

THE PROCESSION OF EL SEÑOR DE LOS MILAGROS: A BAROQUE MOURNING PLAY IN
CONTEMPORARY LIMA

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Abstract

This thesis examines the procession of “El Señor de los Milagros” (Lord of Miracles), one of the largest Catholic ceremonies in the world and one of the most important national celebrations in Peru for the last four centuries. In this work I use my own Ethnographic material, and I also rely on historic, written, oral and virtual sources, to analyze how the performance of the procession of Señor de los Milagros unfolds through space and time, and particularly how specific meaningful places/sites are used by both the Peruvian State and the institutional (national and global) Church as points for self-legitimation.

Keywords: Ritual, power, religion, politics, colonialism, and territory.

Abrégé

Cette thèse examine la procession d' "El Señor de los Milagros" (le Seigneur des Miracles), une cérémonie très importante au Pérou, comptant même parmi les plus grandes célébrations catholiques dans le monde, et ce depuis quatre siècles. Ce travail est principalement basé sur ma propre recherche ethnographique, mais repose également sur des sources historiques écrites et orales, parfois digitales, afin d'analyser comment la performance de la procession du Señor de los Milagros se déroule à travers l'espace et le temps, et en particulier comment des lieux/ sites significatifs sont utilisé à la fois par l'État péruvien et l'Église institutionnelle (national et mondial) comme moyens d'autolégitimation.

Mots-clés: Rituel, pouvoir, religion, politique, colonialisme, et territoire

Introduction

Latin America is a region where people constantly struggle between indigenous and western rationalities as a product of the collision of colonization. By colonization I do not only mean the “conquest” of the past, but also the process of dispossession that has taken place for the last five centuries in the Latin American region or, in Eduardo Galeano’s words, since “[t]he sword and the cross marched together in the conquest and plunder of Latin America” (Galeano, 2008). This make Latin America a heterogonous region full of conflicting particularities, which are in many cases outcome of local and national powers that have shaped divergent realities and practices. The procession of El Señor de los Milagros (the Lord of Miracles) in Lima is one of these.

In this procession that dates back to the seventeenth century, thousand of Peruvian devotees take over the streets of the historic center of Lima, to accompany the image of the crucifixion of Christ carried upon a massive dais by members of a special brotherhood called “La Hermandad del Señor de los Milagros.” This is one of the largest Catholic processions in the world, and arguably the most important Peruvian celebration. At first sight, with the exception of the sheer numbers of people taking part in this perambulation, it is not very different from similar Catholic processions in Latin America, Spain, or Ireland. However certain particularities in this ceremony-- inherited from the clash between Andean, African and western rationalities- reflects the colonial legacy of racism and discrimination that still in force in Peru.

In this thesis I am concerned with how local and national histories are either made evident or disguised in the procession; how critical elements, like the State authority or the Catholic Church's power are underlined at different points in the procession. In so doing I claim that the control of space by the Church or the Peruvian State is not total, rather the city as it marked out by the procession accentuates points of ambiguity or uncertainty in the ritual, allowing other ‘subtexts’ of customarily dominated populations (poor; indigenous; Afro-Peruvian; non-Catholic or even progressive Catholic) discernible because this ceremony is a shared space, a communal construction in which traditionally excluded populations play a fundamental role.

I propose that El Señor de los Milagros can be seen as sort of urban Catholic *huaca* [sacred Andean shrines-beings-places-sites] with colonial-Afro-Peruvian origins, which connects the personal and the emotional sensations of the procession to erstwhile powers. In this way the procession is a ritual, which employs relational process and memories to bond citizens with the historical meanings embodied in the capital of Peru, as a specific locality. I do this by examining the

origins of the cult and the roles (Chapter I) that El Señor has played in relationship with actors like the Brotherhood, the Church, the State and the crowds (Chapter II), in different scenarios and sceneries in the city (Chapter III).

