate against insurgent and state-sponsored violence.³ But today, relatively few of these women are known by name. Perhaps the two most famous individual women remembered for their roles in this history were Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano, both of whom were killed during the conflict. Edith Lagos was a young, white militant recruited by Sendero. She was killed by the Peruvian armed forces early in the war, prompting a public outpouring of grief that initially suggested the development of almost mythological status for Lagos as a heroic and martyred figure. According to one Peruvian journalist, Lagos "exuded the intense and total devotion to the Shining Path rebellion...a vision of a society built on transcendent and enduring justice...Edith Lagos symbolized this generation of young Ayacuchans, clay shaped for sacrifice."⁴ The symbolic significance thus attached to Lagos's life prompted widespread public mourning at the news of her death, which was perceived widely as the brutal killing of a young idealist by a violent state; as many as thirty thousand people were estimated to have attended her funeral.⁵ Later in the war, however, Lagos's memory declined in prominence, both because the escalation of the violence led to shrinking popular sympathy for Sendero and because the cult of personality that

³ See Isabel Coral Cordero, "Women in War: Impacts and Responses," in *Shining and Other Paths*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁴ Gustavo Gorriti, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru*, trans. Robin Kirk (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 240-241.

⁵ Gorriti, *The Shining Path*, 241.

Abimael Guzmán deliberately fostered around himself ultimately eclipsed all other figures within Sendero.⁶

The other woman who is the focus of this study occupied a very different social and political position from Lagos's. María Elena Moyano was an Afro-Peruvian leftist activist whom Sendero Luminoso assassinated towards the end of the war, believing her to be a traitor to the revolution. As the deputy mayor of the low-income neighborhood of Villa El Salvador and as a nonviolent leftist, Moyano was in their view complicit in and morally compromised by the corrupt state against which the Shining Path was waging war, making her assassination a necessary phase of the revolution. After her death, then-President Alberto Fujimori attempted to portray Moyano as a martyr to the anti-Sendero cause, erasing her fierce criticism of his government's military and neoliberal policies.⁷ Academics, journalists, and activist groups within and without Peru challenged both of these narratives.⁸ Today, Moyano is remembered much more widely than Lagos in Peru, as a heroine who sacrificed for her country. In this thesis, I will analyze these women's

⁶ See Ricardo Caro Cárdenas, "Ser mujer, joven, y senderista: género y pánico moral en las percepciones de Sendero Luminoso," *Allpanchis: Revista del Instituto de Pastoral Andina* 37, no. 67 (2006): 125-156.

⁷ Fujimori was a political outsider who was elected president of Peru in 1990, due in part to widespread frustrations with the previous APRA government's handling of the war against Sendero as well as over the economic collapse. While in office, Fujimori established a neoliberal state and took control of counterinsurgency efforts, ultimately becoming a dictator through a coup against his own government. See Jo-Marie Burt, *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru: Silencing Civil Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), chapter 8.

⁸ See Jo-Marie Burt, "Los usos y abusos de la memoria de María Elena Moyano," *Contracorriente: Una revista de historia social y literatura de América Latina* 7, no. 2 (2010): 165-209 and Gabriela McEvoy, "La construcción de la imagen heroica través del discurso periodístico: El caso de la activista peruana María Elena Moyano," *Historia Crítica*, no. 35 (2008): 82-104.

lives, deaths, and memories to shed light on complex processes and dynamics of gender, race, war, social memory, and nation building in Peru.

Drawing on theories of hero cults, body politics, and social memory, I argue that the shifting narratives surrounding Lagos's and Moyano's lives and deaths reflected changes in public opinion towards Sendero and the armed conflict. Sendero and the state, as well as other actors, attempted to use collective memories of both Lagos and Moyano to their own purposes, Sendero seeking to foster support for its war and legitimize its violent tactics and the state to justify its authoritarian character and the violence of its counterinsurgency. I also argue that Catholic ideas of female virtue and martyrdom shaped the hero cults and social memory positioning of both Lagos and Moyano; in Moyano's case, the elision of Afro-Peruvian identity was central as well.

Methodology: Researching Women in the Archives

For this thesis, I work with both primary and secondary sources to study the politics of memory surrounding Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano. I draw on secondary sources in history, anthropology, and other scholarly disciplines, as well as the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.⁹ I use these secondary sources to provide historical background on the origins of Sendero Luminoso and the internal armed conflict in Peru in general, as well as the lives of Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano and the importance of gender to this period. I have also read sources that provide a

⁹ For my thesis, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission functions as an important secondary analysis and as a primary source, in that it was explicitly conceived as a public social memory project in the wake of the war. Although Lagos and Moyano are not discussed in great detail within the Truth Commission's final report, the CVR is in many ways emblematic of the politics of social memory in postwar Peru. For discussion of the politics of investigating and writing the CVR report, see Kimberly Theidon, *Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 6-11.

theoretical framework for thinking about these women's lives and memories, including studies on heroes and hero cults, body politics, and social memory after violence. Because of the limitations of the existing scholarly literature on women and the internal armed conflict, I reference sources on women, war, and memory in other Latin American contexts for a comparative perspective.

I draw on primary sources from both the United States and Peru, including testimonies, newspapers, photographs, and government documents both digitized and in print. The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission holds a digital archive of photographs unearthed during its investigation process, including photographs of both Lagos and Moyano as well as photographs of the Peruvian public mourning their deaths. These images provide visual evidence of the public importance attributed to these women. For details of Moyano's life, I turn to a brief autobiography, which was published posthumously by a close friend.¹⁰

This January, I was able to travel to Lima for the purpose of conducting archival research. While there, I concentrated on two archival collections that do not have extensive digital holdings. I visited the archives at the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, which hold a range of both published and unpublished sources on Sendero Luminoso. In this collection, I examined books and newspapers written by the Shining Path for mentions of Lagos and Moyano, hoping to trace the use of their narratives for propaganda purposes. I consulted collections of published testimonies, newspapers and magazines in addition to those published by the Shining Path, and human rights reports and other

¹⁰ María Elena Moyano, *The Autobiography of María Elena Moyano: The Life and Death of a Peruvian Activist*, ed. Diana Miloslavich Tupac, trans. Patricia S. Taylor (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

documentation produced by both Peruvian and United States non-governmental organizations, as well as published scholarly sources that are not available in the United States.

I also visited the archives of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There, I studied testimonies and interviews relating to the lives of both Lagos and Moyano, newspapers from the period, and legal documentation relating to the investigation of Moyano's death and the assassination of other women leaders by Sendero. I read a series of testimonies from women who were militants in the Shining Path in order to compare their experiences with Lagos's.

I was also interested in looking at more public forms of commemoration for both Lagos and Moyano. To that end, I visited Lagos's tomb in Ayacucho, a monument to Moyano in Villa El Salvador, and a museum based on the Truth Commission's report featuring references to both Lagos and Moyano. I discuss all of these spaces as sites of memory making related to Lagos and Moyano, but also as spaces where dominant narratives of their lives and deaths may be contested.

There are specific methodological challenges associated with using archival collections to research women's lives and histories. Archives are not produced in a vacuum, but are in themselves spaces shaped by and reflective of the existing power relations within which they are created. Antoinette Burton writes that women are often relatively absent from written histories "that may touch on contexts of significance to them but that effectively brush by them, in part because of the comparative lack of

archival trace to secure them in the sightlines of history.”¹¹ Within this dynamic, women who are privileged or marginalized in other ways along the axes of race and class become more or less visible. In this context, methodologies for archival research on women’s lives are rarely straightforward, involving instead “‘researching around’ subjects who left few material traces...[and] reading ‘against the grain’ a single official document (or a few such documents) for ‘subtexts and silences.’”¹² I utilized these strategies for interrogating archival sources both during my field research in January and after my return to campus.

Historical Context: The Shining Path War in Peru

Prior to Sendero Luminoso’s decision to begin the armed struggle, few expected the Shining Path would ever constitute a serious threat. Sendero began its war in May of 1980, when a small group of masked militants burned the ballot boxes and voter registry in the town of Chuschi in the rural department of Ayacucho, which Sendero understood as the epicenter of its revolution.¹³ Staged in a small town in the Andes on the day when national elections were held for the first time after twelve years of military dictatorship, the attacks garnered little attention outside of Chuschi and Ayacucho at first. Even shortly thereafter, when dead dogs appeared hanging in the streets of Lima with the words “Death to the Revisionists,” national attention remained largely transfixed by the changes

¹¹ Antoinette Burton, “Foreword: ‘Small Stories’ and the Promise of New Narratives,” in *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*, eds. Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), vii.

¹² Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), xv.

¹³ Gorriti, *The Shining Path*, 17.

occurring in Lima and in the realm of legal politics.¹⁴ Most Peruvians, especially people living in the capital, were surprised at the outbreak of armed uprising, but initially viewed it as a regional phenomenon confined to Ayacucho rather than a national threat, and thus were unconcerned by Sendero's violence.¹⁵ Preoccupied with the transition from military to civilian rule, Peru's new president, Fernando Belaúnde Terry, also failed to perceive the threat that Sendero represented, focusing instead on the continued jockeying for power taking place between Peru's legal political parties.¹⁶ This collective failure to recognize the initial significance of the Shining Path was due in part to the election, but even more to the deep and enduring divisions between Lima and the rest of Peru, particularly rural and impoverished regions of the Andean highlands such as Ayacucho.¹⁷

Before choosing to launch the armed struggle in 1980, the Shining Path spent years building a following in Ayacucho under the leadership of Abimael Guzmán. Much of Sendero's initial support came from frustrated and struggling Peruvians, many of them indigenous campesinos who did not benefit from the limited agrarian reform implemented under General Juan Velasco Alvarado's military government.¹⁸ A political philosopher with ties to Maoism, Guzmán arrived in Ayacucho to teach at the

¹⁴ Peter Flindell Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 372.

¹⁵ Carlos Iván Degregori, *How Difficult It Is To Be God: Shining Path's Politics of War in Peru, 1980-1999*, ed. Steve J. Stern, trans. Nancy Applebaum, Joanna Drzewieniecki, Héctor Flores, Eric Hershberg, Judy Rein, Steve J. Stern, and Kimberly Theidon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 7.

¹⁶ Gorriti, *The Shining Path*, 55.

¹⁷ Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, 370. For a regional history of Ayacucho focused on local politics and indigenous peasants' shifting responses to Sendero and the military, see Miguel La Serna, *The Corner of the Living: Ayacucho on the Eve of the Shining Path Insurgency* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, 366. For agrarian reform, see chapter 11 of Klarén's book.

Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga in 1962, where he quickly attracted followers among the student body. Many of these students were indigenous peasants and the first in their families to enroll at the university. Hoping for economic advancement, these students were instead frustrated by the racial barriers to employment they encountered upon graduation, sending many into the arms of the Shining Path. Amidst a period of factionalism and turmoil within the Peruvian left, Guzmán also began organizing an underground Maoist party that would become the Shining Path; many of his students would go on to become members and later militants.¹⁹

In a plenary session held in March of 1980, militants in the Shining Path agreed to go to war. In that meeting and in the party's Military School, held in April, Guzmán articulated his ideology of violence, which would become a guiding principle of how Sendero Luminoso waged war.²⁰ The Shining Path rejected both Cuban and Soviet

¹⁹ Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, 368-69. Although Guzmán initially belonged to the Partido Comunista del Perú, which was the original Marxist organization in Peru, he later became the leader of a Maoist faction, called the Partido Comunista del Perú-Bandera Roja, or Red Flag, which splintered off from the PCP in 1964. This division reflected the worldwide Sino-Soviet Split in the Communist Party, between those who favored the Russian Bolshevik model and those who preferred Mao's vision of a peasant-based revolution that moved from the countryside to the urban center. In 1968, Guzmán was expelled from the Bandera Roja for refusing to support Velasco's reforms, which had been taken up by most of the left; instead, he insisted on violent revolution as the only path to communism. In 1970, he founded the Partido Comunista del Perú en el Sendero Luminoso de Mariátegui (Shining Path), which drew on José Carlos Mariátegui's Peruvian-oriented vision of communism as well as Maoist doctrine.

For a history of the Shining Path's development and ideology prior to the internal armed conflict as well as Guzmán's recruitment of university students, see Carlos Iván Degregori, *El surgimiento de Sendero Luminoso: Ayacucho 1969-1979* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1990). For an analysis of Sendero's fraught relationship with the rest of the Peruvian left, see Iván Hinojosa, "On Poor Relations and the Nouveau Riche: Shining Path and the Radical Peruvian Left," in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 60-83.

²⁰ See Gorriti, *The Shining Path*, chapter 3.

models for revolutionary change, instead drawing on the Maoist revolution in China as a framework for the armed struggle in Peru. Marked by an extraordinary degree of ideological rigidity and resistance to national political trends towards reform and electoral opening, Sendero and Guzmán insisted that violent revolution was the only means of enacting communism, and thus “rejected the primacy of politics in favor of the primacy of violence.”²¹

Although a detailed analysis of senderista ideology is beyond the scope of this chapter, one of Sendero’s guiding principles was the conviction that terrorist action would provoke a violent and repressive state response, which would then result in a conversion of the indigenous peasantry to the Shining Path party line. This ideology rested on a theory of warfare that accepted a heavy toll of civilian life as a so-called blood quota that had to be paid, a grim calculus regarding the amount of sacrificed life necessary on the part of both militants and noncombatants to realize the revolution’s goals. As a result, Sendero would commit the majority of violence against civilians during the armed conflict despite its claim to be waging war on behalf of Peru’s most vulnerable citizens, the campesinos.²² As Sendero anticipated, the response from the Peruvian state was a violent counterinsurgency campaign. Especially initially, massacres and state terror were key components to police and military strategy, which contributed to

²¹ Carlos Iván Degregori, “The Origins and Logic of Shining Path: Two Views: Return to the Past,” in *Shining Path of Peru*, ed. David Scott Palmer (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 55.

²² The CVR later found that Sendero was responsible for fifty-four percent of deaths and disappearances that occurred during the armed conflict, while the state security forces bore the responsibility for thirty-seven percent. CVR, *Hatun Willakuy*, 12-13. This is in contrast to most other internal conflicts in Latin America, in which state forces generally committed the vast majority of atrocities.

the continuing escalation of violence. These massacres specifically targeted indigenous and campesino communities, which the military viewed as support bases for Sendero.²³

The response of indigenous campesinos in Ayacucho to Sendero's initial advances was deeply mixed. Degregori characterizes the overall response as "somewhere between acceptance and rebellion," although of course this response varied widely by community.²⁴ Initially, some peasants were sympathetic to Sendero's message of redress to injustice, and supported to a degree Sendero's punishments of community transgressions such as alcoholism and adultery. However, as the war continued and violence committed by both Sendero and the military escalated, resistance to Sendero developed concomitantly.²⁵ As a result, campesinos organized self-defense committees called *rondas campesinas* to protect their communities and fight against Sendero. In some cases allied with the Peruvian military, by the early 1990s more than 3,500 different communities in Ayacucho and other departments beset by violence had organized their own *rondas*.²⁶ These organizations played an important role in defeating Sendero.

As the Shining Path was developing its armed struggle, another revolutionary organization in Peru became prominent. Beginning in 1984, the Tupac Amarú Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) waged an insurgent war against the state modeled on the Cuban tradition of revolution, in contrast to the Shining Path's Maoist background.

²³ Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, 381-382.

²⁴ Degregori, *How Difficult It Is To Be God*, 119.

²⁵ Degregori, *How Difficult It Is To Be God*, 120-121. See also Miguel La Serna, *The Corner of the Living*.

²⁶ Orin Starn, "Villagers at Arms: War and Counterrevolution in the Central-South Andes," in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 225. See also Carlos Iván Degregori, "Harvesting Storms: Peasant *Rondas* and the Defeat of Sendero Luminoso in Ayacucho," in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 128-157.

Growing out of small groups of the left that were never absorbed into the United Left (IU) coalition organized in the early 1980s, the MRTA was a much smaller insurgency than the Shining Path and much more similar to other revolutionary groups in Latin America. Counting on more support from the legal left in the event of a military coup against the newly elected government, the MRTA was primarily an urban revolution among students, though it was also active in parts of the Amazon, threatening Asháninka indigenous communities.²⁷

These ongoing military and political developments represent the historical backdrop against which Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano lived and died. Although women go relatively unmentioned in the major scholarly works on the internal armed conflict, they participated in important ways throughout. Women joined the Shining Path as militants, although “their presence derived more from their own expectations and desires to enter new spaces of participation than to a senderista sensibility that incorporated gender interests into the Shining Path project.”²⁸ Nevertheless, women were an important presence within Sendero; as many as a third of those imprisoned on charges of terrorism during the war were women, and Sendero claimed at one point that women represented forty percent of its forces.²⁹ As Coral Cordero notes, there was a significant gendered division of labor within Sendero, which continued to operate on deeply patriarchal lines, viewing gender equality as an incidental byproduct rather than a key

²⁷ Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, 376-377. Although a detailed examination of the MRTA is beyond the scope of this thesis, see the discussion in CVR, *Hatun Willakuy*, 122-130.

²⁸ Coral Cordero, “Women in War,” 349.

²⁹ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey’s Paw: New Chronicles from Peru* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 63.

objective of Maoist revolution.³⁰

The presence of women militants within Sendero was initially deeply shocking to both the public and the armed forces. For instance, as Robin Kirk writes, “a woman with a gun means something very other than a man; it is armed emotion, violence pushed beyond the rules of formal combat. In the place of the mother is something terrible, in the sense of full terror.”³¹ There was something profoundly disturbing, then, about the presence of so many women in the Shining Path that went beyond the shock of seeing the sudden emergence of a violent insurgency on the national stage. The upheaval in gender roles coming from female revolutionaries reflected the deeper disturbance of the social order that Sendero represented.

These gendered dynamics shaped Edith Lagos’s experience within Sendero before her death, and are thus important to understanding both her life and the various posthumous interpretations of her memory. Lagos was *misti*, a Quechua term for people racially coded as white, and the daughter of relatively prosperous storeowners in Ayacucho. She studied briefly in Lima before joining Sendero Luminoso, where she became the most prominent individual senderista aside from Guzmán by the time the war began. As part of the Shining Path, she orchestrated a famous raid on the Ayacucho prison in 1982, in which seventy-eight militants were freed; the police shot her within six months of that attack. It is said that she was killed on a mountain road with another

³⁰ Coral Cordero, “Women in War,” 350, 352.

