

The Reds and the Real in Santiago Roncagliolo's *Abril rojo*

Liliana Wendorff
Queens University of Charlotte

J. Thomas Morley
Fayetteville Technical Community College

The bloody confrontations between Shining Path and the Peruvian army engulfed a substantial population of peasants for two decades (1980-2000) and resulted in the death or disappearance of approximately 70,000 people.¹ This colossal conflict so tainted the dynamic of Peruvian society that it has been an essential influence in the Peruvian narrative since the 1980s. The first texts about political violence appeared in 1986² and were produced mostly by writers of Andean origin who inherited the *indigenista* tradition: writers who felt culturally attached to the actors and victims of the conflict.³ At the same time they were fictionalizing violence, these writers began to identify themselves as *andinos*, contrasting their works to the more abundant *criolla* narrative that achieved greater recognition by the national critics (Nieto Degregori 38-39). Andean narrative is produced by middle class intellectuals with Indian roots. It is primarily urban and mestiza; Lima occupies a preferential role, more so than the small and large cities of the sierra. The *criolla* narrative is inscribed in creole culture (coastal population), and it is the hegemonic literature. The differences between the Andean and Creole narratives are sociocultural—not geographic—and they offer a different vision of Peru, according to Luis Nieto Degregori (43). Dante Castro identifies variables responsible for a variety of nuances: 1) proximity to the most relevant events of the conflict; 2) social origin of the author; 3) ideological point of view; and 4) writer's ethnic origin ("Los Andes" 13). Castro and Ricardo Virhuez Villafane

¹ Out of four victims of the conflict, three were peasants whose mother tongue was Quechua (Cox, "Apuntes" 68). The internal armed conflict between 1980 and 2000 had the longest duration, intensity, and largest human and economic costs in all of the Republic of Peru's history. The center-south area—departments of Ayacucho, Apurímac, and Huancavelica—felt the most effects of this conflict. Sixty-five percent to seventy-six percent of this region's inhabitants live in poverty (Theidon 26).

² Mark R. Cox identifies more than three hundred short-stories and sixty-five novels by one hundred and sixty-five writers in the cultural production of narratives related to the Shining Path topic ("Dos perspectivas" 118).

³ See Papa Mamour Diop's "Recorrido de la literatura indigenista del siglo XX en Latinoamérica: Análisis de una muestra de novelas" for an in-depth study of *indigenista* literature in Latin America.

place the novel *Abril rojo* (2006) by Peruvian novelist Santiago Roncagliolo in the bourgeois current of post-war *criolla* literature.⁴ This current, according to these critics, comprises writers that do not know Peru well, clearly have a conservative ideological position, and enjoy the favors of the media and editorial success (Castro, “¿Narrativa...” 30; Virhuez Villafane 31).⁵ In addition, according to Castro, *Abril rojo* lacks credibility and needs more investigation of the topic in order to show a valid criticism of the events that affected Peru’s collective unconscious during the internal war (“¿Narrativa...” 29-30). Both critics—Virhuez Villafane and Castro—also find incoherencies in the text that show Roncagliolo’s lack of knowledge of Peruvian institutions. Roncagliolo gives a rational, albeit fictional, reconstruction of the endemic deceit with only an adventitious connection to the actual residual froth of the insurrection.

Abril rojo follows the canon of the police novel, uniquely set in Ayacucho (*the corner of the dead* in Quechua), the birthplace of Shining Path, a war zone paradoxically distinguished for its great tradition of Holy Week.⁶ It is set from March 9 to May 3, 2000. The novel is divided into nine chapters with titles that indicate a date, a day, and a month (“Jueves 9 de marzo” [11], for example.) The tale begins with an official report about finding a mutilated, burnt body, which we later discover was Alfredo Cáceres Salazar, a lieutenant in the Peruvian Army. The protagonist, Associate District Prosecutor Félix Chacaltana Saldívar (always mentioned with his title) must write the reports about this crime and four others later on—Justino Mayta Carazo, a peasant; Sebastián Quiroz Mendoza, a Catholic priest; Hernán Durango, an imprisoned terrorist; and Edith Ayala, an ex-terrorist and Chacaltana’s girlfriend—in which the victims were also brutally dismembered. These assassinations are reminiscent of the war on terrorism of the 1980s, which was thought to have ended. Skeptical of the official explanations, Chacaltana begins his own inquiries. *Abril rojo* can be read as a type of American hardboiled novel/political thriller that takes place in an unexpected space, a small town in the Peruvian mountains. The protagonist of *Abril rojo* is an unlikely detective because he subconsciously suppresses information not only from the reader but also from himself. His investigation reveals as much about his past and personality as it does about the case. As detestable as these revelations might make him seem, they help him in his search and they help the reader figure out who the assassin is. Unlike typical pot boilers where the reader, along with the detective, looks for clues to uncover the guilty, the associate district prosecutor exposes a rather despicable past hidden from him by a well-developed milquetoast personality and

⁴ Roncagliolo obtained international fame in 2005 with *Pudor* (2005), the story of a dysfunctional family from Lima. In addition, Roncagliolo has written two children’s books, *Rugor, el dragón enamorado* (1999) and *Matías y los imposibles* (2006); a collection of short-stories, *Crecer es un oficio triste* (2003); a play, *Tus amigos nunca te harían daño* (1999); an adventure novel, *El príncipe de los caimanes* (2002); the story of Abimael Guzmán, *La cuarta espada* (2007); a historical thriller, *Memorias de una dama* (2009); and a science fiction thriller, *Tan cerca de la vida* (2010).

⁵ Virhuez Villafane places Mario Vargas Llosa’s *Historia de Mayta* (1984) and *Lituma en los Andes* (1993), as well as Alonso Cueto’s *La hora azul* (2005) in the same category of bourgeois novels as Roncagliolo’s *Abril rojo*. He finds confusion about Peruvian—particularly Andean—reality and racism, and hatred toward the Andean world in these works (31).

⁶ The author points out that he chose the city of Ayacucho for its culture of death, as it was the center for colonial rebellions. In 2000, Roncagliolo was in Ayacucho to observe the national elections. Alberto Fujimori was reelected.

the tainted history of all the other participants. It is as if the disfigured character of each is writ large, and perhaps derived from, the personality of the society. Therefore, it is a noir police procedural in form only. This article does not intend to reopen the *andina* or *criolla* narrative debate. Instead it focuses on the detective protagonist as a way of uncovering the mysterious below the many layers of quotidian life in Ayacucho. It will analyze *Abril rojo* through the main protagonist as a detective genre and not as an historical, political novel.

Despite having studied at the university in the capital of Peru, Chacaltana lacks the confidence expected of a Lima graduate. His superiors make fun of him because of his lack of knowledge of how the system works in the Andes, and even his ex-wife had accused him of being devoid of ambition and sophistication, like those who stayed in the province and lacked education and urbanity. Chacaltana develops into a rule-governed bureaucrat. He compulsively concentrates on one thing. He is mediocre, cowardly, and zealous in his duties. His plotting style belies little sagacity. He subscribes exclusively to what the regulations of the Civil and Penal Codes of Peru dictate in hopes of obtaining recognition. Chacaltana is a misguided Kantian. His imperative is categorical. That is, he adheres to duty and trusts the State blindly as an instrument of justice: “El fiscal distrital adjunto nunca se había portado mal. No había hecho nada malo, no había hecho nada bueno, nunca había hecho nada que no estuviese estipulado en los estatutos de su institución” (22). If he does anything good it is not because it is good, but because it is his duty. He has tunnel vision. The only thing he is sure about is the law and his inflexibility blinds him to the negative aspects of Peruvian institutions. He lacks any emotional intelligence or social ability. He had been living in Ayacucho for a year and he did not know anyone. Often he exasperates the reader and other characters of *Abril rojo* with his naïveté. Perhaps, subconsciously, he feels the punch of his father calling him a moron (320). Chacaltana himself had requested a transfer to Ayacucho, a city that suffered greatly at the hands of Shining Path, believing that terrorism had ended and quiescence reigned. The forensic surgeon laughs suspiciously about the reason for Chacaltana’s placement in Ayacucho: “¿De Lima a Ayacucho? Debe haberse portado mal, señor Chacaltana” (22). No one in his right mind would volunteer to go to Ayacucho in 2000 because of its reputation as the pulsating heart of the terror.

Chacaltana initial character is like Isaiah Berlin’s hedgehogs who are the embodiment of a single, central vision of reality in which they feel, breathe, experience, and think.⁷ Everything that hedgehogs are, say or do has significance only as it relates to an organizing principle (436). The hedgehog makes a good ideologue. The primal, mythic narrative provides the dyslogical interpretation for any event with stereotypical ease.