³¹ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey’s Paw*, 64. In thinking about the experiences of Edith Lagos and other women revolutionaries, I have found useful several scholarly works on female guerrilleras in other Latin American contexts. See Irina Carlota Silberman, *Everyday Revolutionaries: Gender, Violence, and Disillusionment in Postwar El Salvador* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011) and Jocelyn Viterna, *Women in War: The Micro-processes of Mobilization in El Salvador* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

combatant who was teaching her to drive. After their stolen truck stalled, they attempted to seize the next passing truck, which was full of police officers who recognized Lagos and killed her immediately. She was buried in Huamanga, the capital city of Ayacucho, and thousands of people attended her funeral.³² It is rumored that the Central Committee of Sendero, including Abimael Guzmán, were all in attendance. Since the funeral, army paramilitary groups have bombed Lagos's gravesite three times, and her family has rebuilt her gravestone each time.³³ Although rumors about Lagos's importance to Sendero despite her youth and her gender circulated frequently in the press while she was alive, her image took on even greater importance after her death: "she became an emblematic and tragic figure, a status which has endured."³⁴

In contrast to Lagos's experience as an underground militant, María Elena Moyano was an Afro-Peruvian leftist with deep ties to civil society. She was one of many women to take part in community organizing, which developed throughout the war in low-income districts of Lima (as well as in rural departments). These organizations provided badly needed social services that were not offered elsewhere, including by the government.³⁵ Coral Cordero describes the importance of these sorts of organizations not only for the work they did, but also for their impact on the women involved with them; as part of these organizations, "poor women forged their new role as new social actors and

³² Robin Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 80-81.

³³ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 83.

³⁴ Caro Cárdenas, "Ser mujer," 126. Unless otherwise cited, all translations from Spanish are by the author.

³⁵ There were of course important women's organizations operating in other areas of Peru outside the capital city, including most prominently mothers' groups advocating for family members of disappeared people in Ayacucho and other regions subject to heavy violence. See Coral Cordero, "Women in War," 353-362. This section focuses on women's organizations in Lima simply because the capital was where María Elena Moyano lived.

constructed an alternative project to respond to the economic crisis.”³⁶ These organizations were also targeted by Sendero, which viewed them as complicit in a corrupt Peruvian state and counterrevolutionary traitors to the true left.

María Elena Moyano was born in 1958 in Lima. She moved to Villa El Salvador at a young age after her parents’ separation, when she, her mother, and her siblings found themselves with no place to live.³⁷ After studying sociology at the University of Garcilaso de la Vega, where she first encountered Marxism, Moyano taught in an early childhood program before helping to found a mother’s club, of which she became the director.³⁸ Racial identity was central to both Moyano’s experiences and her activism. Part of the strength of Moyano’s political commitment to Villa El Salvador came from the racial discrimination she encountered in wealthier districts of Lima with whiter populations, and she “represented a new generation of ‘popular’ feminists: no longer mostly white, middle-class professionals, these women are born in the shantytowns and trained in ‘survival groups,’ which they have transformed into a powerful way to promote feminist and social justice issues.”³⁹ The depth of her commitment to empowering and

³⁶ Coral Cordero, “Women in War,” 364.

³⁷ McEvoy, “La construcción de la imagen heroica,” 84-85. Villa El Salvador is a low-income district on the outskirts of Lima which experienced explosive population growth during the armed conflict as a result of internally displaced people facing violence in Ayacucho and other areas fled to Lima. The government failed to provide basic resources and services, so residents organized to provide themselves with water, food, shelter, and electricity. Although Moyano was born in Lima and thus not one of these displaced people, this experience shaped the community she lived in and her activism later on. See Edinson Ramos Quispe, *Sueños sobre arena: proceso histórico de Villa El Salvador* (Lima: Universidad de Ciencias y Humanidades, Fondo Editorial, 2010).

³⁸ McEvoy, “La construcción de la imagen heroica,” 84; Moyano, *Autobiography*, xv.

³⁹ Robin Kirk, “Untold Terror: Violence Against Women in Peru’s Armed Conflict,” (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992), 54, accessed December 3, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/SKMBT_55213062512100.pdf; McEvoy, “La construcción de la imagen heroica,” 85.

improving the lives of women and low-income Peruvians is clear in her autobiography. In her career as a local activist, Moyano also served as the secretary (1983) and two-term president (1986, 1988) of the Popular Women's Federation of Villa El Salvador (FEPOMUVES) and was later elected the district's deputy mayor (1989). Moyano was deeply critical of both Sendero, which she felt had having betrayed its revolutionary mission by committing violence against the Peruvian people, and the Peruvian state, for failing to curb violence and poverty in Villa El Salvador.⁴⁰ She was an outspoken opponent of government austerity programs as well, which she believed increased poverty and inequality and as a result added to the violence.⁴¹ In response, Moyano and other women's groups organized mass demonstrations that criticized both the use of terror by Sendero and hunger and poverty in Villa El Salvador.⁴² Sendero assassinated Moyano on February 15, 1992, at a public event and in front of her two children.⁴³ The assassination was carried out the day after Moyano led a women's march for peace that condemned Sendero's violent acts.⁴⁴ Much like Lagos, Moyano's death reverberated publically and was attended widely; nearly 300,000 people marched behind her coffin.⁴⁵

Heroes and Martyrs: Conceptualizing Gender and Social Memory

Gender is widely recognized as an important dimension of analysis within the study of armed conflict, political violence, and social memory. The CVR itself stated its intent to employ a "gender approach," which it understood as "developing specific

⁴⁰ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 27, 63-64.

⁴¹ Burt, "Los usos y abusos," 166.

⁴² Moyano, *Autobiography*, ix.

⁴³ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 15.

⁴⁴ Burt, "Los usos y abusos," 167.

⁴⁵ Moyano, *Autobiography*, ix.

approaches to shed light on women's experiences during war and authoritarianism."⁴⁶

Scholars argue that attention to gender dynamics within an armed conflict sheds light on deeply embedded power relations that shape patterns of violence.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, gendered scholarship has been criticized for neglecting the role of masculinities in favor of analyzing femininities. Kimberly Theidon notes that "a gendered perspective on war should include an analysis of masculinity; 'gender' is too frequently a code for 'women,' leaving men as the unquestioned, unmarked category."⁴⁸ Much of the extant historical literature on the armed conflict in Peru is implicitly gendered masculine in that major works foreground the experiences of men; however, the oversight of these works regarding women's experiences is also a failure to critically engage with the many dynamics of gender and interrogate masculinities as well as femininities in the context of the war against Sendero.⁴⁹ Although in this thesis I focus on an analysis of gender, war, and social memory that privileges femininity and women's experiences, the specific dynamics of masculinity in the Peruvian armed conflict merit future research.⁵⁰

Women in wartime, both militants and noncombatants, are represented in

⁴⁶ CVR, *Hatun Willakuy*, 3.

⁴⁷ Caroline O. N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark, *Victims, Perpetrators, or Actors: Gender, Armed Conflict, and Political Violence* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 4. See also Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism, and Feminist Analysis* (London: Zed Books, 2007); Julie D. Shayne, *The Revolution Question: Feminisms in El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

⁴⁸ Kimberly Theidon, "Gender in Transition: Common Sense, Women, and War," *Journal of Human Rights* 6 (2007): 471.

⁴⁹ See Peter Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, David Scott Palmer, *Shining Path of Peru* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), Carlos Ivan Degregori, *How Difficult It Is To Be God*.

⁵⁰ Caroline Yezer, "Anxious Citizenship: Insecurity, Apocalypse, and War Memories in Peru's Andes," (PhD diss., Duke University, 2007), chapter 4 for a discussion of masculinity, indigenous soldiers, and postwar politics in Ayacucho.

complex ways that enact meaningful political work for different parties, with the result that the images and narratives of women that circulate during and after wars are shaped by political agendas and realities. As two scholars of gender and war note,

Along with the woman war victim, another prevalent war image is that of a woman with a rifle over her shoulder and a baby on her back...these prevailing images of women have largely been spread by state institutions, media, and military organizations and have come to constitute iconic representations and/or symbols of women at/in war. As such, they tend to serve strategic, nationalist, or state purposes.⁵¹

The narratives that circulate around prominent women in armed conflicts, such as Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano in Peru, thus carry important political weight. In life and in death, women's bodies are called upon to carry out symbolic and political work on behalf of nations, states, militaries, or other groups. Samuel Brunk's work on the popular and political significance of mythology argues that myth and history are intertwined, and that the social and political significance of heroic figures stems from not only the biographical facts of their lives, but also from the ways in which they are enshrined in social memory, and the political uses made of their memories and mythologies. Writing about Emiliano Zapata, Brunk argues, "the political need to make something of Zapata probably had less to do with the story of Zapata the man than with that of his mythical twin—with the way in which memories of him had developed since his death."⁵² Brunk terms this ongoing political work of heroes' memories after their physical deaths "posthumous careers." I borrow this concept in my thesis to evaluate the disparate political ends to which Lagos's and Moyano's memories are put.

⁵¹ Winona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, eds., *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 4.

⁵² Samuel Brunk, *The Posthumous Career of Emiliano Zapata: Myth, Memory, and Mexico's Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 4.

To that end, I turn to the role of hero cults, martyrdom, body politics, and social memory as analytical frameworks for this thesis, recognizing that the respective posthumous careers of Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano shed light on complex dynamics of social memory, nation building, and political engagement in Peru. Both women occupy spaces in Peruvian social memory and historical narrative that are not fixed; instead, their legacies are interpreted through narratives that are contested, at times sharply, by different actors and for specific political reasons.

The popular sympathy surrounding Edith Lagos before and immediately after she was killed prompted Sendero to establish her in the public eye as a martyr who willingly sacrificed her life for the cause of revolution. As Kirk argues, “Edith became the Shining Path’s rallying cry, their martyr. They needed one.”⁵³ Lagos’s importance as a martyr was due in part to developments in the war; shortly after her death, the president, Fernando Belaúnde, declared a state of emergency in regions where Sendero was active. As a result, the military took control of those areas, and violence escalated rapidly.⁵⁴ This is why it was so vital for the insurgency’s military and political objectives to circulate narratives of itself as fighting a just and righteous war, and Sendero took full advantage of Lagos’s mythology to that end: “Edith’s memory came to mean not only justice, but vengeance. Not just an end to poverty, but the beginning of a new science, Guzmán’s science, that would blast their enemies...from the earth.”⁵⁵ Recognizing the power of Lagos’s memory, state forces repeatedly bombed her gravesite and thus sought to eradicate that legacy by destroying her physical remains.

⁵³ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey’s Paw*, 83.

⁵⁴ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey’s Paw*, 83.

⁵⁵ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey’s Paw*, 84.

The idea of a martyr resurfaces in narratives surrounding Moyano as well. After she was assassinated, the Peruvian state, Sendero Luminoso, and the media circulated distinct narratives about her life and death. To justify its assassination of Moyano, Sendero Luminoso portrayed her as a state collaborator and an enemy of the revolution; this narrative worked to legitimize its actions and dismiss nonviolent leftist alternatives as treasonous collaborationism with the corrupt Peruvian state.⁵⁶ By contrast, the heroic image circulated of Moyano by most media sources worked to “create a collective identity in which many sectors of the population were united and in solidarity momentarily to create a common face against the enemy of the nation: terrorism.”⁵⁷ It was to this end that the Fujimori government attempted to use narratives about Moyano. Seeking to control the narrative of Moyano’s life and the reasons why she died, the state attempted to use her death to highlight senderista violence and justify both its economic policies and the violence of its own counterinsurgency campaign as part of winning popular support for the war.⁵⁸ This narrative functioned to silence Moyano’s leftist activism and militancy and her own sharp criticisms of the consequences of Fujimori’s political, military, and economic policy. After the collapse of the Fujimori estate and the establishment of the Truth Commission as a project to construct an official history of the internal armed conflict, Moyano would continue to be positioned as a depoliticized supporter of the state, although other activists from Villa El Salvador continuously challenge this discourse.

⁵⁶ Burt, “Los usos y abusos,” 180.

⁵⁷ McEvoy, “La construcción de la imagen heroica.”

⁵⁸ Burt, “Los usos y abusos,” 169.

Moyano's younger sister, Martha Moyano, remains active in Peruvian politics. Although initially she articulated a narrative of her sister's life that included both repudiation of Sendero's violent tactics and criticism of the state's failures, her narrative changed when she ran first for Lima's municipal council and then later as a congresswoman as part of Cambio 90, Fujimori's political party. In line with this new political position, Martha Moyano's narrative of her sister's life shifted to "emphasize the condition of María Elena as a victim of Sendero, ignore her criticisms of Fujimori's neoliberal policies, and silence her leftist ideals and activism."⁵⁹

On the left and in the media, activists and journalists sought to complicate and counteract each of these narratives, resurrecting Moyano's history of resistance to both Sendero and the state. The publication of her autobiography, which though authored by Moyano herself was compiled and edited by a fellow activist and personal friend, represents one such alternate memory project. This editor, Diana Miloslavich Tupac, articulates a different narrative of Moyano's legacy, one that is a call to ongoing oppositional activism: "Her murderers were mistaken if they thought they could make her disappear by dynamiting her body. She endures in the hearts and in the sands of Villa, where her ashes were scattered, as well as in the work of those who knew her. Beyond any doubt, María Elena Moyano compels us to continue the struggle."⁶⁰ Although Tupac's role in the publication of the memoir and her active efforts to reframe Moyano's memory in an introduction that centers her activism complicates the idea of authorship, the fact that Moyano herself wrote most of the text while she was alive but knowing she

⁵⁹ Burt, "Los usos y abusos," 171.

⁶⁰ Moyano, *Autobiography*, x.

might be killed indicates that she was thinking about her place in social memory, making the text her effort to participate in the creation of her own hero cult.

In my research, I have found the idea of heroes and hero cults an interesting, although not unproblematic, framework for thinking about the meanings that are bestowed on extraordinary lives, how and why those meanings are socially produced, and the political purposes for which they are invoked. Brunk and Fallaw define a hero as “a person to whom remarkable courage, talent, and other noble, even godlike traits are attributed by members of a community and who thus acquire lasting importance in that community’s culture.”⁶¹ The importance of a hero, then, is not only the sum total of his or her life itself, but also the political meaning attributed to that life—and its memory—by other people; in other words, the hero cult. Fallaw and Brunk also point out the role that heroes play in nation building, particularly when the narratives that circulate around them are deployed or dominated by states: “Heroes help large numbers of people identify with a nation and internalize and accept as natural its basic principles and laws, thus producing greater unity in a population.”⁶² Of course, state powers do not have absolute control over social memory, and other groups frequently contest these narratives to their own political ends.

Heroes and hero cults intersect with gender in complex ways. In many cases, heroism and achieving status as a hero in national memory are tied to masculinity, in part because military and political power have historically been controlled mostly by men.⁶³ This results in a complex relationship between masculinity, heroism, and national

⁶¹ Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw, eds., *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 1.

⁶² Brunk and Fallaw, *Hero Cults*, 3.

⁶³ Brunk and Fallaw, *Hero Cults*, 266.

identity. Writing about Frida Kahlo, Nancy Deffebach notes that a means “for gaining interpretive power was to create a strong female personage—herself—whose repeated image helped to counterbalance the ubiquitous images of male heroes.”⁶⁴ Thus, those women who do achieve status as heroines often implicitly resist the equation of masculinity with national heroism. In the cases of Lagos and Moyano, gender plays into their heroic status and their place in social memory in complex ways.

The historian Lyman Johnson has written about the political weight carried by dead bodies and particularly by the dead bodies of heroes such as those discussed by Brunk and Fallaw. On the importance of bodies specifically, Johnson writes, “the human remains of these heroes, and the locations associated with their sacrifices and martyrdoms, retain powerful emotional content that can be used to mobilize mass action on behalf of a nation, an ethnic group, or a class.”⁶⁵ The meanings attached to the dead bodies of those viewed as having sacrificed themselves for their nations or communities as political martyrs are rooted in Latin America’s tradition of syncretic Catholicism. There is of course significant overlap between the idea of a hero and the idea of a martyr; but Johnson specifically focuses on the idea of martyrdom, which invokes both Catholic tradition and religious iconography and the power of sacrifice. For people who are martyrs as well as heroes, part of the power of their memory comes from the violence, humiliation, and degradation they suffer both in life and during their deaths.⁶⁶ Johnson also notes how the region’s history of inequality shapes these symbolic meanings:

⁶⁴ Nancy Deffebach, “Frida Kahlo: Heroism of Private Life,” in *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, eds. Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 177.

⁶⁵ Lyman L. Johnson, ed., *Body Politics: Death, Dismemberment, and Memory in Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 4.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Body Politics*, 18.

“Underdevelopment and the persistence of economic and social injustice are also central to the region’s history. As a result, dead bodies in Latin America are as likely to speak the language of social protest...as to celebrate national greatness.”⁶⁷ Both Lagos and Moyano become identified with marginalized communities in Peru as their hero cults develop, making the place of each of these women in social memory a contested one.

As in the case of hero cults, nation-states often seek to control the narratives surrounding these martyrs, their sacrifices and their bodies, in order to mobilize them on behalf of the state to reinforce its power. But in part because of the themes of sacrifice, suffering, and injustice, these figures are made relatable to broad swathes of the population, making it difficult for states to dominate the narrative completely. Because women’s bodies in particular are so frequently called on to sacrifice for the nation and to perform symbolic political work on its behalf, body politics and martyrdom are gendered in complex ways. Part of the power of the legacies of both Lagos and Moyano come from the violent ways in which they died, as martyrs willing to give up their lives for a greater cause, and how the themes of sacrifice and martyrdom manifest in their posthumous narratives. Grief at Lagos’s death came was tied to the image of her young, white, and female body and the idea of its martyrdom, which was reinforced with the repeated destruction of her grave. In Moyano’s case, the power of her sacrifice comes not only from her death but also from the extremely violent way in which she was killed. By dynamiting her body publicly, Sendero made it possible for the state to claim Moyano as a martyr who sacrificed herself for the nation and to do so in ways that stripped her legacy of the agency and activism of her life, even as activists who knew her contested

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Body Politics*, 8.

this narrative. Thus, body politics, martyrdom, and hero cults are all important analytical lenses for viewing the lives of Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano.

In thinking about the meaning attached to the lives of women like Lagos and Moyano, I necessarily draw on scholarly work done on social memory, especially in contexts of war, violence, and post-conflict reconciliation. There is an important body of scholarly work on social memory and war in Latin America. These writers generally recognize the promise of social memory as a way of honoring victims, speaking truth, and seeking justice after violence; but also acknowledge the real limitations of such projects.⁶⁸ One such scholar asks simultaneously, “Why is it that we Peruvians cannot decide to construct a more inclusive memory that promotes rich learning of our history? Why are economic exploitation, violence, and hierarchical management still practiced daily in Peru?”⁶⁹ In this vision of memory politics, the writing of a more inclusive national and historical narrative has the potential to alter unequal power relations and structures in the Peru of the present. However, there is also an important literature that acknowledges the traumas associated with social memory, particularly in the context of violence, recognizing why some citizens choose not to take part in social memory projects.⁷⁰ Understanding social memory is critical for interrogating the shifting and

⁶⁸ See Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), Ksenija Bilbija and Leigh A. Payne, eds., *Accounting for Violence: Marketing Memory in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), Eugenia Allier and Emilio A. Crenzel. *The Struggle for Memory in Latin America: Recent History and Political Violence* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), among others.