As prosecutor, Chacaltana’s duties include writing reports about various minor infractions—thefts, rapes, or other crimes. He is meticulous. He writes and reviews his reports repeatedly, treating them almost as works of art. He thinks of himself as a cultured prosecutor with the soul of a poet:

⁷ Sir Isaiah Berlin is the author of the essay “The Hedgehog and the Fox.” Taking a line attributed to the Greek poet Archilochus (7th century BCE) that says, “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing,” Berlin postulates that human beings can be divided into hedgehogs or foxes (436). Ideological societies exemplify the reliance on a simplistic, imagistic, quasi-mythology for explaining any societal occurrence. Democratic societies, on the other hand, are characterized by piecemeal explanations that rely on different frameworks for different phenomena. Chacaltana begins as a hedgehog and becomes a fox, only to return to being a conspiracy theorist hedgehog.

Seguía todos los procedimientos reglamentarios, elegía sus verbos con precisión y no caía en la chúcará adjetivación habitual de los textos legales. Evitaba las palabras con ñ —porque su Olivetti del 75 había perdido la ñ— pero conocía suficientes palabras para no necesitarla. Podía escribir “cónyuge” en lugar de “señor esposo”, o “amanecer” en lugar de “mañana”. Se repitió satisfecho que, en su corazón de hombre de leyes, había un poeta pugnando por salir. (16)

Gradually, the prosecutor undergoes a transformation as his attention to detail reveals contradictions and unexplainable lacunae. The legal frame that governs his life starts to crumble. Doubts nag Chacaltana. He does not understand what is going on, and he begins to notice that what the officials tell him about the events contradict the reality he observes. He tells his girlfriend Edith, “Creo que no entiendo ni siquiera qué está pasando en esta ciudad ni en este país. Últimamente creo que no entiendo nada de nada. Y no entender me da miedo” (155). He starts to think that his reports are not as crucial as he would want them to be. When he writes the brief on the third victim, the terrorist Hernán Durango, we see certain anguish in the prosecutor: “El fiscal distrital adjunto Félix Chacaltana Saldívar leyó el informe por décima vez. Esta vez no lo tiró a la basura. Pero sí vaciló. Estaba preocupado. La sintaxis no estaba mal, aunque quizá era demasiado directa y respetaba poco las formas tradicionales. Faltaba por ejemplo la edad de los implicados, que no había podido constatar en todos los casos” (137).

In his interview with Father Quiroz, a Catholic priest, Chacaltana learns of the church’s complicity with the Peruvian army in creating a crematorium for terrorist victims. Later, even as he is recording the same priest’s dismemberment, Chacaltana realizes that he lacks relevant data; he does not know where to start and he is no longer sure about anything. At this point only a god could contribute substantial information:

Los datos no bastaban. Los hechos narrados no tenían nada que ver con el asesinato, sino con su hallazgo. Era como si para describir una sesión de pesca, se informase de cómo el pescado se sirve en la mesa para el almuerzo. No tenía nada que ver con lo verdaderamente importante. Ninguno de sus informes, en realidad, tenía nada que ver con lo importante. Pensó que la información relevante era justamente la que el informe no contenía: quién lo hizo, por qué, qué pasaba por su cabeza. Un verdadero informe útil debía ser escrito conociendo cada detalle de la vida de los involucrados, su pasado, su memoria, sus costumbres, hasta sus conversaciones más irrelevantes, las perversiones que cruzaban por su mente en el momento de la ejecución, todo lo que ninguna persona podía saber. Un informe de verdad, concluyó, sólo podía ser escrito por Dios, al menos por alguien que tuviese mil ojos y mil oídos, que lo pudiese saber todo. Pero si hubiese gente así, pensó, los informes no serían necesarios. (234)

The hedgehog Chacaltana sets his standards too high. He needs to move like Berlin’s fox, who can work with partially defined problems.⁸ He needs to be more fluid in his thinking.

⁸ Foxes pursue many divergent goals, often not related or contradictory. Foxes are cunning creatures, able to devise a myriad of complex strategies for sneak attacks upon the hedgehog. If they decided to connect the goals, the cause is psychological or physiological and it is not related with any ethical or moral principle. Despite the greater cunning of the fox, the hedgehog always wins. Hedgehogs have a piercing insight that allows them to see through complexity and discern underlying patterns. Hedgehogs see what is essential and ignore the rest (Berlin 436).