⁶⁹ Marita Hamann, Santiago López Maguiña, Gonzalo Portocarrero, eds., *Batallas por la memoria: antagonismos de la promesa peruana* (Lima: Red Para el Desarrollo de las Ciencias Sociales en el Perú, 2003), 9.

⁷⁰ See Theidon, *Intimate Enemies* and Caroline Yezer, “Anxious Citizenship.”

contested posthumous careers of both Lagos and Moyano, making social memory an important theoretical important framework for this thesis.

Summary of Chapters

In my second chapter, I trace the existing information on Edith Lagos's life and death and analyze the short-term hero cult that surrounded her and her subsequent decline in social memory. I discuss how Sendero initially used Lagos's death to circulate a narrative of sacrificial martyrdom and promote support for the armed struggle, as well as how her prominence was displaced both by the expansion of Abimael Guzmán's deliberately circulated cult of personality and by declining sympathy for Sendero's cause, which clouded the image of Lagos as a young, innocent idealist. I also touch on the ways in which whiteness shaped her place in social memory and how her symbolic status has endured beyond the collapse of the Shining Path even as state-sponsored narratives minimize her significance.

In my third chapter, I discuss Moyano's life, focusing on her activism and her strong criticisms of both Sendero and the state. I touch on the different types of political and advocacy work in which she was engaged and the way in which gender, race, and class informed her activism, focusing on how racial politics within Peru have contributed to the erasure of Afro-Peruvian communities and social movements and how this dynamic plays out in Moyano's experiences. I then analyze the distinct narratives about Moyano deployed by Sendero, the state, and activists after her death to evaluate disputes over social memory in Peru.

Chapter 2

Edith Lagos: Heroism, Martyrdom, and Displaced Narratives in Ayacucho

One of the most famous women to be a Shining Path militant, Edith Lagos was very young when she was recruited into Sendero Luminoso, and only nineteen when she was killed. Her death at the hands of the Peruvian police triggered a tremendous wave of public grief; her funeral, attended by thousands of people, is considered the largest public gathering of sympathizers to Sendero Luminoso to have taken place during the entire armed conflict.⁷¹ Because her death occurred so early in the war, her funeral happened at a moment when the insurgency's public image was not yet fixed and not so negative as it would later become. As a result, the widespread mourning at her killing offered the Shining Path an opportunity to capitalize on the sympathetic power of her image to develop greater public support. The need to foster that kind of popular sympathy for the armed struggle would become even more important shortly after her death, when the Peruvian president, Fernando Belaúnde, declared the department of Ayacucho to be in a state of emergency as a result of the Shining Path uprising and placed it under formal military control.

As a result of ongoing developments in the war, Sendero would resurrect the memory of Lagos for years after her death in ways it did with only a few of its militants. The cult of personality surrounding Abimael Guzmán was so dominant as to overshadow almost all other individuals within the insurgency, both in Sendero's own discourse and in outsiders' perceptions of the organization. Yet Lagos's narrative, her name and her image surface periodically in Shining Path media; while she is only ever mentioned

⁷¹ Caro Cárdenas, "Ser mujer," 125.

briefly and intermittently in the documents that I have studied, she stands out in comparison to the absolute anonymity in which most members of Sendero operated, both alive and dead. Yet the way she has been remembered has changed since the end of the armed conflict, largely because developments in the violence eroded public support for Sendero steadily as time went by. Because the war ended with Sendero defeated and the state still standing, many sites of memory production in Peru today are state-sponsored, circulating a narrative of the war that highlights senderista atrocities and downplays state responsibility for violence. As a result, Shining Path figures are generally portrayed less sympathetically at these memorial sites than many institutions associated with the state or individuals known for their criticism of Sendero, such as María Elena Moyano.

While only one of many women to join Sendero Luminoso prior to the commencement of the armed struggle and as the armed conflict continued, Edith Lagos was likely the most well-known, especially during the initial years of the armed conflict. Lagos gained widespread fame both within and outside Sendero as a martyr figure after she was killed by the military in 1982. However, most of the women (and men) who joined the Shining Path are not remembered by name today; the organization's hierarchical structure, the quasi-religious cult of personality surrounding its leader, Abimael Guzmán, and its emphasis on the collective rather than the personal made it difficult for most of its members to gain individual recognition or notoriety. Lagos appeared to be one of the few exceptions to this trend, in part because she was already a public figure before her death, with rumors about her background and her place within Sendero circulating in the media. After her death in 1982, Lagos rose to far greater prominence, with the image of her as a martyr gaining popular sympathy at a time when

Sendero desperately needed it. The Shining Path's use of her memory suited the insurgency's propaganda purposes. By drawing on existing and deeply gendered scripts of martyrdom, Sendero discursively positioned Lagos as a young and innocent victim of a violent and repressive state. In doing so, the Shining Path made an implicit claim about the justice of the cause for which Lagos gave up her life, attempting to discursively link the sympathy that Lagos's death elicited, especially within Ayacucho, with support for its particular vision of the armed struggle.

In this chapter, I explore the little that is known about Edith Lagos's life and death, discussing her identity and experiences in the broader context of women's involvement in Sendero Luminoso. I draw on secondary sources as well as newspaper articles, testimonies collected by the Truth Commission, photographs, and other primary sources. I also discuss my visits to several memorial sites in Peru that reference Lagos's life, including her tombstone in the capital city Huamanga of Ayacucho and the official Truth and Reconciliation Commission photography exhibit in Lima. I am interested not only in the relatively limited biographical data available on her, but also how her posthumous career has shifted as both the Peruvian state and Sendero Luminoso have attempted to control and utilize the hero cult that initially emerged around her. I argue in this chapter that the way Lagos's prominence in social memory has declined reflects growing disillusionment with Sendero among the general public as well as state efforts to establish as official and legitimate its own narrative of the war, which framed the Shining Path as a brutal and violently cruel aggressor against which its own violence was justified. However, the ways in which Lagos's tombstone in Ayacucho continues to be a site of commemorative rituals suggests that her narrative and social memory of her can be

disentangled from the largely discredited Shining Path, at least regionally and conditionally within particular spaces.

The Life and Death of Edith Lagos

Edith Lagos Sáez was born on November 27th in 1962; she was one of the youngest siblings in an ayacuchano family with seven children.⁷² The family into which she was born was *misti*, a Quechua word referring to someone who is racially coded as white, and her parents were relatively prosperous storeowners in the city of Huamanga.⁷³ From an early age, she is said to have shown exceptional intelligence as well as great sensitivity to the poverty that shaped so many lives in Ayacucho. Because of these traits, she “was possessed a strong morality...[and] quickly developed leadership and rebelliousness that distinguished her among her fellow students.”⁷⁴ These were qualities that would remain with her later on in her life when she joined Sendero.

As a young girl, Lagos studied with Catholic nuns.⁷⁵ When she was older, her parents sent her to Lima to study law; it was there, at the university, where Lagos first became involved with revolutionary leftist groups.⁷⁶ She became known as a prominent pro-senderista speaker, particularly in Ayacucho, where she returned after leaving the university. In one such speech, she urged young women to become involved with Sendero:

How many of us women...will know how to serve Peru in a truly meaningful way. How many of us will forget that there are many girls who need us. How many of us will manage to obtain a profession where we sit at a table or in an office, to order or to be ordered, to exploit or to be exploited, to serve or to be

⁷² Caro Cárdenas, “Ser mujer,” 138.

⁷³ Kirk, *The Monkey’s Paw*, 80.

⁷⁴ Caro Cárdenas, “Ser mujer,” 138.

⁷⁵ Caro Cárdenas, “Ser mujer,” 138.

⁷⁶ Kirk, *The Monkey’s Paw*, 80.

served. How many of us will assume the real role that belongs to us, that of making a homeland.”⁷⁷

Here, Lagos uses language that is in many ways reminiscent of Sendero’s party line, with the key difference being that she is specifically calling for her fellow women, especially young university students graduating and wondering what to do next, to become involved with the Shining Path. Using a theme common to senderista propaganda, Lagos stresses the exploitative nature of the Peruvian state, presenting her audience with a choice between becoming complicit in that exploitation of others or being exploited themselves. The only viable option, it is clear in her speech, is active resistance to that state through joining Sendero’s revolution. She is also careful to present Sendero’s work as the creation of a new society and a new nation, one more just and inclusive than that which came before. This vision of another Peru was a key component of Sendero’s appeal to young, disenfranchised university students and recent graduates in Ayacucho, many of whom were indigenous and facing both racial and economic barriers to advancement that were nearly insurmountable. These recent graduates from the University of Huamanga faced an economy with relatively few job openings; the many of these students who were indigenous young people and the first in their families to attend college encountered a workplace that was actively hostile to them even in jobs for which their education formally qualified them. This outcome ran counter to these students’ expectations that earning a university education would offer social and economic mobility that had traditionally been closed to them. In becoming militants within the Shining Path, these young people, both men and women, sought a framework for

⁷⁷ Ernesto Chávez and Georgina Pareja, “Edith Lagos quiso cambiar el país apretando el gatillo,” *La República*, September 7, 1982, quoted in Caro Cárdenas, “Ser mujer,” 140.

understanding Ayacucho's relegation to part of the so-called "Mancha India," or Indian stain, by coastal elites as well as the structural and racist forces that excluded them even after gaining the education they trusted would offer a path to upward mobility. In Guzmán's teachings, Lagos and other young women and men like her believed that they had found a way to upend the traditional hierarchies that defined Peru and oppressed their communities and to participate in the creation of a more just state and society.⁷⁸

But her specific appeal to women is distinct from much of Sendero's discourse of gender, which generally viewed women's equality as a secondary concern to the overall success of the revolution.⁷⁹ Here, Lagos identifies women as natural participants in the revolution, highlighting the duty they have to women and girls throughout Peru by speaking of "the girls who need us." She sees women students struggling under the weight of gender in addition to the racial and economic barriers faced by male students and calls on them to rebel. Involvement in Sendero offered Lagos and other women avenues to political participation, albeit in a violent and militarized context, that they would have been unlikely to have otherwise, given Peru's patriarchal social norms.⁸⁰ However, Lagos's invocation of female militants duty to young girls also reaffirmed traditional gender roles by positioning women senderistas as caretakers. This reflects the history of maternalist politics in Latin America as well as the tangled nature of gender relations and gender equality within the Shining Path. This view of the relationship between patriarchy and the revolution is far from unique to Sendero; most leftist movements in Latin America held that the destruction of capitalism would also bring

⁷⁸ Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, 370-371.

⁷⁹ See Coral Cordero, "Women in War," 349.

⁸⁰ Carmen Rosa Balbi and Juan Carlos Callirgos, "Sendero y la mujer," *Quehacer* 79 (1992): 50-53, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

about the end of sexism, a notions which female militants accepted to varying degrees.⁸¹

While at first glance, Peru's patriarchal norms might seem to inhibit women's participation in Sendero as it has limited other avenues for women's political engagement, Vega-Centeno B has speculated that

...the woman, abandoned by the state and the society, in a situation of domination/submission...is controlled by the laws of the society and confirmed in her role by religion. Before this abandonment and confinement and the almost total lack of opportunities for the full development and participation of women in social and political life, Sendero Luminoso developed a strategy for recruiting women for their own political purposes.⁸²

In other words, the motivations of women joining Sendero often mirrored those of young men with the added desire to escape patriarchal constraints. Robin Kirk recounts the story of a young woman pseudonymously called Betty who along with a friend left behind an abusive home to become a senderista militant, hoping to both escape her difficult personal circumstances and be part of the coming revolution. "I remember that we were not afraid," she said. "We were leaving our homes to fight for the revolution."⁸³ That sense of the possibility of agency in a society that had so often denied it was a powerful motivator for many female senderistas.

Lagos shares important similarities with other women who became involved with Sendero Luminoso's revolutionary project. Like so many others, she was recruited as a very young university student, although she studied in Lima rather than Ayacucho, where most young senderistas were recruited. It was the Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de

⁸¹ Viterna, *Women in War*, 4-5; Shayne, *The Revolution Question*, 3.

⁸² Imelda Vega-Centeno B, "Género y política: A propósito de la mujer en Sendero Luminoso," in *Boletín Americanista* 44 (1994): 209-210.

⁸³ Robin Kirk, "Las mujeres asesinas de Sendero Luminoso," trans. Janet Ramón, unpublished, undated working paper, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

Huamanga where so many students, both men and women, encountered Abimael Guzmán's philosophy and became involved with the Shining Path as undergraduates. They continued their work with Sendero after graduation, first attempting to recruit the public and then serving as clandestine militants after the armed struggle began.⁸⁴

Other relatively well-known women to join the insurgent group included Abimael Guzmán's wives, first Augusta La Torre and, after her death, Elena Iparraguirre, who along with Guzmán is currently serving a life sentence in prison.⁸⁵ Like Lagos, La Torre became involved with the Communist Party and the Shining Path at a very young age, marrying Guzmán when she was only nineteen; however, her involvement stemmed from family ties rather than recruitment as an undergraduate student, as she was the daughter of Carlos La Torre, the head of the Communist Party in nearby Huanta⁸⁶. As a member of the Shining Path, she worked as the director of the Movimiento Popular Femenino (Popular Women's Movement), one of the institutional mechanisms for recruiting women into Sendero and overseeing their activities; purportedly, she also worked as a spy. She died in 1988 under circumstances that remain unclear.⁸⁷ Photographs of Guzmán grieving at her funeral were released in a senderista propaganda project reminiscent of the political work done with Lagos's memory; she was framed as someone willing to sacrifice her life for the revolutionary cause, as "her body is an idea made flesh."⁸⁸ Similarly, the Shining Path would make use of Lagos's body and her memory for symbolic work after her death,

⁸⁴ Peter Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, 368-369.

⁸⁵ See Jaymie Patricia Heilman, "Family Ties: The Political Genealogy of Shining Path's Comrade Norah," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 29, no. 2 (2010): 155-169; Elena R. Iparraguirre, Entrevista 88, Caja 8, 001-026, Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información.

⁸⁶ Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 89.

⁸⁷ Kirk, "Las mujeres asesinas," n.p., Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

⁸⁸ Kirk, "Las mujeres asesinas," n.p., Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

retelling her story in order to reenact their ideal of absolute devotion to and sacrifice on behalf of the armed struggle.

Elena Iparraguirre, who became Guzmán's second wife as well as one of the highest-ranking leaders of the Shining Path, is now serving a life sentence in prison along with Guzmán. She was born in Trujillo, a northern coastal city, to a family with four daughters. Her father was a leader in Haya de la Torre's revolutionary organization APRA, and spent time in jail during the repression of APRA conducted under the dictatorship of Manuel Odría.⁸⁹ Her family later moved to Lima during the 1960s, where she participated in a teachers' strike as a secondary student, marking the beginning of her own experiences with leftist activism.⁹⁰ Later, she moved to Ayacucho to join with the Mariateguista organization Bandera Roja (Red Flag), where she was recruited by La Torre to join Guzmán's faction.⁹¹

After the armed struggle began with the attack on the ballot boxes at Chuschi in 1980, Edith Lagos's role within Sendero changed as she transitioned to life as a militant while the entire insurgency began to operate even more clandestinely. As an underground combatant, she went by the pseudonym of Camarada Carla.⁹² The police captured her for the first time on December 24, 1980 in Ayacucho, less than a year after the beginning of the armed struggle, on her way to attending a dance celebrating Christmas Eve. Someone from among a group of fourteen people whom the police had

⁸⁹ Iparraguirre, Entrevista, 3. Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información. For an account of the Odría military dictatorship and its repressiveness towards APRA, see Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, chapter 10.

⁹⁰ Iparraguirre, Entrevista, 4. Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información.

⁹¹ Iparraguirre, Entrevista, 6. Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información.

⁹² José Alberto Guía Espinoza, Testimonio #202170, Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación, 001. Centro de Información.

already denounced detained Lagos as a member and a leader of Sendero; they accused her of involvement in a confrontation with a Peruvian intelligence organization, setting the house of an election official on fire with a Molotov cocktail, and attacking the municipal building and other government offices with dynamite. Lagos denied all charges; although whether or not she was guilty is difficult to establish, such activity would not be atypical for her and other militants' involvement with Sendero.⁹³

Following these denunciations, Lagos was arrested. While she was being held, her photograph was taken and released to the press. The sight of a young, light-skinned woman, imprisoned as a member of the Shining Path, came as quite a shock to the media, who found it difficult to believe that such a girl could be a revolutionary militant. "She is a tiny woman, a little girl, she has light eyes and does not seem like a guerrillera," proclaimed one article, while another described Lagos as "a young girl with light eyes and fine features."⁹⁴ Part of the shock of Lagos's image to the press and to the public was that she represented such a contrast from the narrative of female Sendero combatants that the state and the military circulated, as hyper-sexualized, vicious and bloodthirsty figures.⁹⁵ It was difficult to reconcile this imaginary of the senderista woman with the reality of Lagos's youth and her racialized appearance, as these repeated references to her social whiteness attest. As both writers make clear by stressing her "light eyes" and "fine

⁹³ Centros de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo, *Violencia política en el Perú* (Lima: DESCO, 1989), 66, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/laoap/desco/desco00002.pdf>.

⁹⁴ "Contra todo y contra todos: El luminoso sendero de Edith Lagos, una chica de armas tomar," *Revista Caretas* 630, January 5, 1981, and Rosa Málaga, "Morir a los diecinueve, Edith Lagos: así comienzan las leyendas," *El Diario de Marka*, 13 January 1983, quoted in Caro Cardenas, "Ser mujer," 142.

⁹⁵ Robin Kirk, "Las mujeres asesinas," n.p., Instituto de Estudios Peruanos; Rosa Mavila León, "Presente y futuro de las mujeres de la guerra," *Quehacer* 79 (1992): 44-49.

features,” Lagos’s ability to be perceived as innocent, socially white, and politically neutral despite her career of militancy and non-violent activism, which was reasonably well-known at least within Ayacucho, was deeply tied to her racial identity. This ability to perform innocence would not necessarily have been available to indigenous women senderistas. These descriptions of her highlight her whiteness to an extent that belies her actual physical appearance; the emphasis on whiteness reflects how deeply tied race in Latin America is to notions of education level, morality or decency, class, and other social relationships. As the daughter of a relatively well-off family with a university education and ties to Lima from her days as a student, Lagos was positioned as socially white in the media, and thus as someone assumed to be good. The resulting identification of Lagos as a young, innocent woman would become inextricably tied to the imaginary of her as a martyr to a just cause after the police killed her in 1982.