Blinded by detail, he cannot grasp the essence of the individual players. At this point in the narrative, Chacaltana becomes a foxy pragmatist. He is starting to see reality more clearly. The parameters that governed and ordered his life are evaporating. Worse yet, when Chacaltana tries to apprehend the priest's assassin, he winds up firing shots into the dark. He fears he may have hit the culprit. He worries that he might be implicated in the shooting. In his next report, he writes, speaking of himself,

Cabe señalar, asimismo, que las heridas practicadas en el susodicho sacerdote Sebastián Quiroz Mendoza no podrían haber sido perpetradas por una persona mayor de cuarenta años, debido a que requieren una fuerza física considerable, ni por un funcionario, por ejemplo, o persona que laborase o desarrollase sus respectivas funciones en una oficina, probado el hecho de la necesidad de entrenamiento en operaciones policiales o subversivas que el victimario demuestra en sus acciones. (280)

His supposed sophistication barely conceals his attempt at exculpating himself. This will fool no one, not the authorities, not even himself, as it is obvious that he is trying to exonerate a functionary older than forty like him. On the contrary, he seems like a ridiculed and pedantic character.

Chacaltana becomes the center of the vortex of the assassinations and he does not understand why. He does not understand that the assassin could be manipulating and trying to implicate him, since everyone he meets is crucified. He becomes anguished, as if he were lost in a Kafkian labyrinth like Joseph K. in *The Trial* of Franz Kafka.⁹ Chacaltana feels an enveloping, menacing, and disorienting complexity tinged with a sense of imminent danger. He lacks a plan of action, the ability of seeing past the immediate turn. He is trapped like a tragic Greek hero. He suffers the scorn of those in power who impose their own kind of justice. Doubt intrudes and moral decomposition sets in. He is a part of an oneiric and brutal world.

Another key resource that Roncagliolo uses to reveal aspects of the prosecutor's character is to involve continuous oneirodynia. He dreams about fires, blood, screams, and blows. He also dreams of his mother walking into a fire while he is unable to stop her. These violent nightmares function as the Dance of the Seven Veils.¹⁰ In this work, each veil

⁹ Joseph K. wakes up one morning and for reasons unknown even to himself he is arrested and submitted to the judicial process for an unspecified crime. Chacaltana resembles Pantaleón Pantoja, the protagonist of Vargas Llosa's *Pantaleón y las visitadoras* (1973). Pantoja, a captain in the Peruvian army, is selected by his superiors, very much against his will, to carry out a secret mission to employ prostitutes to satisfy the sexual needs of a group of soldiers assigned to the Peruvian Amazon region. He is selected because he is a model soldier, without vices or children. He is chosen although his bosses know that they are demanding the impossible. Yet the Captain surprises everyone by creating a model organization. Nevertheless, when one of the *visitors* (euphemism for prostitute) is assassinated, Pantaleón becomes the scapegoat of the armed forces. Vargas Llosa holds that Pantaleón is a man of principles. The same thing happens to Chacaltana. He initially appears to be a disciplined, innocent man, with no vices or children, who devotes himself completely to his work and voluntarily hides underneath an iron shell of complacency and submission, like the hedgehog. Through his writings, it is easy to see that his sense of personal and professional security diminishes as he starts deteriorating emotionally.

¹⁰ The Dance of the Seven Veils is thought to have originated with the myth of the fertility goddess Ishtar (Astarte) of the Assyrian and Babylonian religion. In this myth, Ishtar decides to visit her sister, Ereshkigal, in the underworld. When Ishtar approaches the gates of the underworld, the gatekeeper lets Ishtar pass through the seven gates, opening one gate at a time. At each gate, Ishtar has to shed an article of clothing. When she

represents the things hidden from others and from ourselves. One has to remove each veil as if one were peeling an onion to get to the truth. The blows, shouts, and blood are related to the abuses Chacaltana and his mother suffered at the hands of his alcoholic father, who had been a soldier. Nevertheless, the fire has a more alarming symbolism: it is the fire that the prosecutor himself started in his house when he was nine years old, killing both his mother and father. This is a late surprise, because Chacaltana has been portrayed as a decent type, albeit insecure, strange, and even puppet-like. In reality, Chacaltana is sadistic like his father, a *supaypawawa* (“hijo del diablo” [273] in Quechua, and one of the worst insults that one can give in that language). He is unconsciously imitating his father’s violent streak. He is like a cobra mesmerizing the little bird before eating him. Besides committing patricide, Chacaltana rapes his girlfriend, Edith, and he does not feel remorse. He started enjoying the taste of violence in his mouth, and the sensations it produced in him, after he shot at the priest’s assassin: “Ayer le disparé a un hombre —dijo él—. No sé a quién ni si le di. Pero pude haber matado a alguien. Sentí que era como un ensayo, como un entrenamiento para algo. Sentí que algo cambiaba en mí” (273). This act shows a cruelty that has been repressed for many years, to the point that he concludes that he has raped Edith because it is in his genes, a flaw inherited from his controlling, sadistic father: “No era sexo lo que había buscado, sino una especie de poder, de dominio, la sensación de que algo era más débil que él mismo, que en medio de este mundo que parecía querer tragárselo, él mismo también podía tener fuerza, potencia, víctimas” (281). Chacaltana no longer has a hard time accepting that he is a transgressor. He blunts the gravity of the rape by rationalizing that maybe Edith will forgive him:

Quizá ella aceptaría una disculpa, pensó mientras abría las cajas de casos desestimados. Él no era un mal tipo después de todo. Se había portado bien con ella... al menos hasta esa mañana. Quizá podría olvidarlo pronto. Le llevaría flores esa noche. La invitaría a cenar. La llevaría a bailar. Eso le gustaría. Pronto, el bochornoso incidente de esa mañana sería sólo un mal recuerdo fácil de borrar. (282-83)

When he discovers that Edith is a terrorist, he is able to embrace his vile action, even feeling a flush of pride: “Recordó la escena de esa misma mañana, mientras penetraba el cuerpo de Edith. Ya no sentía arrepentimiento, sino placer. El placer de la labor bien hecha. Sacó la pistola y apuntó a la pequeña cabeza que temblaba cerca del suelo. Recordó a todos los muertos que había visto. Se dio cuenta de que ya no le temblaba la mano” (290).

Chacaltana represses any character flaws or memories of evil deeds. It is true that he showed a pathological behavior when he recreated the bedroom of his dead mother from his childhood memories—he buys her clothes, strokes the sheets of her bed, talks to her every night—but this same behavior initially can be seen as an innocent peculiarity of the character. In his attempt to create ambivalence, Roncagliolo is unjust with the reader. Crucial data appear at the end as if Roncagliolo was a magician who had taken a rabbit out of the hat and said *voilà!* The reader of a detective novel feels pleasure when following the premises of the genre; that is, when the author ties things together to arrive at the

finally passes the seventh gate, she is naked. She is then imprisoned by Ereshkigal. When she is rescued and passes back through the seven gates, Ishtar receives one article of clothing back at each gate, and is fully clothed as she exits the last gate.

conclusion in a logical manner. Roncagliolo does not allow the reader to do that, due to his predilection for hidden data.

Chacaltana's last dream is the most revealing of himself. It is different from the others because there are no blows, shouts, blood, or fire. Chacaltana is awakened by troubling dreams of Frankenstein.¹¹ In the middle of the Andean landscape, he sees a body that rises slowly, made up of different limbs that correspond to the extremities cut from the five victims, and his own head crowns the monster:

Era un cuerpo hecho de partes distintas, un Frankenstein cosido con hilos de acero que no cerraban bien sus juntas, de las que goteaban coágulos y costras. Tenía dos piernas distintas, y tampoco los brazos parecían corresponderle exactamente. El tronco era de mujer. La visión era macabra, pero no parecía tener una actitud violenta. Se limitaba a levantarse e irse reconociendo poco a poco mientras tomaba conciencia de ser. Lo que sobresaltó realmente al fiscal fue sólo el fin de la visión, cuando el engendro terminó de incorporarse y, sobre sus hombros, el fiscal vio su propia cabeza, atrapada sobre ese cuerpo que no había elegido, antes de que la luz fuese haciéndose más intensa, cada vez más, hasta cegar todo como una luminosa oscuridad blanca. (307)