Because of Sendero’s deeply hierarchical and patriarchal nature, most women militants did not hold leadership positions; Lagos was one of only a few who did, serving on the Comité Regional Principal.⁹⁶ This was relatively uncommon for women senderistas, however, although there were an unusually significant number of low-level female militants in Sendero Luminoso in comparison with to the gender ratios of other revolutionary and insurgent organizations in both Latin American and the world. Women represented approximately forty percent of Sendero’s militants, and roughly one third of

⁹⁶ Mavila León, “Presente y Futuro,” 33, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. The Comité Regional Principal was responsible for overseeing Shining Path military and political activities in what Sendero characterized as the most important regions of the conflict, Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and Apurímac. Gorriti, *The Shining Path*, 66.

those imprisoned on terrorism charges.⁹⁷ Women also held leadership positions in the party; while many of those positions rotated and women were in the minority, it is worth noting that they at times represented as many as eight out of nineteen members of the Central Committee and two out of five of the Politburo.⁹⁸ By contrast, most other revolutionary movements in Latin America had many fewer women members.

In addition to their numerical importance, women took on positions of responsibility for the violence committed by Sendero. For instance, while mixed-gender teams of assassins were tasked with capturing targets, women often bore the responsibility for delivering the killing blow.⁹⁹ The role of women in militant subversive groups across Latin America has often been discounted, in part because of gendered thinking that expects that men will tend towards violence and militancy while women “are peaceful by nature, apolitical, and victims of war” only rather than agents of it.¹⁰⁰ So while I stress the particularities of women’s participation in Sendero Luminoso, I do not want to discount the roles women played in other Latin American insurgencies.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey’s Paw*, 63. For more on the experiences of women militants in prison, see Claudia Castro, “El retorno de Sybila,” *Historia, Antropología, y Fuentes Orales* 37 (2007): 81-88, and Gabriel Joo Domínguez, *Las mujeres inocentes acusadas del terrorismo* (Lima: Instituto de Defensa Legal, 1999), Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

⁹⁸ Robin Kirk, “Las mujeres asesinas,” Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, n.p. The Politburo, or Political Bureau, oversaw the Shining Path’s political activities, especially prior to the beginning of the Armed Struggle, and reported to the Central Committee. See Gorriti, *The Shining Path*, chapter 3.

⁹⁹ Robin Kirk, “Las mujeres asesinas,” n.p., Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

¹⁰⁰ Luisa María Dietrich Ortega, “La ‘compañera política’: mujeres militantes y espacios de ‘agencia’ en insurgencias latinoamericanas,” *Colombia Internacional* 80 (2014): 85.

¹⁰¹ See Viterna, *Women in War*; Lucía Rayas Velasco, *Armadas: Un análisis de género desde el cuerpo de las mujeres combatientes* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, 2009), Instituto de Estudios Peruanos; Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, “Guerrilleras in Latin America: Domestic and International Roles,” *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 3 (2006): 313-329; Shayne, *The Revolution Question*.

Yet despite the scope of women's presence within the insurgency and Sendero's stated policy regarding gender equality, Sendero replicated many of Peru's patriarchal norms in both its rigid hierarchy and its enforcement of gender roles. This discrepancy between rhetoric and reality is in keeping with much of the Peruvian left, which has traditionally been dominated by machismo and the same patriarchal values that shape Peru as a whole. Kirk notes that "things [for women] are only slightly better within the Marxist left, where women have to break with the model of secretary-lover (called 'machismo-leninismo') that limits the scope of their activities."¹⁰² Like much of the left in Peru and throughout Latin America, Sendero held that destroying capitalism would end gender inequality and patriarchy automatically. For instance, a 1978 publication by a student organization with ties to Sendero declared,

...the subordination of the woman to the man is owing fundamentally to the existence of private property and the lack of participation of women in the creation of social riches, that is to say, the means of production. It is for this reason that to talk of the feminine liberation on the margins of the liberation of the exploited and the abolition of private PROPERTY is an absurdity.¹⁰³

In this view of the armed struggle, there was no reason to address gender inequality as an issue distinct from capitalist and imperialist exploitation, all three of which would be resolved by the destruction of the old state and the construction of a communist Peru. However, entrenched patriarchy in Peru still colored gender relations within the organization in ways the Shining Path proved unwilling or unable to fully disentangle.

¹⁰² Kirk, "Las mujeres asesinas," n.p., Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

¹⁰³ *Voz Ferista: Órgano Central del FER-base Callao (Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario)* 1 (1978): 11, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, Gustavo Gorriti Microfilm Collection of the Peruvian Insurrection, Group A., I. Manifestos and Official Publications, Box 1, Folder 1.

Perhaps Edith Lagos's most prominent action during her life was the instrumental role she played in orchestrating a Shining Path attack on the prison in Ayacucho, in 1982. In the famous prison break, seventy-eight senderista combatants were freed along with one hundred and sixty-nine other prisoners, representing nearly three hundred people in total.¹⁰⁴ This incident was a major victory for the Shining Path, underscoring its legitimacy as a revolutionary military force and its ability to wreak havoc on the Peruvian state and in Ayacucho more generally. It was also a tremendous embarrassment for the Peruvian police, a symbol of their failure to keep order in Ayacucho and curb Sendero's advances. This failure was consistent with the inability of the police force to contain and defeat the Shining Path, foreshadowing the later transfer of the war effort to the control of the military in 1982.

Lagos's death occurred within six months of the famous jailbreak, in September of 1982. She was nineteen years old at the time. There are several differing accounts of her death, making it difficult to know exactly what happened. However, the most common story is that she was killed along with another senderista fighter who had been teaching her to drive on a road in the mountains. After their vehicle stalled, they flagged down a passing truck and attempted to seize it; but the truck was carrying a group of police officers, some of whom recognized Lagos and shot her immediately.¹⁰⁵

Although this narrative is overwhelmingly the most common account found of Lagos's death, it is worth noting that the Truth and Reconciliation houses a testimony that offers a different version. There are three testimonies collected by the CVR that

¹⁰⁴ Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 80; Carol Andreas, "'It's Right to Fight': Women Insurgents in Peru," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without consent*, ed. Nicole Ann Drombowski (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 319.

¹⁰⁵ Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 80-81.

reference Lagos; however, only one of those testimonies is available to the public. This account dates her death to July or August of 1981, and relates that the police killed her in the town square of Umacca after she fired her gun into the air.¹⁰⁶ However, I think this account is less likely because it contradicts the much more prevalent narrative and because even the interviewer for the testimony noted that this account differed from the historical record.¹⁰⁷ More than anything, this narrative discrepancy speaks to the challenges of testimonies as a historical source; because they so often are collected after significant elapsed time after the events in question occurred and because they so often ask the speaker to recall traumatic memories, testimonies are highly subject to the vagaries of human memory.

In any case, after Lagos's death, a funeral was held for her in her hometown, the capital city of Ayacucho. As many as thirty thousand people are believed to have attended the funeral—including, according to the rumors, the members of the Central Committee of the Shining Path, among them Abimael Guzmán.¹⁰⁸ As one witness of the funeral described it,

From the cathedral of stone was brought the coffin, covered with the red flag with the sickle and the hammer [the symbol of the Shining Path]...it was rumored that the entire military command of the Shining Path was near...According to the press, more than thirty thousand people accompanied the coffin to the tomb of cement.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Guia Espinoza, Testimonio #202170, 020-021, Comisión del a Verdad y la Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información.

¹⁰⁷ Guia Espinoza, Testimonio #202170, 018, Comisión del a Verdad y la Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información.

¹⁰⁸ Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 81.

¹⁰⁹ Kirk, "Las mujeres asesinas," n.p.

Gustavo Gorriti, a journalist in attendance at the funeral, recounted that it marked a moment of rapprochement between Sendero and the armed forces, as Abimael Guzmán “was completely safe as long as it lasted. Colonel Delgado Matallana ordered all police to retreat to their barracks to prevent confrontation with the crowd. The Shining Path banner passed openly, and many of its victims as well as people who would become victims in the near future applauded it.”¹¹⁰ During the funeral ceremony, one of Edith Lagos’s sisters read a poem entitled “Hierba Silvestre,” which Edith had written before she was imprisoned. This is the same poem that today can be read carved into Lagos’s tombstone; it later became a well-known Andean folk song.¹¹¹

Edith Lagos in Sendero’s Discourse, State-Sponsored Narrative, and Social Memory

Edith Lagos continues to occupy a complex place in social memory that defies simplistic categorization. After the funeral, state-sponsored paramilitary groups repeatedly attacked Lagos’s gravestone, attempting to blow it up. Two of these attacks took place on August 8th and December 30th, 1988.¹¹² The fact that efforts to destroy Lagos’s gravesite were continuing so many years after her death—and that her tomb was repaired repeatedly after each attack—attests to the continuing power of her narrative. Because her memory continued to elicit sympathy, the Shining Path capitalized on Lagos’s hero cult for recruitment and propaganda purposes, attempting to make use of sentiment favorable to Lagos for its own political and military purposes. The military’s attacks on her tombstone can be understood as a violent response to this framing of Lagos, an attempt to eradicate her memory by attacking its linkage to the site of her

¹¹⁰ Gorriti, *The Shining Path*, 241.

¹¹¹ Andreas, “Woman Insurgents,” 319.

¹¹² Centros de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo, *Violencia política en el Perú*, 178, 258.

physical remains, and in doing so to undermine the Shining Path's use of her hero cult. In this way, Lagos's memory became part of the struggle between the Shining Path and the armed forces for popular support in Ayacucho.

In Shining Path propaganda, Lagos appears only infrequently; but where she is mentioned she is portrayed as a martyr to the cause. In doing so, Sendero invokes a long history of heroic and martyred figures in Latin America as those who sacrificed themselves, both to causes of social justice and on behalf of the nation.¹¹³ While certainly bent on gaining support for its war against the Peruvian state, the Shining Path was also committed to articulating its vision for a new Peruvian government, nation, and society built upon more just, equitable, and inclusive foundations.

In using Lagos's narrative, then, Sendero had dual propaganda purposes: to cultivate public support for the armed struggle and to reimagine national identity and citizenship as they would evolve in the new nation it hoped to build. Seen in this context, the myth of Lagos as a martyred figure hinted at in senderista media suggests not only a propaganda project to justify its violence, but also a nascent effort for the construction of an alternative nation. Fallaw and Brunk explain that "heroes help large numbers of people identify with a nation and internalize and accept as natural its basic principles and laws, thus producing greater unity as a population."¹¹⁴ At least implicitly, the Shining Path used Lagos in this way as well, to foster public identification with and belief in a nation that did not yet (and ultimately never would) exist. Lagos therefore represents not only the ideal of a young militant, so faithfully committed to the cause that she was willing to

¹¹³ Johnson, ed., *Body Politics*, 8.

¹¹⁴ Brunk and Fallaw, eds., *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, 3.

sacrifice her life, but also becomes symbolic of what women's citizenship in this new Peruvian nation might look like.

One of a few relatively direct mentions to Lagos in Shining Path media appeared in an article in *El Diario*, the major Shining Path publication, with a December 12, 1984 headline that declared, "Break the Chains!"¹¹⁵ This was more than two years after Lagos's death in September of 1982, showing that to some degree her hero cult persisted, at least within Sendero. Despite the many military reversals facing the Shining Path, the article takes a triumphant tone, declaring,

...the democratic path of the combatant people and their vanguard: the Communist Party of Peru, advances uncontrollably. Four years of armed struggle have sown new hope for millions of Peruvians, armed struggle that has shown itself to be the only path and the highest political expression of the struggle against imperialism and feudalism.

The article's celebratory, triumphant rhetoric defies much of the existing realities of the war, with the presence of the Armed Forces in Ayacucho and surrounding provinces threatening to both Sendero and the public and popular support declining because of both Shining Path atrocities and opposition to the state's violent response. Despite that, the Shining Path's confidence in its own eventual victory is clear, and here Sendero is not only making the case for the continued success of the armed struggle, but also seeking to establish the legitimacy of the nation it hoped to build after the war was won.

The article's writer, who is not named, also symbolically invokes both the importance of women to the success of the Shining Path revolution thus far and the many

¹¹⁵ "Romper las Cadenas," *El Diario*, December 14th, 1984, 14-15, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, Gustavo Gorriti Microfilm Collection of the Peruvian Insurrection, Group A., I., Box 1, Folder 6.

opportunities afforded to women via participation in the armed conflict, despite the many barriers to gender equality embedded in Sendero's military and organizational structure. The writer mentions Lagos as one of Sendero's most noteworthy female figures immediately after underscoring women's contributions to the revolution, further emphasizing her individual importance:

...we highlight the important participation of the woman as a combatant in the advance guard of the revolutionary struggle, understanding that the only form of liberation from the double exploitation to which she is subjected, is participating in the destruction of this old order. No other movement has permitted the notable participation of women, even making them guerrilla leaders in many cases. Without leaving out the participation of many combatants, it is important to highlight the figure of...the Commander II Edith Lagos, only twenty years old, who was murdered after being savagely tortured by reactionary forces.¹¹⁶

This comment is accompanied by a sketch of Lagos that is reminiscent of a famous photo of her being held in police captivity before her death (see Figure 1). Here, Sendero invokes the importance of female combatants to the military objectives that the revolution had thus far attained and simultaneously presents Lagos as representative of the best of senderista women. The language used stresses her youth—she died at “only twenty years old” (though other accounts put her age at nineteen), which implicitly underscores her imagined innocence. The epigraph accompanying her image—taken from the words of one J. Hidalgo, rather than Lagos herself—is also significant: “And they know that I only die if you begin to slacken because he who dies fighting lives on in each *compañero*.” In Sendero's narrative, Lagos's life continues symbolically after her physical death, so long as she is remembered and her legacy is honored by the

¹¹⁶ The reference to savage torture as part of her murder is likely fabricated; most accounts of her killing claim that she was shot more or less on sight on the side of a mountain road, rather than being detained as a prisoner, in which case she might well have been tortured before being disappeared.



Figure 1: "Romper las Cadenas," *El Diario*, December 14th, 1984, 14-15, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, Gustavo Gorriti Microfilm Collection of the Peruvian Insurrection, Group A., I., Box 1, Folder 6.

continuation of the armed struggle, an outcome certainly in line with the Shining Path's objectives. Although her physical body is dead and buried, her memory and legacy are embodied as her comrades remember them. Taken together, all of this implies a gendered view of women's participation in the revolution, as willing sacrificial bodies whose symbolic power offers moral justification to carry on the armed struggle to its conclusion.

Part of the power of this discursive representation of Lagos comes from its emphasis on the physical pain that she went through: "she was killed after being savagely tortured by reactionary forces." This emphasizes not only Lagos's death but the physical suffering she endured as she was killed, despite the fact that most accounts of her death suggest that it took place in the open and was relatively quick. At the time of her death, she was not detained and subjected to the tortures that awaited most captured Shining Path militants, both known and suspected, although she had been beaten previously while being held in jail several months before her death.¹¹⁷ This too is tied to traditions of syncretic Catholic martyrdom and the suffering of saints.¹¹⁸

In another, similar propagandistic framing (see Figure 2), Lagos's photo appears alongside those of several other fallen comrades under the headline "Sendero Luminoso: We are the party of the new kind: We will build in Peru the Party, the armed force and the united front: we apply the principles in the purest possible form."¹¹⁹ The photo is

¹¹⁷ Robin Kirk, *The Monkey's Paw*, 80.

¹¹⁸ Johnson, *Body Politics*, 8.

¹¹⁹ *El nuevo diario*, September 24, 1986, Lima. Gustavo Gorriti Microfilm Collection of the Peruvian Insurrection, Group A, I. Manifestos and Official Publications, Box 2, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

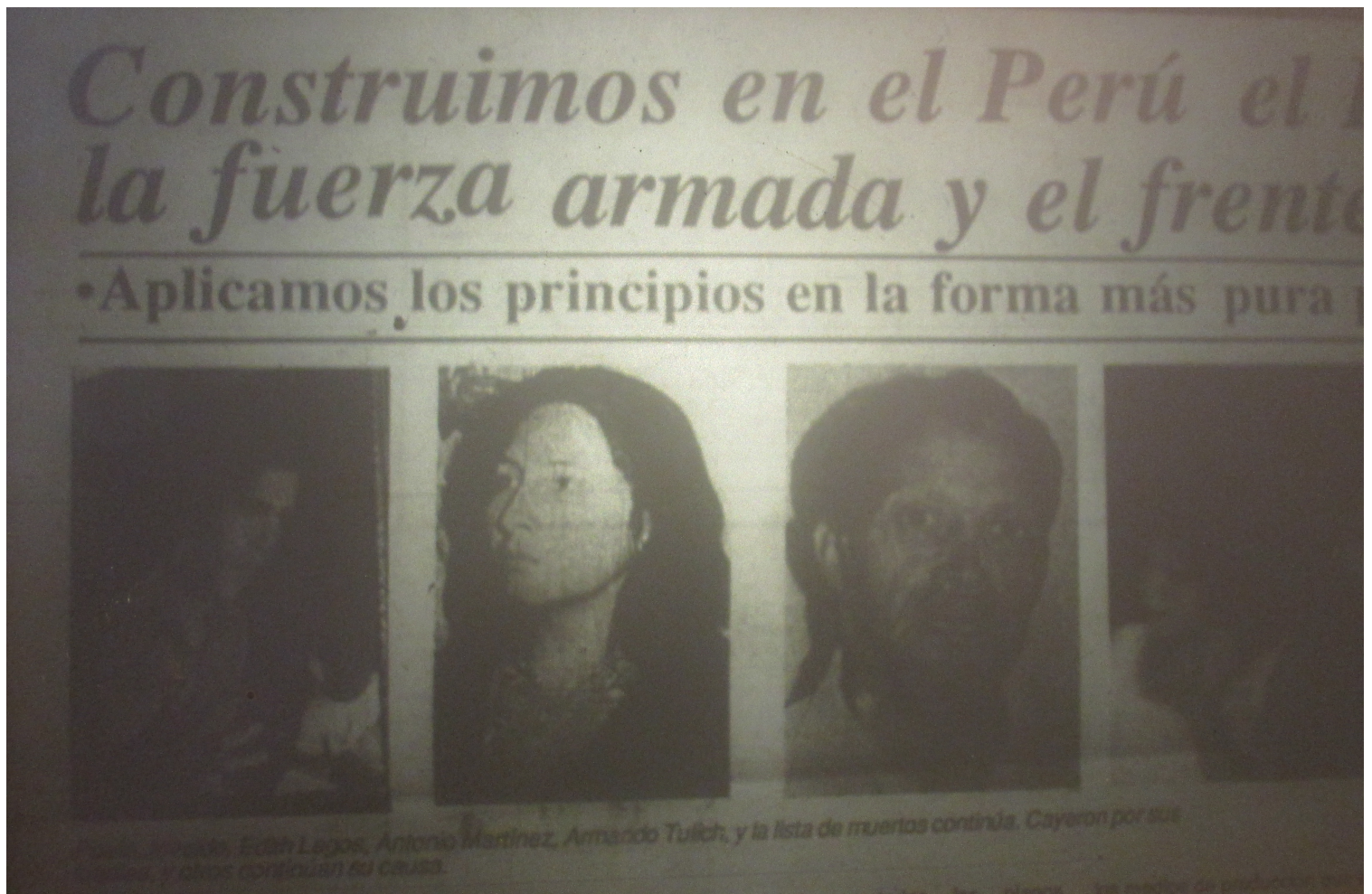


Figure 2: *El nuevo diario*, September 24, 1986, Lima. Gustavo Gorriti Microfilm Collection of the Peruvian Insurrection, Group A, I. Manifestos and Official Publications, Box 2, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

captioned, “Poeta Jovaldo, Edith Lagos, Antonio Martínez, Armando Tulich, and the list of the dead will continue. They fell for their ideals, and others will continue their cause.”