He is unaware of a complicity in completing the monster's body. Chacaltana's Frankenstein is a metonymical way of referring to the Andean myth of Inkari, which includes religious faith, the trauma of the dismemberment of the Inca Empire, and the impact of the conquest. According to this myth, the body parts of Túpac Amaru II (the last Inca that led a rebellion against the Spaniards in the nineteenth century; he was dismembered by the Spaniards in May 1781), which were interred in different places, are now growing and merging. When they finally unite, the Inca Túpac Amaru II will rise and the Inca Empire will flourish again. But Chacaltana's monster will not make anything good reappear. All the parts that form him—the priest, soldier, peasant, terrorist, woman, and Chacaltana himself—are tainted with blood. They live in a Hobbesian world where life is “vile, nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes 107). The whole society precedes the parts. These parts only have meaning derived from the whole, and the parts, in this work, are all disjointed and expose a paranoid society. Slavoj Žižek holds that “[l]a violencia ‘real’ es una especie de escenificación que surge cuando la ficción simbólica que garantiza la vida de una comunidad está en peligro” (109; emphasis in the original). And Víctor Vich also holds that “Si todo Estado-nación se constituye a sí mismo a partir de una especie de una idea fundacional que es la que permite ‘imaginar la comunidad’ . . . , entonces la violencia política estaría también haciendo alusión a una profunda pérdida de sentido sobre el conjunto de imágenes que cada Estado-nación ha venido construyendo sobre sí mismo” (9). Chacaltana reenacts the Baconian “idols of the tribe” by indulging in abstraction and holistic self-absorbed, self-aggrandizing thinking.¹² Roncagliolo suggests that in a violent and chaotic atmosphere, in

¹¹ Mary Shelley's novel tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a young student of medicine in Switzerland, obsessed about knowing the secrets of heaven and earth. Victor creates a body by uniting different parts of dissected cadavers. The experiment concludes successfully when Victor gives life to the monster. After fleeing the laboratory, the monster feels the rejection of humanity, awakening hate, and thirst for vengeance in him.

¹² “Idols of the tribe” are fallacies incident to humanity or the race in general. Of these, the most prominent are the proneness to suppose in nature greater order and regularity than there actually is; the tendency to support a pre-conceived opinion by affirmative instances, neglecting all negative or opposed cases; and the tendency to generalize from few observations, or to give reality to mere abstractions, figments

the margin of legality, most people will act out animalistic instincts and disregard any kind of social empathy.

It is important to note that the serial killer is Commander Carrión, the highest authority of the armed forces in the area. Next to each victim, Carrión placed a message written in lower case letters and with many spelling errors, belying the military's disdain for the peasants. This red herring imitated voices with Shining Path ideology, emphasizing millennial history, blood, death and the creation of a new world:

vamos a hincendiar el tiempo y el fuego creará un mundo nuevo.
un nuevo tiempo para ellos.
para nosotros.
para todos. (29)

antes mi voz era pequeña, como un arroyito. poco a poco ha ido creciendo, como un gran torrente. lo ha hecho sola, ha ido ocupando un lugar mayor en mi memoria, ha ocupado el lugar de los otros, ya no hay mas voces. (226)

With the death of Justino, a peasant, the voice cries out,

llevaremos hasta el final del camino a todos los que se nos unan, a todos los que están con nosotros desde el inisio de los tiempos. cada vez se acerca más el momento, justino. cada vez estás mas cerca el momento de la victoria ¿bes las manchas en la tierra? ¿bes el color rojo de los charcos en la noche? es tu semilla, justino, eres tú el que riega la tierra para que de sus entrañas crezca el mundo por el que hemos peleado tanto. disfrútalo, porque es lo último que vas a disfrutar. (169).

In the end, Chacaltana foxily figures out the identity of the assassin by elimination. But nowhere in the novel is the reader told of the mental deterioration of Carrión, the serial killer, who is presented as lucid and pessimistic, even cruel, but never rash. Carrión commits the murders in an attempt to rewrite the past, by trying to make people attribute sole responsibility for the crimes to Shining Path. He is afraid that the relatives of the victims will come looking for him and his henchmen to get vengeance for the brutal crimes they [the armed forces] committed at the same time Shining Path was doing the same thing. The townspeople appear appeased, but the horrible images reverberate in one's memory. Both Commander Carrión and Chacaltana *see* them by the thousands, in everyday life, suggesting that Shining Path's ideological new world order cannot be created:

—¿No los ve, Chacaltita? ¿Acaso no puede verlos? Están por todas partes. Están aquí siempre.