As in the case of the previous image, this framing imagines Lagos as a heroic martyr who sacrificed for a noble cause, and invites other senderista combatants to do the same. Her example is used as an instructive guide for ideal militant behavior and a model for others in the Shining Path to follow.

The highlighting in propaganda of women’s contributions to the armed struggle in the article above is not uncommon for the Shining Path; however, it is striking that Lagos’s narrative is deployed as an individual figure instead of a collective ideal. Sendero made symbolic use of women’s images and bodies in its propaganda literature periodically, despite the patriarchal nature of its organization. However, the majority of these propagandistic depictions of women appear as nameless and generic symbols; Lagos is highly unusual in being represented as an individual and as herself. For instance, one senderista illustration depicting women was captioned “our light will make the shadows retreat, in this country it will illuminate the homeland, we will make her red but we want her red for always, this is in our hands” (see Figure 3). This image featured women prominently, carrying guns and waving Sendero’s flag. In this illustration, they appear as symbolic heroines of the revolution, echoing the symbolic use of women’s bodies often made in visual representations of revolutions.¹²⁰

Another such image showed a drawing of the Shining Path military school that was used to recruit followers and indoctrinate them with Sendero’s military and political philosophy, especially prior to the beginning of the armed conflict (see Figure 4). In the

¹²⁰ Carlos Iván Degregori, “Sendero: El principio del fin?”, *Quehacer* 79 (1992): 30-37, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

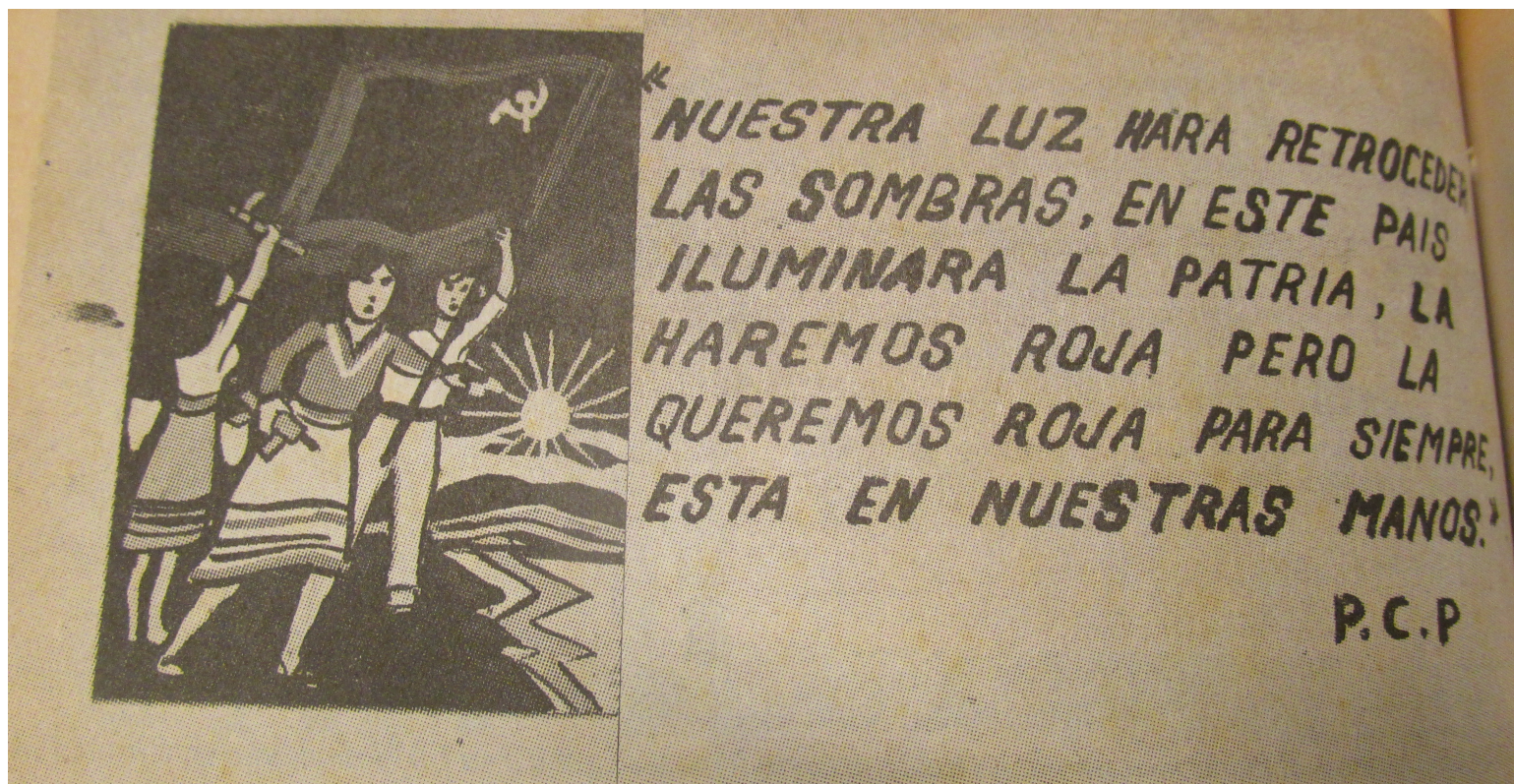


Figure 3: Carlos Iván Degregori, "Después de la caída," in *Quehacer* 79 (1992): 40, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.



Figure 4: Carlos Iván Degregori, “Después de la caída,” in *Quehacer* 79 (1992): 41, Instituto de Estudios Peruano

image, both women and men are lined up to join and to receive Guzmán's teaching, with women featured prominently at the front of the line although men appear to be the majority of the volunteers. This image implicitly echoes Sendero Luminoso's claims about gender equality and women's political and military participation despite the more complex reality of women's experiences within the organization.

In stark contrast to Lagos's heroic framing in Shining Path media, state commemoration of her positions her far less prominently. As part of my January research, I visited the exhibit Yuyanapac in the Museo de la Nación in Lima. Yuyanapac is a permanent exhibit displaying photographs unearthed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the course of its research and outlining the historical narrative of the violence that Commission constructed. Because of truth commissions' purposes as official historical narratives sponsored by the government, Yuyanapac can be understood as a state-sponsored memory project. As is common to state narratives, the exhibit frames the Shining Path as the primary aggressor in the conflict, underscoring repeatedly that Sendero was responsible for more than half of the violence committed and positioning the state as forced to use violence in order to defend itself.¹²¹ In doing so, the exhibit highlights senderista atrocities while downplaying state-sponsored ones.

Lagos's positioning within the exhibit reflects this preoccupation. Unlike Moyano, who as discussed in the next chapter is given an entire room dedicated to her memory, Lagos is featured in only a handful of photos included as part of a room outlining the beginning of the conflict (see Figure 5). The photos include the famous

¹²¹ This emphasis also appears in the text of the Truth Commission itself. See CVR, *Hatun Willakuy*, 12-13. Accessed April 30, 2016. https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ_Book_Peru_CVR_2014.pdf.



Figure 5: Museo de la Nación, Yuyanapac Photography Exhibit, Lima. Photo by Author.

picture of her after her arrest released by the press and a photo of her coffin and the crowds attending her funeral procession. The caption to her photograph reads, “Edith Lagos, young member of the Shining path, is presented to the press after her apprehension. On September 2, 1982, when she was 19 years old, she would die in a confrontation between members of Shining Path and members of the Republican Guard.”¹²² Although the inclusion of a photograph of her funeral procession hints at the popularity and sympathy Lagos enjoyed after her death, there is no explicit textual reference to that sympathy or to the importance of her posthumous career.

That posthumous career continues into the present day. As recently as April of 2017, Frente Amplio, a leftist coalition party, released a video decrying the Fujimori’s regime’s use of violence and human rights abuses, particularly during the Operation of Chavín de Huantar.¹²³ The video became highly controversial, however, because it used a famous photograph from Lagos’s funeral procession, which was shown under the heading, “the heroes of democracy are all the citizens who fight to reject acts of terrorism, dictatorship, and corruption of past decades.” Although the caption referenced terrorism as well as dictatorship as something that Peruvian citizens must combat, the use of the image of Lagos’s funeral in this moment of the video identified her implicitly with that struggle. This framing provoked a storm of controversy, with some supporting Frente

¹²² Translation taken from the caption.

¹²³ This counterinsurgency operation ended the takeover of the Japanese embassy in Lima by the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amará (MRTA), another leftist insurgency organization that was not affiliated with the Shining Path, but was active during roughly the same historical period. As part of the operation, the Peruvian military recaptured a group of hostages being held by the MRTA, but also engaged in the extrajudicial execution of suspected MRTA militants. CVR, *Hatun Willakuy*, 53.

Amplio and many decrying the usage; as a result, Lagos's name trended briefly on Twitter.¹²⁴

Memorializing a Guerrillera: Commemoration of Lagos at her Tombstone

The repeated attacks on Lagos's tombstone by state-sponsored paramilitary groups reflect the link between her physical remains and her place in social memory. State-sponsored efforts to destroy the first represented an attempt to symbolically control the latter as well. In death, Lagos became a symbolic figure whose power endured despite and indeed because of the Peruvian military's attempts to limit the power of her legacy.¹²⁵ The attacks on her tombstone underscored her martyrdom and the power of her life as a symbol for the revolution; efforts to restore her and maintain her gravesite conversely reflected a desire by some in Ayacucho to push back against state-sponsored narratives that linked her to the Shining Path and thus undermined her martyr status and downplayed her significance to social memory.

Lagos's grave is known for nearly always bearing flowers, which are usually left anonymously (see Figure 6).¹²⁶ When I visited her tombstone in January, found just inside the entrance of the public cemetery in Huamanga, the capital of Ayacucho, I saw yellow and red flowers resting on her headstone; they were fresh enough to have been left

¹²⁴ *Perú21*, "¿Por qué la terrorista Edith Lagos fue trending topic este jueves cuando murió en 1982?" April 21, 2017. Accessed May 1, 2017. <http://peru21.pe/politica/que-terrorista-edith-lagos-trending-topic-cuando-murio-1982-2278578>

¹²⁵ Caro Cárdenas, "Ser mujer," 126.

¹²⁶ Caro Cárdenas, "Ser mujer," 125.



Figure 6: Tombstone of Edith Lagos, Cementerio de Huamanga, Ayacucho. Photo by Author.

only days before, despite the fact that Lagos died more than thirty years ago. This suggests some regional differences in the way Lagos is remembered: while she is less prominent in narratives circulating in Lima, her memory clearly remains meaningful to at least some residents of Ayacucho.

Johnson describes the importance of tombs to the ritual commemoration of heroes and martyr figures:

Because of the special qualities of these deaths, the remains require an appropriate setting. The place must also be connected to the life of the hero in a convincing way. The place must be marked by suitable markers or transformed to fit this requirement by the actions of the faithful. ... This concern to locate remains in the appropriate place explains the restless political lives of some dead bodies.”¹²⁷

This explains why Lagos’s tomb represents an important site of memory-making and memory politics in the context of her posthumous career.

Evita Perón, another Latin American woman with a significant posthumous hero cult, shows some similarities with Lagos’s memorialization, although there are of course important differences between the two, as Perón was much more identified with the state. Eva Perón is remembered as iconic because of her efforts to aid the poor and the working class, the same groups associated with the Shining Path cause in Peru for whom Lagos sacrificed her own life.¹²⁸ Like Lagos, Evita Perón’s death was met with an outpouring of public grief; she also had a major funeral procession, which included white flowers.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Johnson, *Body Politics*, 22.

¹²⁸ However, it is important to note that much of Perón’s support base was among the urban working class and that the organization she started delivered important material benefits for her supporters, something which is much more doubtful in the case of Lagos and the Shining Path. Linda Hall, “Evita Perón: Beauty, Resonance, and Heroism,” in *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, ed. Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 230.

¹²⁹ Hall, “Evita Perón,” 251.

However, Perón remains a much more significant figure in Argentine discourse today than Lagos does in Peru.

Seen in this light, the commemorative rituals centered around Lagos's tombstone take on new significance. That she is buried in Ayacucho and her headstone is located so prominently in the public cemetery highlights the identification of her memory with Ayacucho and its people. Because of Ayacucho's history of marginalization within Peru, Lagos becomes identified not only with the Shining Path's armed struggle but also with the longer struggle for recognition, inclusion, and justice of ayacuchano residents. This helps explain the reasons why her memory has at least to some extent and at least regionally outlasted the popularity of the Shining Path.

The poem on Lagos's grave, which she wrote before her death, evokes her sense of impending mortality, as she asks the grass to grow over her tomb and accompany her. Presumably in death her legacy will be carved in stone.

Hierba Silvestre
Te ruego
Acompañarme en mi camino.
Serás mi amiga
Cuando crezcas
Sobre mi tumba.
Allí que la montaña me cobije
El camino descanse
Y en la piedra
Lapida eternal
Todo quedará grabado.

Wild herb
I beg you
Go with me in my path.
You will be my friend
When you grow
Over my tomb.
There, where the mountain shelters
me
The path rests
And in stone,
The eternal gravestone,
Everything will remain carved.

Lagos's poem clearly evokes her overwhelming sense of her own mortality, which is not unexpected for someone who was an active revolutionary combatant. But it is especially striking that her words hint at her expectations for her own legacy. Lagos declares that "en la piedra lapida eterna todo quedara grabado," she is referring not only to the permanence of her words on her gravestone, but to what she hopes will be the indelibility of her own memory. In writing the poem in this way, Lagos is thus taking an active part in the creation of her own hero cult. To some extent, her hopes have been borne out; the continued upkeep of her tombstone and the debates over Frente Amplio's video are examples of how Lagos's posthumous career is continually resurrected and debated in Peru today. However, in many ways, Lagos's memory has declined, because of the Shining Path's catastrophic loss of public support even before its ultimate defeat and because Sendero itself fostered a cult of personality around Guzmán so all-consuming that it largely overshadowed any other figures, including Lagos, in social and historical memory.

Chapter 3

María Elena Moyano: Activism, Violence, and Contested Memories in Lima

Before her assassination by Sendero Luminoso on February 19th, 1992, María Elena Moyano was already a prominent Afro-Peruvian activist and an outspoken critic of both the Peruvian state and the Shining Path. She became a leading figure in Villa El Salvador, an impoverished pueblo joven, or young town, built on the outskirts of Lima during the city's explosive population growth in the 1970s and 1980s. As a resident of Villa, Moyano was deeply involved in local politics and community self-government as well as the district's active women's movement. In her activism, Moyano was deeply committed to addressing the structural forces harming low-income communities like Villa El Salvador and limiting Peruvian women's political engagement. She believed strongly in peaceful activism, rejecting the violent methods of bringing about change chosen by Sendero. Nevertheless, she remained deeply critical of the limits of neoliberal policies and the growing authoritarianism of Alberto Fujimori's dictatorship.

After Moyano's death, Sendero Luminoso and the Fujimori government attempted to appropriate her legacy in ways that contradicted central tenets of her advocacy. Sendero sought to frame Moyano as a state collaborator and a traitor to the nation, while Fujimori coopted her death to claim her as a martyr to the nation and in doing so erased her vehement criticism of his neoliberalism and the Peruvian military's own use of violence. In both state-sponsored and senderista narratives of her life, Moyano's gender and her status as a heroic martyr are foregrounded while her racial identity as an Afro-Peruvian is unspoken, her Blackness coded in visual images of her rather than voiced aloud. Moyano's allies among women's groups in Villa El Salvador

attempted to challenge both insurgent and state-sponsored narratives, foregrounding her activism and reclaiming the nature of her sacrifice as oriented towards social justice.

In this chapter, I explore the activism and political work in which Moyano engaged while she was alive. I draw on her autobiography, media sources, and testimonies from her fellow activists to illuminate her advocacy work, situating her life in the context of growing violence and ongoing state formation projects as well as her position within the complex dynamics of race, gender, and class in Peru. I also consider Moyano's place in social memory after her death and the nature of her posthumous career, identifying the political work for which various groups deployed her legacy. I argue that in identifying Moyano with the state and positioning her as a traitor to the revolution, Sendero Luminoso attempted to justify their use of violence, specifically in their assassination of Moyano and more broadly in their violence against many vulnerable groups in Peru. However, the Shining Path was never able to make this narrative take hold, not having recognized the extent to which its public support had declined as opposition to its use of violence, including the assassination of Moyano, crystalized.

By contrast, the Fujimori state's narrative of Moyano as a heroic martyr to the nation has taken hold in more lasting ways, despite its many silences and elisions, particularly of her Blackness. Recognizing the need to cultivate public support for a counterinsurgency campaign that was deeply violent in its own right as well as neoliberal policies that fell most heavily on people and communities struggling already from the economic collapse that occurred under the previous APRA government, Fujimori's government appropriated the immediate wave of public outrage after Moyano's death.

The state claimed her memory for its own purposes despite her fierce criticism of its actions while she was alive. I examine the origins of this state-sponsored narrative in the framework of the hero cult to understand for what purpose it was used, and trace some of the ways in which this narrative is still visible in memory projects today, particularly state-sponsored memorial sites. However, I argue that state efforts to control Moyano's memory always operated under certain constraints, as the continuous pushback from members of Moyano's activist community limited the dominance of the state's narrative.

María Elena Moyano: Early Life and Incipient Activism

Moyano was born in Lima in the district of Barranco, but moved to Villa El Salvador at a young age after her parents' divorce.¹³⁰ Built and organized largely by its own residents with minimal state intervention or support, Villa El Salvador is a low-income district populated largely by people of color, including Afro-Peruvians, acculturated indigenous people called cholos, and the primarily indigenous refugees fleeing military and Shining Path violence in the rural Andean highlands.¹³¹ These roots shaped Moyano's worldview and the strength of her political commitment to Peru's marginalized communities, especially women and the poor of districts like Villa El Salvador, who she saw as neglected by the state in a form of structural violence just as deadly as the overt violence practiced by the Shining Path.¹³² She explains in her autobiography, "I learned so much in Villa El Salvador. It was a school, a place where many people, including leaders, were shaped. I also believe that, in a certain sense, Peru's

¹³⁰ Gabriela McEvoy, "La construcción de la imagen heroica."

¹³¹ See Ramos Quispe, *Sueños sobre arena*.

¹³² I understand structural violence as violence and loss of life tied to entrenched social, political, and economic inequality, that cannot be easily attributed to a single responsible actor but which nevertheless has a very real human cost. See Mark Vorobej, "Structural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 2 (2008): 84.

hope lies in Villa.”¹³³ For Moyano, supporting activists efforts’ in her own community and valuing the lives of the people who lived there were central to this hope. This viewpoint undergirds her criticism of structural state violence and her opposition to Sendero’s vision of enacting change through violence against communities with whom she stood in solidarity.

This political commitment developed further when she attended university, where she studied sociology as an undergraduate student at the University of Garcilaso de la Vega.¹³⁴ Much like Edith Lagos, her time at the university was when Moyano encountered Marxist philosophy and leftist activism for the first time. Although her first experiences with activism came from a church group inspired by liberation theology, Moyano studied Marxist theories of class struggle and historical and dialectical materialism; she also encountered a group of Maoist students who taught her about the Communist Revolution in China, which would go on to become the basis for the Shining Path’s war against the state. While a student, Moyano participated in a teachers’ strike, which she saw as a revolutionary undertaking.¹³⁵ In a crucial difference from Lagos, however, Moyano never found herself in sympathy with Sendero’s specific vision of Communist revolution enacted through violence against the existing state and the people alike. She insisted that the true revolution lay in life and in affirming the lives and dignity of people neglected and oppressed by the Peruvian state, with the result that her early activism led her down a different path from Lagos’s decision to join Sendero. Moyano later became involved with the Marxist revolutionary group Partido Unificado

¹³³ María Elena Moyano, *Autobiography*, 39.

¹³⁴ McEvoy, “La construcción de la imagen heroica,” 84.

¹³⁵ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 78-79, 82.

Mariateguista (Unified Mariateguista Party, or PUM), but later distanced herself from traditional Marxism after the PUM's split, focusing more on women's community organizing.¹³⁶

After graduating from the university, Moyano taught for a time at an experimental school for young children in Villa El Salvador beginning in 1976.¹³⁷ This experience instilled in Moyano the importance of community mobilization to provide needed resources, especially in a context of a lack of state support. That conviction would remain with her throughout her life and would shape her career as an activist.

In Villa El Salvador as in other pueblos jóvenes around Lima, women's involvement in building the basic infrastructure of the town and organizing social services that the state had failed to offer the public, including water, electricity, and limited health care and education, prompted the initial growth of community organizations run by and for women. Within urban and low-income pueblos jóvenes, this constituted the early emergence of local branches of the women's movement, dominated by working class women and women of color.¹³⁸ This process of community mobilization in low-income districts began in the 1970s, but accelerated in Villa El Salvador in the 1980s and 1990s as an influx of displaced people fleeing violence in the Andes caused

¹³⁶ Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información, María Elena Moyano, Anexo 02, Entrevista Anónima. 013-014.

¹³⁷ Diana Miloslavich Tupac, "Women in Peru: A History of Struggle and Courage," in María Elena Moyano, *The Autobiography of María Elena Moyano: The Life and Death of a Peruvian Activist*, ed. Diana Miloslavich Tupac, trans. Patricia S. Taylor Edmisten (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000), 31-32.

¹³⁸ Coral Cordero, "Women in War," 346. Working women in other areas of Lima became involved with labor organizing in 1917 with the organization, which is considered the first major action of the women's movement in Peru, although wealthier limeña women had been discussing women's issues in salons since the nineteenth century. See also Diana Miloslavich Tupac's prologue to *The Autobiography of María Elena Moyano*, "Women in Peru," 4.

dramatic population growth at the same time as neoliberal austerity policies imposed by Fujimori in the 1990s began to limit state support. In her accompanying introduction to Moyano's autobiography, Tupac explains that "as the government showed itself to be ever weaker before the demands of international lenders and spread out more thinly in response to armed revolution, it was poor women who assumed the responsibility for making their communities safe and clean."¹³⁹ Although formal political participation for women remained relatively limited, this sort of popular and community-based organizing played a crucial role in bringing women into the public sphere more prominently.

Moyano was deeply involved in such community organizing for much of her adult life. In 1979, she was part of an oversight committee established to coordinate the advocacy work and community organizing that was already happening in Villa, led mostly by women. This committee laid the foundation for the creation of the Federación Popular de Mujeres de Villa El Salvador (FEPOMUVES), the main organization with which Moyano was involved throughout her career. In 1980, the first mothers' clubs were established, receiving some assistance from the government and international charitable organizations to support their services.¹⁴⁰

In 1983, Moyano was the co-founder of a mother's club in Villa El Salvador, serving as its director. She also helped to found the Federación Popular de Mujeres de Villa El Salvador (FEPOMUVES), serving as its secretary before being elected its

¹³⁹ Tupac, "Women in Peru," 26. The impact of war also resulted in an increase of female-headed families as husbands and fathers were killed, forcing women to take responsibility for a broader array of survival tasks; in response, women formed community organizations to assume that work collectively. Because of the regional concentration of the violence, this trend was especially marked in Ayacucho, but could be seen in Villa El Salvador as well, particularly among displaced families who had fled to Lima from the Andes. Coral Cordero, "Women in War," 355.

¹⁴⁰ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 41.

president twice, first in 1986 and again in 1988.¹⁴¹ Through her activities with FEPOMUVES, Moyano ultimately became involved in coordinating the work of many different women's organizations as well as health and human rights activism in Villa El Salvador. Moyano recognized the importance of FEPOMUVES in promoting women's political participation and strengthening grassroots democracy: "women have proven how effective grassroots political participation can be. We have not participated merely to register opposition, complain about our lives, or simply denounce others. We have documented our complaints and have struggled to offer concrete proposals and alternatives."¹⁴² This conviction represented Moyano's growing belief in the potential of political activism within the existing system to transform that system, something that would shift her relationship with Marxism and the Peruvian left and make her a target for the Shining Path later on.

FEPOMUVES and the smaller women's organizations that fell under its umbrella engaged in various forms of community organizing. They ran the Vaso de Leche program, which beginning in 1985 provided over one million glasses of milk to children under six years of age, nursing mothers, and pregnant women living in low-income districts of Lima such as Villa El Salvador.¹⁴³ Women's clubs also founded communal kitchens to help feed struggling members of the community, organized sewing cooperatives to provide income for FEPOMUVES members, ran workshops relating to health and education, and organized advocacy for the legal and human rights of residents

¹⁴¹ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 42.

¹⁴² Moyano, *Autobiography*, 37-38.

¹⁴³ Patricia Cordova, *Mujer y liderazgo: Entre la familia y la política* (Lima: Asociación Civil Estudios y Publicaciones Urbanas YUNTA, 1992), 11, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

of Villa El Salvador.¹⁴⁴ The communal kitchens were organized under a central committee of Comedores Populares Autogestionarias beginning in 1986, which served more than one million and a half meals over the course of its work.¹⁴⁵ Moyano recognized the major changes that this degree of public organization represented for women in Peru: “I think that women have made significant individual and collective gains...Before, involved only with their own families, they overlooked their skills. Women are now developing their talents and creativity within their own communities, through their own organizations.”¹⁴⁶ For Moyano, the value of this activist work came not only from the direct benefits for her community, but also from the resulting expansion of women’s political roles.

Moyano became involved in formal electoral politics in 1989 when she was elected to serve as Villa El Salvador’s deputy mayor. She ran as the candidate for both FEPOMUVES, which though not a formal political party was concerned with increasing women’s participation in the political process through promoting voting and supporting female candidates for elected office, and the Izquierda Unida (United Left) Party. Moyano viewed women’s organizational support as key to her victory in this election.¹⁴⁷ She also recognized the complexity of the relationship between grassroots democracy and community organizing and formal political politics. She noted,

I would like to highlight in the case of Villa that everyone who today is part of the municipal government has been a community leader, has been working in direct relationship with our support bases, and that we continue doing so now that now

¹⁴⁴ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 42.

¹⁴⁵ Cordova, *Mujer y liderazgo*, 11, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

¹⁴⁶ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 43.

¹⁴⁷ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 55.

that we are the governmental authorities, because we live there we are, in the first place, neighbors.¹⁴⁸

In Villa El Salvador and in Moyano's career, community organizing and holding formal elected office were intertwined processes that mutually reinforced each other. Despite her criticisms of the state at higher levels, participating in local government in Villa El Salvador was for her another means of serving the community. This principle would continue to inform her career as an activist, but also form part of the basis of the Shining Path's attacks on her and her work later on.

Much of Moyano's activism was framed around motherhood, as she recognized that "the primary concern of women continues to be their families, their children. It is the women who must leave home and join the community to survive; the priority of women from the poor classes is survival. As mothers, they know and feel that their children come first."¹⁴⁹ Moyano was conscious of the double burden to which this mode of activism could subject women, forcing them to assume the bulk of both private and public responsibilities, especially in the absence of many other avenues for women to participate in political life or work as activists. Yet she felt that "our organizations enable women to develop their skills, to study, to work for remuneration, while dedicating themselves to their children. Thus women carry out both responsibilities. They are overworked, perhaps, but also valued and empowered."¹⁵⁰ This centering of motherhood reflected the lived realities of the women with whom she worked and her own experiences as a mother, but also suggests a consciousness of maternalism as an avenue for making

¹⁴⁸ Cordova, *Mujer y Liderazgo*, 37, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

¹⁴⁹ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 43.

¹⁵⁰ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 43.

women's activism and political participation publically palatable by grounding women's citizenship in motherhood.

At much the same time that women's organizations were developing a major role in Villa El Salvador, Sendero Luminoso worked towards organizing a political and military presence in the community, beginning relatively early in the war.¹⁵¹ The Shining Path attempted to infiltrate the community spaces belonging to women's organizations in an effort to consolidate popular support and recruit militants. Tupac explains that

Programs directed at easing the plight of the poor, however, especially those that required government cooperation, like the Vaso de Leche program, were anathema to Sendero, because they diminished grievances against the government and were thought to lessen revolutionary fervor among the poor. The women who refused to be cowed by Sendero's threats and continued to manage Vaso de Leche centers became primary targets for the terrorists.¹⁵²

Initially, Moyano and many other women organizers in Villa El Salvador were sympathetic to Sendero's political vision as expressed, although its means of enacting revolution were different from her own. From the beginning, Moyano was committed to peaceful community organizing, which she saw as the most powerful means of creating social and political change. In this she differed from much of the Marxist left in Peru, which was initially reluctant to criticize Sendero because of its own history of advocating violent revolution.¹⁵³ In her autobiography, she explains how her work in Villa shaped this conviction:

¹⁵¹ For discussion of the early encroachment of the Shining Path in Villa El Salvador, see Jo-Marie Burt, "Shining Path and the 'Decisive Battle' in Lima's *Barriadas*: The Case of Villa El Salvador," in *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980-1995*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 266-306.

¹⁵² Tupac, "Women in Peru," 24-25.

¹⁵³ Iván Hinojosa, "Shining Path and the Radical Peruvian Left," 61. See also Florencia E. Mallon, "Chronicle of a Path Foretold?: Velasco's Revolution, Vanguardia

Villa El Salvador is a concrete example of how a people can organize to secure certain rights from the state... We have brought together 2,5000 local organizations, composed of youth, women, and small business owners. The Senderistas want to destroy our efforts. They tell us that our way is wrong.¹⁵⁴

This vision stood in sharp opposition to Sendero's conviction that total destruction of state and society was the only way to create change; but at first Moyano was somewhat sympathetic to their stated ideals of social justice and equality, though in disagreement with their methods. However, Moyano identified strongly with the self-management and self-governing project she was helping to develop in Villa, viewing it as distinct from the state's repressiveness because of the close ties between community leaders and formally elected officials and the high level of community organization. As it became clearer that the Shining Path's efforts to destroy the state would also target the community she was helping to build, Moyano's opposition to Sendero began to coalesce.¹⁵⁵

Moyano and many other women's leaders in Villa El Salvador became increasingly disillusioned as the Shining Path's willingness to commit violence against the people became apparent. As she became a more outspoken opponent, Moyano began to criticize the Peruvian left for not doing more to combat Sendero's excessive use of violence, arguing that the Shining Path had taken advantage of divisions within the left and used leftist discourses and about state repression to develop its support base: "I believe the left bears a serious responsibility for not educating people about the Shining

Revolucionaria, and 'Shining Omens' in the Indigenous Communities of Andahuaylas," in *Shining and Other Paths*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 85.

¹⁵⁴ Moyano, *Autobiography*, 40.

¹⁵⁵ Burt, "The Case of Villa El Salvador," 284.

Path...what left-wing party has made a statement about what is happening in Villa? Not one, not one political leader has come to see what is happening with these organizations or to find out how the mothers are...”¹⁵⁶ She also argued for the creation of neighborhood watch organizations modeled on the rondas campesinas in Andean communities to protect the people of Villa from state-sponsored and Shining Path violence.¹⁵⁷

Moyano’s growing conflict with Sendero began to escalate in 1991 as attacks on community leaders, particularly women, in Villa became more common. The Shining Path assassinated Alejandro Magno Gómez, the governor of Villa, and began sending Moyano and other leftist leaders in the pueblos jóvenes frequent death threats.¹⁵⁸ Juana López, who was a Vaso de Leche leader, was assassinated on August 31, 1991 after receiving death threats demanding she leave her post. Doraliza Espejo Márquez, also a coordinator for Vaso de Leche, was shot on December 6, 1991, with a sign reading “This is how traitors who collaborate with the army die” left on her body. Emma Hilario, who was the director of the National Commission of Communal Kitchens, one of the organizations associated with FEPOMUVES, narrowly survived an assassination attempt on December 20, 1991.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ María Elena Moyano, “There Have Been Threats,” in *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Orin Starn, Carlos Iván Degregori, and Robin Kirk (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 389.

¹⁵⁷ Moyano, “There Have Been Threats,” 390.

¹⁵⁸ Burt, “The Case of Villa El Salvador,” 288.

¹⁵⁹ Moyano, “There Have Been Threats,” 387; Tupac, “Women in Peru,” 28. For more discussion of assassination attempts against community leaders, see Americas Watch and the Women’s Rights Project, “Terror no contado: Violencia contra mujeres en el conflicto armado peruano,” (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993). Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 48-56; Maruja Barrig, “Liderazgo femenino y violencia en el Perú de los 90,” *Debates en Sociología* 18 (1993): 89-129, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

Donatilda Gamarra, who along with Moyano was involved in FEPOMUVES and the Vaso de Leche programs, described how this violence against women leaders affected both her and Moyano's view of Sendero Luminoso:

When [Sendero Luminoso] began to organize I was a leader of local chapter of the Glass of Milk Program, of FEPOMUVES, and I tell you, personally, I admired Sendero Luminoso, and with Marielena [sic] I talked about it, we said, they are professional men and women who fight for justice, for peace, who share our ideals, and we really admired them.¹⁶⁰

For Gamarra and Moyano, witnessing the violence that Sendero was willing to commit against the people they claimed to be fighting for and against women's leaders in particular was profoundly disturbing and ultimately led to their growing disillusionment with the Shining Path. Gamarra explained that the attempt to assassinate Emma Hilario particularly crystalized their opposition: "When they attempted to assassinate Emma Hilario of Pamplona, at that point we said, 'how is this possible, if we know Emma and how is it possible that they are trying to assassinate her.'"¹⁶¹ Moyano struggled to reconcile her knowledge of Hilario as someone working to serve women and the poor with Sendero's claim to be waging revolution on behalf of the poor, yet insistence that Hilario's death was necessary for and justified by the revolution and the class struggle.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información, María Elena Moyano, Anexo 02, Donatilda Gamarra, 026. For more on Emma Hilario and other women activists targeted by Sendero in Lima, see Jacqueline Minaya Roderíguez, "'No matarás ni con hambre ni con balas': Las mujeres de los comedores populares autogestionarios en El Agustino durante la violencia política," *Antropologica* 33, no. 34 (2015): 165-186, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

¹⁶¹ CVR, MEM, Anexo 02, Donatilda Gamarra, 026.

¹⁶² This growing sense of disillusionment with senderista violence in many ways parallels a process that developed in Andean and indigenous communities wracked by the internal armed conflict, particularly in Ayacucho. There, the increasing gulf between Sendero and the population facilitated the growth of both community organizations run by women that offered support to families of those killed and disappeared by Sendero and the military

As she became a more vocal critic, Moyano reported becoming a target of Sendero well before her assassination:

There have been threats. About a year ago, they attacked me and the Women's Federation through *El Diario*. They said we were a support cushion for the system, that we don't value or empower women because they are emancipated only through war...that I am a revisionist and manipulate women...it's a permanent threat.¹⁶³

Moyano was also deeply critical of the Peruvian state and its neglect of communities like Villa El Salvador, especially in the context of Fujimori's neoliberal policies. She specifically criticized the lack of state support for women's community organizing. Tupac noted, "Maria Elena disparaged the Peruvian government's feeble attempts to stem violence in the country, while crediting the women in the community organizations for giving her the courage she needed to defeat Sendero"¹⁶⁴

Moyano and other women activists thus found themselves caught between pressures from the state and Sendero; as Gamarra said:

Well, we were caught in the middle, right? If it weren't the state, the intelligence services that when we were marching repressed us, it was Sendero that accused us of being a support cushion of the capitalist system, and we really felt caught in the middle.¹⁶⁵

On September 9th, 1991, Sendero Luminoso bombed a warehouse used to store materials used by the soup kitchens and the Vaso de Leche program organized by FEPOMUVES. Sendero later accused Moyano of orchestrating the bombing herself as

and, later on in the war, of the rondas campesinas. Although these processes fall outside the scope of this chapter, they are an important complement to the story of Moyano and Villa El Salvador. See Degregori, "Harvesting Storms," for more on the rondas campesinas. For women's and family organizations in Ayacucho, see Coral Cordero, "Women in War," 353-362.