Chacaltana los vio entonces. En realidad, llevaba un año viéndolos. Todo el tiempo. Y ahora la venda se le cayó de los ojos. Sus cuerpos mutilados se agolpaban a su alrededor, sus pechos abiertos en canal apestaban a fosa y muerte. Eran miles y miles de cadáveres, no sólo ahí, en la oficina del comandante, sino en toda la ciudad. Comprendió entonces que eran los muertos quienes le vendían los periódicos, quienes conducían el transporte público, quienes

of the mind. Manifold errors also result from the weakness of the senses, which affords scope for mere conjecture; from the influence exercised over the understanding of the will and passions; from the restless desire of the mind to penetrate to the ultimate principles of things; and from the belief that "man is the measure of the universe," while in truth, the world is received by us in a distorted and erroneous manner (Singer 2: 882).

fabricaban las artesanías, quienes le servían de comer. No había más habitantes que ellos en Ayacucho, incluso quienes venían de fuera, morían. Sólo que eran tantos muertos que ya ninguno era capaz de reconocerse. Supo con un año de retraso que había llegado al infierno y que nunca saldría de él. (316-17)

Vich holds that “La escritura es poder y el poder (ya lo sabemos) también se ejerce desde los textos literarios. La escritura no sólo propone una representación de la realidad sino que además ‘construye’ todo un aparato dedicado a sostener la autoridad de sus imágenes” (58). Roncagliolo’s conservative, urban, *criollo* background not only prevents him from adapting to the peasants’ perspective, but it also keeps him from savoring Andean society from the inside. Many animadversions echo their sources—newspaper accounts. The unveiling of Carrión could have been a *courtroom real* à la Perry Mason. *Abril rojo* fails in this representative function. His noir thriller lacks closure. It does expose the continuing interconnectedness among the players—policemen, soldiers, civil servants, Shining Path adherents, ex-terrorists, peasants, and corrupt politicians—which prevents any kind of resolution. Every one—Shining Path, the Peruvian institutions, the Church, and even the victims—represents an insurmountable obstacle for human happiness.

Works Cited

- Berlin, Isaiah. “The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy’s View of History.” *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*. Ed. Henry Hardy. New York: Farrar, 2000. 436-98. Print.
- Castro, Dante. “Los Andes en llamas.” *Sasachakuy tiempo: Memoria y pervivencia*. Ed. Mark R. Cox. Lima: Pasacalle, 2010. 11-18. Print.
- . “¿Narrativa de la violencia o disparate absoluto?” *Sasachakuy tiempo: Memoria y pervivencia*. Ed. Mark R. Cox. Lima: Pasacalle, 2010. 25-30. Print.
- Cox, Mark R. “Apuntes para el estudio de la narrativa peruana desde 1980 y la violencia política.” *Sasachakuy tiempo: Memoria y pervivencia*. Ed. Mark R. Cox. Lima: Pasacalle, 2010. 66-77. Print.
- . “Dos perspectivas literarias opuestas: Dante Castro y el grupo literario Nueva Crónica.” *Sasachakuy tiempo: Memoria y pervivencia*. Ed. Mark R. Cox. Lima: Pasacalle, 2010. 118-33. Print.
- Diop, Papa Mamour. “Recorrido de la literatura indigenista del siglo XX en Latinoamérica: Análisis de una muestra de novelas.” *Ogigia* 1 (2007): 31-40. Web. 14 July 2012.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ed. Herbert W. Schneider. New York: Bobbs, 1958. Print.
- Nieto Degregori, Luis. “Un país en el infierno: Sociedad, política y cultura en el Perú de los ochenta y noventa.” *Sasachakuy tiempo: Memoria y pervivencia*. Ed. Mark R. Cox. Lima: Pasacalle, 2010. 34-44. Print.
- Roncagliolo, Santiago. *Abril rojo*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 2006. Print.
- Singer, Charles. “Francis Bacon.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 1962. Print.
- Theidon, Kimberly Susan. *Entre prójimos: El conflicto armado interno y la política de la reconciliación en el Perú*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2004. Print.

- Vich, Víctor. *El caníbal es el Otro: Violencia y cultura en el Perú contemporáneo*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2002. Print.
- Virhuez Villafane, Ricardo. "Abril rojo, de Santiago Roncagliolo." *Sasachakuy tiempo: Memoria y pervivencia*. Ed. Mark R. Cox. Lima: Pasacalle, 2010. 31-33. Print.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *El acoso de las fantasías*. Trans. Clea Braunstein Saal. Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1999. Print.