¹⁶³ Moyano, "There Have Been Threats," 388.

¹⁶⁴ Tupac, "Women in Peru, 27.

¹⁶⁵ CVR, MEM, Anexo 02, Donatilda Gamarra, 026.

part of their attempt to discredit her, but this narrative never caught on.¹⁶⁶ Moyano was furious at the attack, and her opposition to Sendero further crystallized; in an interview given shortly after, she said: “Until some time ago I thought that Shining Path was a group committing errors, but that, in some way, they were trying to fight to obtain justice...But now they have attacked the grassroots organizations, where the poorest organize...I no longer consider Shining Path a revolutionary group.”¹⁶⁷ In response, Moyano and FEPOMUVES organized a massive protest on September 27, 1991, to condemn Sendero’s attack on their community spaces. Moyano gave a series of interviews that year in which she articulated strong critiques of Sendero. Towards the end of the year, the newspaper *La República* named Moyano its “Person of the Year.”¹⁶⁸ All of these factors combined to make Moyano a target for Shining Path violence.

On February 14th, 1992, Moyano along with FEPOMUVES organized a march for peace, taking a stand against state and insurgent violence; the march was meant as a counter-protest to an armed strike being held by Sendero on the same day. Moyano marched at the front of a long column of protestors carrying white flags. Sendero assassinated her the next day, on February 15, 1992, at a local women’s group’s event. The assassination was designed to be as violent and shocking as possible; after she was shot in front of her children, the assassins used dynamite to blow her body into pieces.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Tupac, “Women in Peru,” 29; Moyano, *Autobiography*, 65.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Burt, “The Case of Villa El Salvador,” 289.

¹⁶⁸ Americas Watch, “Terror no contado,” 57.

¹⁶⁹ Americas Watch and the Women’s Rights Project, “Terror no contado,” 57. See also Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información, María Elena Moyano, Anexo 04 Atestado 056-03-DINCOTE.

Her brutal murder prompted a huge public outcry; thousands of people mourned at her funeral, and Sendero was publically condemned for the attack.¹⁷⁰ Esther Flores, then president of FEPOMUVES, declared, “Sendero Luminoso will continue trying to eliminate our communal kitchens, but they still have not understood that the mothers of Villa El Salvador want our children to be well fed and we repudiate violence.”¹⁷¹ Although the outpouring of grief and anger after Moyano’s assassination was very real, Sendero’s attempt to intimidate other women leaders was successful to an extent. One woman recounted the effect of Moyano’s assassination on women’s organizations in Villa:

...many were afraid to do work with the Federation, because after the death of María Elena, it was known that she had been killed by Sendero, so many people who were in Vaso de Leche, or in the community kitchens, left them, for the first few months after the death of María Elena, for eight months or so the people were paralyzed, they didn’t go...¹⁷²

Within a few months of Moyano’s murder, Flores was forced to flee the country, although she would later return. Pilar Anchita, a member of FEPMOVES with strong ties to the Shining Path, replaced Flores as the foundation’s president.¹⁷³

In her activism, Moyano foregrounded issues of class and gender as the lenses through which she viewed inequality in Villa El Salvador and in Peru. She was less explicitly focused on racial inequality in general and on her Afro-Peruvian identity in particular, although it profoundly shaped own her experiences and others’ views of her. There are complex historical and cultural reasons for this lack of focus on race, including

¹⁷⁰ Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información, María Elena Moyano Anexo 02, Roger Muro, 055.

¹⁷¹ Americas Watch, “Terror no contado,” 57.

¹⁷² Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información, María Elena Moyano, Anexo 02, Josefina Bonilla, 093-094.

¹⁷³ Burt, “The Case of Villa El Salvador,” 292.

the emphasis on class common to many leftist leaders and Marxist movements, which shaped Moyano's intellectual and activist development as a university student later in her life and her career, as well as the specific struggles and experiences of the Afro-Peruvian community. Moreover, most Marxist movements in Latin America took it as a given that ending capitalism and imperialism would bring about an end to gender and racial inequality automatically.

In much of Latin America, Afro-Peruvian communities have faced a longstanding struggle for visibility, recognition, and inclusion within a racial worldview that imagines national citizenship in terms of creole, mestizo, or indigenous identities. In Peru as in much of Latin America, race is imagined as a binary between coastal limeños racially coded as white and indigenous people living in highland communities. In this racist and racialized framework, mestizaje becomes the process of racial and cultural mixing by which indigenous people can approach whiteness and achieve progress despite their imagined backwardness. As de la Cadena points out, there is no space for Black identities in this imaginary of the Peruvian nation; Afro-Peruvian people “were considered a foreign race, and therefore lacked a specific place of origin in the national geography.”¹⁷⁴ This vision of citizenship and national identity means that Black communities in Latin America have struggled to gain any kind of visibility.

This trend remains particularly marked in Peru because of the framing of national identity along indigenista lines, with the hyper-visibility of indigenous cultural forms—

¹⁷⁴ Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 21. For more discussion of the binary racialized imaginary of national identity in Peru, see Mary Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in the Andes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

although rarely indigenous bodies themselves—resulting in the relative invisibility of Black bodies and social movements. As a result, Greene argues, “Afro-Peruvians still remain relatively invisible from the point of view of Peru’s multicultural state politics.”¹⁷⁵ In other words, the erasure of Afro-Peruvians from the imaginary of Peruvian national identity has contributed to a lack of state recognition of the Afro-Peruvian community. This means that in Peru, social movements centered on the foregrounding of Blackness are still relatively nascent or even impossible; during Moyano’s lifetime, gender and class were more broadly recognized frameworks in her community for thinking about social inequality and injustice.

Competing Narratives and the Emergence of Moyano’s Hero Cult

After Moyano’s assassination, Sendero became deeply invested in instilling their discourse of her life and the reasons for her death in the public. In response to public outcry that was greater than it anticipated, the Shining Path was forced to attempt to justify the assassination more strenuously. Using its newspaper *El Diario*, Sendero sought to present Moyano as a corrupt collaborator with the Peruvian state and military, someone who represented an obstacle to the implementation of revolutionary aims. Because she had cooperated with the Lima municipal government and the federal government in some of her organizing work in Villa El Salvador, most prominently receiving funding for the Vaso de Leche Program, Sendero insisted that Moyano’s work

¹⁷⁵ Shane Greene, “Does Still Relatively Invisible Mean Less Likely to Be Co-opted? Reflections on the Afro Peruvian Case,” in *Black Social Movements in Latin America: From Monocultural Mestizaje to Multiculturalism*, ed. Jean Muteba Rahier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 152. See also Shane Green, “*Todos Somos Iguales, Todos Somos Incas*: Dilemmas of Afro-Peruvian Citizenship and Inca Whiteness in Peru,” in *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America*, eds. Kwame Dixon and John Burdick, 282-304 (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012).

constituted collaboration with not only the Fujimori state but also the military, accusing her of informing on other residents of Villa. The Shining Path's attitude towards her reflected its deep conviction that any attempt to provide services to marginalized communities in the context of a capitalist state would inhibit the revolution by eradicating its popular support base. In this vision, anything short of total war and the absolute destruction of the Peruvian state was a counterrevolutionary betrayal, allowing Sendero to intensify its rhetoric and ignore widespread condemnation of the assassination.¹⁷⁶ The purpose of these narratives was an attempt to justify her murder.¹⁷⁷ For instance, in a circular printed and distributed immediately following her murder, Sendero claimed that Moyano

Had been denounced by the people for seizing funds from the assistance programs that were meant to help the poor...was the "Madre Coraje" of the regime an honest "activist" trying to help the self-organized masses? No. Moyano worked openly to transform charity and self-government organizations of the people into networks of informants and armed death squads.¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, for many of Moyano's compatriots, this retroactive effort to justify her murder remained utterly unconvincing. Donatilda Gamarra expressed the deep discomfort and fury that she felt towards it:

¹⁷⁶ The Shining Path made similar criticisms of Moyano even before the assassination, accusing her of corruption and of stealing foreign aid dollars for her personal enrichment. These attempts to discredit her became even more pronounced after she was murdered. CVR, MEM, Anexo 02, Roger Muro, 057.

¹⁷⁷ Jo-Marie Burt, "Los usos y abusos."

¹⁷⁸ "La Historia Verdadera de la Madre Coraje," *El Diario*, 1992, cited in Burt, "Los usos y abusos," 181. Moyano was called Madre Coraje, or Mother Courage, as a title that integrated her motherhood with her activism and resistance and which was borrowed from the play by Berthold Brecht: "*Caretas* [a Peruvian magazine] proclaimed Moyano as 'Madre Coraje,' Mother Courage," highlighting her efforts in defense of the poor before hunger and political violence. This phrase was used often to refer to her, even after her death. Burt, "Los usos y abusos," 175.

After they killed Marielena [sic], I became very clear in my belief that “he who kills the people does not represent the people,” this was the most difficult thing for us and from there [opposition to Sendero] grew and I believe it was the Achilles heel of Sendero Luminoso as well to have killed Marielena, to have done so in such a way, not only having killed her, but also trying to destroy her in a thousand pieces, in the bloodiest way possible.¹⁷⁹

For Gamarra as for others who had known Moyano or witnessed her activism firsthand, the narrative of her circulated by the Shining Path would never become acceptable. A massive crowd of people attended her funeral, and many saw her death and the reaction to it as a turning point in public opposition towards the Shining Path.¹⁸⁰ The ceremony hinted at the emergence of her hero cult as well the way in which her death was popularly understood as an act of martyrdom, of sacrificing her life for the betterment of her country and her community.

It is telling that in her comments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Gamarra draws attention to the pain to which Moyano was subjected and the extreme brutality of her death. For Gamarra, it mattered not only that the Shining Path killed Moyano, but that they killed her in such an outrageously cruel way; even more so, that they tried to destroy her body, as if they were trying to destroy any memory of her life, not merely to end it. Johnson explains that for hero cults tied to the body politics of martyred figures, part of the power of the hero’s death comes from the brutal nature of that death, particularly for marginalized communities. The hero’s pain becomes emblematic of the collective suffering of the nation.¹⁸¹ In a narrative reminiscent of the religious iconography surrounding Catholic saints, Moyano’s suffering offered a mirror

¹⁷⁹ CVR, MEM, Donatilda Gamarra, 027.

¹⁸⁰ Jo-Marie Burt, *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State*, 125-126.

¹⁸¹ Johnson, ed., *Body Politics*, 18-20.

to the residents of Villa El Salvador, particularly other women activists, in which they could recognize their own experiences and find inspiration to continue their resistance. The violent nature of her death symbolized the violence Sendero was inflicting on Villa El Salvador, on Ayacucho, and on other communities in Peru long marginalized by race and class. Many newspaper reports of her death underscored this violence; for instance, the headline in *Diario de la República* read, “The cowardice of Sendero: They shot her in the head and dynamited her body.”¹⁸²

Because activists in Villa El Salvador remembered Moyano’s criticisms of the state’s lack of support for community organizers and marginalized people as well as her opposition to Sendero, her death became important as a symbol of state neglect as well as Shining Path violence. In other words, Moyano’s death mattered not only because Sendero murdered her, but also because the Fujimori government and the military failed to save her. Thus, her death came to represent “the state’s incapacity—or perhaps its unwillingness—to protect governing authorities and citizens like Moyano who challenged violence on the part of *both* Shining Path and the state.”¹⁸³ As a result, the violence of her death was linked symbolically to the state as well as to the Shining Path, at least in the minds of many residents of Villa El Salvador. That linkage would make it exceedingly difficult for the state to exploit her memory on behalf of its own vision of Peruvian nationalism, as it later tried to do.

¹⁸² Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información, Pascuala Rosado, Recortes Periodísticos, *Diario de la República*, “La cobardía de Sendero: Le dispararon la cabeza y dinamitaron su cuerpo,” 16 February 1992.

¹⁸³ Burt, *Political Violence*, 128.

Nevertheless, the Fujimori state saw in Moyano's murder and the outpouring of grief that followed it an opportunity to capitalize on those emotions. In doing so, the state attempted to appropriate the image of Moyano as a heroic martyr figure to bolster support for the ongoing war effort and by extension Fujimori's government, including its controversial economic policies. Burt notes, "the media coverage of Moyano's funeral showed her as a victim whose assassination had unified the society against terrorism."¹⁸⁴ This would be the narrative that the state would coopt and re-circulate, that of a woman who sacrificed her life for her nation and for the cause of peace. There are of course vast differences between the Fujimori dictatorship, the post-Fujimori government, and the Truth Commission, all of which made use of Moyano's hero cult; these are distinct state project with extremely different degrees of control and political power, as well as different uses of violence and repression. However, state-sponsored memory projects throughout these different phases of wartime and post-war political life in Peru share a tendency to frame the armed conflict in Peru as a result of Shining Path aggression in a way that minimizes the violence committed by state forces. It is in this context that I discuss state efforts to appropriate Moyano's hero cult in different spaces. Yet the meaning of Moyano's death was never completely subject to state control, and media and civil society groups would continue to contest dominant narratives and reinterpret her legacy.

Although I was unable to visit Moyano's tomb, there is a statue in her honor erected in Villa El Salvador, which echoes state-sanctioned understandings of her life and death and hints at the challenges which activists present to that dominant narrative (See

¹⁸⁴ Burt, "Los usos y abusos," 175.

Figures 7, 8). Moyano's stance in the monument is active and proud, and the flag she is carrying hints at a patriotic framing of her memory. Her statue echoes statues found elsewhere in Lima of figures associated with the Independence Wars, such as Simón Bolívar and José San Martín. It is also worth noting that as in many media sources, her Blackness is coded into this visual depiction of her body, and as such is not explicitly named in the written texts surrounding her monument. A memorial plaque at the monument praises Moyano as a "constructora de la paz y la democracia," a builder of peace and democracy, a framing which foregrounds her opposition to Sendero and implicitly positions her as aligned with the state. Another plaque proclaiming her a "heroína nacional" includes a quotation from Moyano herself:

The revolution is an affirmation of life, of individual and collective dignity; it is a new ethic. The revolution is not death nor imposition nor subjugation nor fanaticism. The revolution is new life, it is having conviction and fighting for a just, worthy society in solidarity with the organizations created by our people, respecting their internal democracy and growing new seeds for the power of the new Peru.¹⁸⁵

Here again, Moyano is presented as an advocate for peace; her declaration that the revolution is not in death but in life can be read as a clear condemnation of senderista tactics. But this statement also suggests the contested nature of narratives surrounding Moyano. Although this plaque does not foreground her critique of state policy, that critique is implied in the repeated references to the necessity of a revolution conducted along a vision radically different from Sendero's and a commitment to community organizations that espouses no such support for national-level politics or government. By invoking the "internal democracy" of community organizations, Moyano positions that

¹⁸⁵ María Elena Moyano Monument, Villa El Salvador. Photo by author.



Figure 7: Monument to María Elena Moyano, Villa El Salvador, Lima. Photo by author.



Figure 8: Monument to María Elena Moyano, Villa El Salvador, Lima. Photo by author.

democracy as more meaningful and more just than anything offered by an exploitative national state.

That contestation of both state and Shining Path narratives continued in the testimonies given by women who had worked with Moyano before the Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación. For instance, Ester Flores Pacheco simultaneously celebrated Moyano's heroism and criticized narratives of her legacy by Sendero and the state.

Describing how Moyano's memory continues to hold meaning for women activists, Esther Flores Pacheco declared that:

The organization suffered a great loss, we wept for her absence and we wept with pain. But her words, although they killed her, and silenced her voice, her words, her example, they could never kill her, because we women carry them in our hearts, we carry them with us...For being a leader and a woman who fought for peace, for justice, who condemned terror...For that they killed her."¹⁸⁶

However, Pacheco was also careful to express her frustration with both state and senderista efforts to appropriate Moyano's legacy:

But also, many people now pretend, nine years after the death of María Elena, they pretend that they were with her and that they knew her and worked with her. And also, they take advantage, some of those who were complicit in the slander...and sometimes with the pretext of kinship, they betray the memory and the ideal, for which she fought.¹⁸⁷

Pacheco's reference to kinship here is particularly telling; it points to an oblique criticism of Martha Moyano, María Elena Moyano's sister who remains a politician active in Fujimori's political party. Martha Moyano was elected to Congress in 1995 as part of Fujimori's slate of candidates. During Fujimori's trial for gross human rights

¹⁸⁶ Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación, Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información, María Elena Moyano, Anexo 1: Testimonio Brindado Ante La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, Ester Flores Pacheco (María Chávez), 008.

¹⁸⁷ CVR, MEM, Anexo 01 Esther Flores Pacheco, 009-010.

violations, corruption, and “usurpation of authority,” Martha Moyano served as an outspoken witness for his defense despite María Elena Moyano’s explicit condemnation of his counterinsurgency tactics and economic policies.¹⁸⁸ In doing so, Martha articulated the traditional state narrative of María Elena as an almost apolitical victim of Sendero, erasing her sister’s criticism of the government.¹⁸⁹ In this effort to appropriate the legacy of her leftist sister for a more conservative political project, Martha Moyano joined a particular Latin American tradition of *hermanos incómodos* (or in this case, *hermana incómoda*), or uncomfortable sibling, which refers to figures criticized for misusing the legacies of more famous, revolutionary siblings.¹⁹⁰ Activists in Villa El Salvador remain deeply angered by this framing; in a piece on the “Amigos de Villa El Salvador” website entitled “María Elena Lives, Martha Does Not,” Martha Moyano’s actions are condemned: “Poor sister who became...a social climber who took advantage of the memory of our compañera and who defends with tooth and nail a murderer, dictator, and mobster. Poor woman who has a communist past that she does not want to remember.”¹⁹¹ By using the word kinship here, Pacheco identifies Martha Moyano as one of the state figures complicit in distorting her sister’s memory.

For Pacheco, María Elena Moyano is a figure who cannot be understood in the context of either state or senderista efforts to claim and make use of her narrative.

¹⁸⁸ Fujimori was convicted of these crimes in a Peruvian court in 2009 and sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. See Jo-Marie Burt, “Guilty As Charged: The Trial of Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori for Human Rights Violations,” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 3, no. 3 (2009): 395-397.

¹⁸⁹ Daniel Cozart, “La Madre Coraje y sus enlaces: Remembering María Elena Moyano,” *The Latin Americanist* 56, no. 2 (2012): 120, 129.

¹⁹⁰ Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 62-63.

¹⁹¹ Miguel Almeyda, “María Elena vive, Martha no,” 15 February 2008, http://www.amigosdevilla.it/maria_elena_moyano/15_de_febrero.html

Instead, she is a hero and a martyr who “speak[s] the language of social protest” and social justice, but on her own terms and the terms of the fellow activists who were her community while she was alive.¹⁹² It is significant, then, that Pacheco makes these comments in her formal testimony before the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, because truth commissions are explicitly conceived as projects designed to write an official and national history of violence and war.¹⁹³ In making this claim about the misrepresentation of Moyano’s memory before a tribunal tasked with constructing an official narrative of the internal armed conflict, Pacheco necessarily contests the state narrative of Moyano, inserting her own vision of Moyano into the historical record. For Pacheco, Moyano’s memory belongs to her community and cannot be claimed entirely by the state.

Both before and after her death, much of Moyano’s activism is framed around her identity as a mother. Aside from her nickname “Madre Coraje,” or Mother Courage,” newspaper articles about her assassination often featured photographs of her with her children, again underscoring the maternalist frame, as in the case of this *Diario la República* story from February 16, 1992, just a day after her death (see Figures 9, 10).

Moyano is also depicted along maternalist lines in Yuyanapac, an exhibit using the photos unearthed by the CVR that is one of the primary postwar memory projects in

¹⁹² Johnson, *Body Politics*, 8.

¹⁹³ For discussion of the role of truth commissions in writing and imagining national histories of violence in other Latin American contexts, see Greg Grandin, “The Instruction of Great Catastrophe: Truth Commissions, Natural History, and State Formation in Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala,” *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 1 (2005): 46-67.



Figure 9: *Diario de la República*, “Cobardía de Sendero: Le dispararon la cabeza y dinamitaron su cadáver.” February 16, 1992. Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información. Pascuala Rosado, Recortes Periodísticos, 070.



Figure 10: *Diario de la República*, "Cobardía de Sendero: Le dispararon la cabeza y dinamitaron su cadáver." February 16, 1992. Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación. Defensoría del Pueblo, Centro de Información. Pascuala Rosado, Recortes Periodísticos, 072.

the capital (see Figure 11). Moyano is given an entire room to herself in that exhibit, but there as elsewhere, her opposition to Sendero is highlighted and her criticism of the state is downplayed. A plaque in her honor reads, “the treacherous assassination [of Moyano] generated a profound rejection both within and outside of the country, and converted María Elena Moyano into a national emblem for courage, solidarity, and the struggle for peace.” In that room, photos of Moyano leading protests and of the massive attendance at her funeral are present, but the most prominent photo by far is a picture of her nursing one of her children, which takes up an entire wall.

Thus, maternalism is framed in the exhibit as a central thread of the state’s narrative of Moyano, while her political activism is downplayed. The maternalist framing reflects the state’s established stake in depoliticizing Moyano’s memory as much as possible to erase her criticisms most effectively. In this narrative, Moyano is a hero less for her activism and more for her virtuousness and her sacrifice on behalf of the country, a framework tied to Catholic notions of sainthood. Historically, motherhood has been central to notions of virtuous Catholic womanhood in Latin America.¹⁹⁴ But in the twentieth century, maternalism also emerged as a basis for legitimizing women’s growing presence in public life; drawing on notions of motherhood, women “took these ‘feminine virtues’ out of the home and into the public sphere, and demanded that they be recognized in service to the nation.”¹⁹⁵ By positioning the photograph of Moyano nursing

¹⁹⁴ Elizabeth Dore, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Gender and the State in the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 22.

¹⁹⁵ Maxine Molyneux, “Twentieth Century State Formations in Latin America,” in *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 45



Figure 11: Museo de la Nación, Yuyanapac Photography Exhibit, Lima. Photo by Author.

her child so prominently in this exhibit, the museum invokes the discourse of maternalism as the basis for Moyano's activism as well, enabling the state narrative of Moyano to continue.

The lens of maternalism as a central framing device is also a crucial difference between the narratives of Moyano and Lagos. Especially in sympathetic narratives of her life, Lagos is portrayed as a young innocent despite her active participation in Shining Path violence in a way that is strongly tied to her racial coding as *misti* or white. That is not an imaginary open to Moyano, both because of her identity as a mother but also because of her Blackness.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I set out to explore questions related to gender, race, and the politics of social memory in the aftermath of violence in Peru. In looking at the lives, deaths, and hero cults of Edith Lagos and María Elena Moyano, I hoped to understand why these two women entered both historical narrative and collective memory of the war between the Peruvian state and Sendero Luminoso, when so many individual women did not. I hoped also to contrast the distinct places that Lagos and Moyano occupy in social memory, and the reasons for those differences. Recognizing that states and other groups frequently make use of women's bodies for political work, I was interested tracing in the posthumous careers of Lagos and Moyano to evaluate which groups were making use of their memory and for what purposes.

A young woman and a university student, Edith Lagos was recruited by Sendero and operated as a clandestine militant until her death in 1982. After she was killed, Sendero capitalized on a surge of public outrage at her violent death to circulate a narrative of Lagos as a heroic martyr in hopes of bolstering public support for the armed struggle. Highlighting Lagos's youth and her gender, Shining Path media portrayed her as a willing and virtuous martyr to a noble cause, implicitly invoking her sacrifice to urge Peruvians to join the insurgency. As I have argued previously in this thesis, this effort was initially successful, with the tens of thousands of people in attendance at Lagos's funeral in Ayacucho representing a high point of Sendero's popularity. Her death at the hands of the military fit within Sendero's narrative of war against the unjust and violent Peruvian state as the only possible pathway to achieving social change. As developments in the war led to an increased military presence in Ayacucho and an escalation of the

violence committed against civilians by insurgents and the state, Sendero's need to retain the public's sympathy drove its continued effort to make use of Lagos's memory. State efforts to undermine the hero cult developing around Lagos by repeatedly attacking her tomb also point to the meaning her memory held for many people.

The importance of Lagos's memory was tied to both her gender and her whiteness. Much of the power of her hero cult came from its emphasis on her young age when she was killed, implicitly emphasizing her innocence despite her long-standing involvement in violence as a Shining Path militant. Johnson has noted that the imaginary of a martyred hero has deep roots in Catholic iconography; in Lagos's case, her narrative fits within a script of "the anticipated forms that ideal lives should take, deeply rooted in traditional Catholic narratives as performed by rituals."¹⁹⁶ The narrative of Lagos as a young innocent who nobly sacrificed her life for a just cause is rooted in the idea of a virgin martyr, a long-standing imagined pathway to virtuous womanhood. Lagos's hero cult repurposes this script not for the cause of Catholicism but for Sendero's vision of a reimagined and just Peru built on the ashes of the state that Lagos gave her life to destroy. Yet the innocence invoked in this narrative has links to a specific and racialized vision of womanhood tied to Lagos's whiteness. Lagos's memory is able to embody innocence in part because her body was white; that imagined narrative would not have been available to a woman of color. The violent and unjust nature of Lagos's death is an important factor in her hero cult; she became a sympathetic figure because her suffering and its perceived injustice could act as a mirror for the suffering of ayacuchano campesinos struggling under a structurally violent and repressive Peruvian state. This type of

¹⁹⁶ Johnson, *Body Politics*, 18.

reflective recognition was a crucial component of the symbolic work that her memory and her body made possible, providing the foundation for much of her posthumous career as a Shining Path symbol, but also as a broader symbol of the struggle for justice that in some ways has outlasted the collapse of the Shining Path.

Helped along by Shining Path media campaigns, the early years of the war saw the emergence of a nascent hero cult around Lagos's memory. As support for the Shining Path's war effort abated, Lagos's prominence in public discourses and social narratives of the war grew gradually diminished. Sendero's investment in maintaining her hero cult also declined, with the cult of personality surrounding its leader Abimael Guzmán ultimately displacing Lagos's narrative. Yet she is still remembered as a sympathetic figure by many today, even as Sendero has become deeply unpopular. This sympathy suggests that Sendero was not able to completely control her posthumous career; her status as a symbol of resistance and sacrifice is always contested.

Before her assassination by Sendero Luminoso in 1992, María Elena Moyano was already a prominent local politician and activist in Villa El Salvador, a low-income district of Lima populated in large part by people who had been displaced by the war in the Andes. Deeply critical of the Shining Path's attacks on the people and communities for whom it claimed to be fighting and the structural violence and neglect of the Peruvian state, Moyano was a committed advocate for women, children, and low-income communities. During her career as an activist, she founded the Federación Popular de Mujeres de Villa El Salvador, participated in many community development projects, and served as Villa El Salvador's deputy mayor. She was also an Afro-Peruvian woman, and although she did not speak explicitly about race as she did about gender and class

because of the positioning of the Afro-Peruvian community socially and politically, her racial identity nevertheless shaped her work as an activist and her posthumous career in important ways.

When Sendero Luminoso assassinated María Elena Moyano, they did so with the intention of circulating a narrative of her as an enemy of the revolution and a treasonous leftist complicit in the corrupt Peruvian state. Yet the Shining Path's efforts to make this narrative take hold largely failed, and various groups began contesting the meaning of her legacy almost immediately. In much the same way that Sendero had used the collective memory of Edith Lagos, the Fujimori government was quick to capitalize on Moyano's narrative, claiming her as a heroic martyr to the anti-Sendero cause while simultaneously erasing her trenchant criticisms of Fujimori's neoliberal and autocratic policies. Today, this state-sponsored narrative of Moyano's life and death continues to circulate widely, particularly in public monuments to her in Villa El Salvador and memorial sites in other parts of Lima. But activists who knew her personally, especially other women from FEPOMUVES and other organizations in Villa El Salvador who worked with her, continue to push back against this narrative, highlighting the ways she spoke out against Sendero and the state.

Race is a crucial part of Moyano's narrative and shapes her hero cult and her place in social memory in ways that are profoundly important, but rarely explicit because of the complexities of Afro-Peruvian identity. Both the prevailing national imaginary of Peruvian citizenship as equated with mestizaje in a Spanish-indigenous binary and the exclusive celebration of indigenismo have driven the erasure of Peru's Black communities. As a result, Afro-Peruvian social movements are still fairly nascent and

engaged in a struggle for visibility. In Moyano's case, her Blackness was nearly always clearly present, but never explicitly voiced; in media depictions of her as well as state-sponsored public memorials, she is visually coded as Black so that her race can be recognized without being spoken aloud.

There are some important differences between Lagos' and Moyano's experiences and hero cults that bear further discussion. Perhaps most significantly, Lagos's and Moyano's different racial identities shape and differentiate their places in social memory of the war in important ways. Both Lagos and Moyano are remembered in ways that idealize their goodness; they are imagined and remembered as virtuous and heroic women. Yet the pathways that they take to access that womanhood are deeply racialized, although differences in their age and life experiences are relevant as well. In Lagos's case, her youth suggests a virtue tied to virginity. Although Lagos was almost fifteen years younger than Moyano, the way her innocence plays into her narrative is a function of her whiteness as much of her age. In Moyano's case, state-sponsored narratives of her legacy in particular stress her maternal identity. Motherhood is used to frame her as a virtuous woman. However, for Lagos and Moyano, gender shapes their hero cults; unlike many male heroic figures in Latin America, Lagos and Moyano are remembered as archetypal figures of virtuous womanhood, the virgin and the mother, rather than as wholly individual.¹⁹⁷ This archetypal framing echoes the limited pathways for women's political participation in Peru, suggesting that those limitations apply to women's entrance into social memory as well.

¹⁹⁷ Brunk and Fallaw, *Heroes and Hero Cults*, 10.

Although the thousands of people in attendance at her funeral and the initial response to Lagos's death suggested the development of a persistent hero cult surrounding her, the scope of her role in social memory declined as the war continued. As Sendero's willingness to commit brutal violence to achieve its aims became more evident, public dissatisfaction with the armed struggle grew, resulting in the formation of *rondas campesinas* who worked with the government to fight the Shining Path as one indicator of growing opposition among indigenous communities. Concomitantly with this process, Edith Lagos's prominence gradually declined. She became a less sympathetic figure after the war, when the state took a greater hand in controlling narratives and social memory of the conflict because of its military victory over Sendero. Because of the state's victory, most narratives of the war position Sendero as the primary aggressor in the conflict and de-emphasize the very real atrocities committed by the Peruvian police and military forces. Thus, most figures associated with Sendero tend to be represented less sympathetically than figures claimed by the state. For instance, although Lagos does appear briefly in the Yuyanapac photo exhibit, she is featured much less prominently than Moyano, meriting only a mention on the timeline and a handful of photographs instead of an entire room. It is worth noting, though, that the extent of this displacement varies regionally. In Ayacucho, where Lagos lived and where the war originated, some aspects of Lagos's hero cult remain, for instance, in the flowers that can be found always on her grave.

Moyano has retained a much more prominent place in social memory than Lagos has, particularly in Lima. This is due in part to state efforts to appropriate her memory, positioning her as a martyr in the context of cultivating opposition to Sendero before the

war ended and the post war nation building (or re-building) that ensued after the Shining Path was defeated. In circulating a narrative that stressed Moyano's opposition to Sendero and her heroic sacrifice supposedly on behalf of the nation while downplaying her critiques of the state, the Fujimori government attempted to gain support for its counterinsurgency campaign as well as its economic policies. But that effort continued to a new purpose after the war ended and Fujimori was ousted and replaced by a different government. As a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was instated and written, memorials to Moyano were constructed and museums exploring the conflict were designed. Throughout this process, Moyano continually resurfaced in state-sponsored memory projects as part of new attempts at nation building.

Part of the reason that Moyano's memory has remained so prominent—and why state efforts to control her memory have been so sharply contested—relates to the dynamics of race and gender within Peru. As a woman of color, Moyano's memory acts as a mirror for the experiences of many women of color in Peru, particularly but not exclusively in lower-income districts of Lima. In many ways, her experiences are representative of those of other women of color; although the violence of her death was extreme, the relationship between citizenship, motherhood, and resistance to state and insurgent violence that marked so much of her life would be very familiar to the women of color who remember her. In many ways, Lagos seems to have been less symbolically representative, both because of her whiteness and because her membership in Sendero made her into a figure who mirrored other women's experiences less closely.

While a useful framework for thinking about the importance of these two women, the particularities of Peruvian history and culture make applying the lens of the hero cult

to Peruvian individuals somewhat challenging. Peru is unusual in that its historical canon lacks the heroic figures that help shape notions of identity and citizenship in so many other countries in Latin America. While Tupac Amarú II, the self-declared descendent of the last Inca ruler who led a failed colonial uprising in the Andes that sought to eradicate Spanish rule and restore the Inca empire, might be called a heroic figure and is certainly remembered sympathetically as someone who fought for justice, the term martyr is perhaps more appropriate.¹⁹⁸ Much of the power of his legacy comes not from what he achieved while alive, but from the suffering he endured during his execution and the torturous indignities inflicted on his body.¹⁹⁹ Unlike most other Latin American nations, Peru also has no major independence hero of its own; the outsiders Simón Bolívar of Colombia and Venezuela and José San Martín of Argentina and Chile liberated Peru, and indeed more of the people who became Peruvians after independence fought with Spain than with the pro-independence armies.²⁰⁰ Many other Latin American countries experienced internal or external conflicts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that later served as axes for national identity; for instance, the War of a Thousand Days in Colombia and the Mexican Revolution both provide narratives to their countries that serve as a basis for state formation and the development of nationalism.²⁰¹ Peru's analogous conflict was the War of the Pacific with Chile, but because this war

¹⁹⁸ Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nationhood*, 117-19.

¹⁹⁹ See Ward Stavig, "Tupac Amarú, the Body Politic, and the Embodiment of Hope: Inca Heritage and Social Justice in the Andes," in *Body Politics: Death, Dismemberment, and Memory in Latin America*, ed. Lyman J. Johnston (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

²⁰⁰ See Kláren, *Peru: Society and Nation*, 122.

²⁰¹ Mary Roldán, *Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Colombia, 1946-1953* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 14, 29.

ended in a devastating defeat for Peru, it could hardly function as a proud foundation for nationalism and national identity in the same way.²⁰²

Once Peru gained its independence, indigenismo and imaginaries of indigenous cultural heritage became the foundation of national identity.²⁰³ The Peruvian citizen was imagined as mestizo and indigenous, particularly pre-Colombian, cultural heritage was celebrated as the central pillar of the Peruvian nation. But deploying indigenismo as a basis of national identity precludes the emergence of individual heroes because indigenismo rests on a valorization of indigenous cultural forms coupled with an erasure of indigenous people and bodies. Marisol de la Cadena notes that indigenous women in particular are called on to symbolically embody the nation in ways that elide individual personhood.²⁰⁴ As most other prominent figures in Peru have been discredited, Moyano and Lagos in many ways exist in a vacuum because there are no other analogous figures, making it impossible to judge them in the context of other Peruvian heroes. But of course the positioning of heroic figures changes over time, as the controversy surrounding the recent Frente Amplio video aptly demonstrates. It is impossible to know for certain what place Lagos and Moyano may hold in social memory in the years to come, or whether other heroic figures might displace their legacies.

²⁰² Klarén, *Peru: Society and Nation*, 191.

²⁰³ See Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos* and Mary Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos*.

²⁰⁴ Marisol de la Cadena, ““Las mujeres son más indias: Etnicidad y género en una comunidad del Cusco,”” *Estudios y debates* 1 (1991): 47. For further discussion of the dynamics of ethnicity, gender, and citizenship in the Andes, see Andrew Canessa, ed. *Natives Making Nation: Gender, Indigeneity, and the State in the Andes* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005).

Nevertheless, the idea of the hero cult, particularly in the context of scholarship about martyrdom and body politics, provides a useful lens for considering the meaning that extraordinary individual lives can sometimes take on and the political weight that memories of those individuals can carry. Examination of the ways in which Lagos and Moyano are remembered—or forgotten—provides insight into the ways the Peruvian state and the Shining Path sought to use women's memories for their own symbolic and political purposes: to gain support, to justify their use of violence, to imagine new visions of what the Peruvian nation might look like after the war was over, and to reconstruct that nation when the war did end. Lagos and Moyano also offer a reminder that social memory is always contested; despite state efforts, it can never be entirely dictated from above. The challenges presented to state-sponsored narratives of each of these women and the efforts to reclaim their legacies hint at the ways in which the body politic finds meaning in hero cults and social memory, oftentimes contrary to the narratives circulated by the state.

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