This thesis is based on ethnographic observations of the October 18th 2013 procession of El Señor de los Milagros in Lima. In what is locally known as the “purple month” this particular route which its stops at the Presidential Palace, the City Hall, the Archbishop Palace, and the Congress, presents an active and simultaneous involvement of Peruvian citizens, the Church, and Peruvian governmental institutions, and therefore allowed me to see the interaction of key actors in the celebration. I draw also on material from interviews conducted in Lima, in June and July 2014, with persons variously situated vis-à-vis the celebration of El Señor de los Milagros. These included: (from the Church) Soledad Garcia, Mother Superior of the convent of the Nazarenas, this group owns the church and the Holy Anda (shrine) of El Señor; Ego Garcia, the “Sacristán Mayor” (parish clerk), who is in charge of the affairs of Church of El Señor de los Milagros; and Felipe Zegarra Russo, former director of the Department of Theology of the Universidad Catolica del Peru, a Catholic priest, and also one of the most important theorists of Liberation Theology in Peru; (from the government) a representative of the Ministry of Culture who asked to remain anonymous; and (from the brotherhood) Manuel Orrillo the “Mayordomo General” of the Hermandad of El Señor de los Milagros. I have also relied on materials gathered by research assistants from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PCUP) on the Señor de los Milagros. These included ethnographic reports and publications in local Peruvian magazines, newspapers and in the Internet about the procession. This research was undertaken as part of a larger project “the Roman Catholic Church mediation, mediatization, and religious subjects in contemporary Latin America”, conducted by Dr Kristin Norget (McGill University), and Dr Margarita Zires (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de Xochimilco). The aim of this larger project is to determine the ways media and technology impact the social significance of rituals and religious processes in Latin America. This thesis seeks to contribute to this larger project by exploring the weight, meanings, and relationships embodied and enacted in the procession of El Señor de los Milagros in contemporary Lima.

This thesis is, then, a study of a religious (Catholic) procession many centuries old, in Lima, a city whose founding, in 1535, as the *Ciudad de los Reyes* by Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro, turned it into the capital and most important city in the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru. Lima was already an urban center, with a population of almost 30,000 inhabitants by the early 16th century (Otero, 1981) when the image of El Señor was first discovered painted on the side of a barn wall.

After the 1687 earthquake, that devastated Lima and Callao, the image of the Lord of Miracles became the official patron saint of the city, in 1718¹.

Today, El Señor de los Milagros is the symbol of Peruvian Catholic devotion, not only in Lima but also everywhere in the world with a notable Peruvian diaspora. In this thesis I suggest that the enduring popularity of El Señor de los Milagros is because his image, the processions that attend to it, and the ways in which the history of both have combined to place him on top of other important Catholic representations in Lima. However, rather than examining the procession of El Señor de los Milagros as an exclusive Catholic ceremony according to the official doctrine, I argue instead that it must be understood as a product of hundreds of years of colonialism coupled with a series of natural disasters—a syncretic sedimentation of Catholic, indigenous and other popular meanings—and that it still bears marks of those significances. Today, these meanings are layered with others, as different groups such as the Catholic Church, the Peruvian government, the Brotherhood and the devotees, affirm their presence and importance in Peruvian society by using the symbolic weight of the celebration.

To understand and to explain how elements critical to the cult, and most especially to different histories of exploitation of indigenous and Afro-Peruvians, are important in the formation of the tradition of El Señor de los Milagros in Lima; Chapter One of this thesis analyzes the clash between colonial and local rationalities, which produced different equivocations, concepts and resignifications between local and exogenous ways of knowing, which still are living and clashing in Lima's Social fabric. Critical aspects of this clash are the many names the saint has had since the formation of the cult in the seventeenth-century. Thus, the second part of Chapter One analyses the relationship of El Señor with dominated populations, and the hegemonic powers in Lima across different periods of time, by means of an investigation of the names of El Señor de los Milagros. These include El Señor de Pachacamilla [The Lord of Pachacamilla], El Cristo Moreno [The Brown Christ], El Señor de los Temblores [The Lord of Earthquakes], and El Señor de las Maravillas [The Lord of Wonders]. I explain how these names map on to diverse but unequal groups of inhabitants of Lima, in the 17th and 18th centuries most especially the indigenous Andean groups, the African Angolan enslaved populations, and the European (largely Spanish) Catholic population (Osorio, 2008). I posit that these names given to the image by the devotees, the governments and the Church

¹ However processions were important public displays of political and religious power even before the arrival of Catholicism to the Tawantinsuyo (the Incan empire) (Salles-Reese, 1997; Bauer & Stanish, 2001; Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, 1981; Rostworowski, 1992, 2002; MacCormack, 1993; Sallnow, 1987).

over time, reflect anxieties emerging at historical junctures like the destruction of the city by different earthquakes and the political reforms dictated by the Crown that disproportionately affected civil, religious, and political spheres in the city. Thus, because many groups have used the image of El Señor to cope with watershed events such as natural disasters, or the local impact of foreign policies, he gradually becomes the symbol of the faith in the city. However it would be a mistake to argue that this devotion has a single history or a single past.

Chapter Two presents an ethnographic description of fourteen hours of the October 18th 2013 processional route, where, I provide a description of the symbols, roles, and my perception of the attitudes of central and peripheral attendants. Based on my personal sensations in the ceremony, I argue that despite the procession intends to be an institutional and highly controlled ceremony -- unlike the spontaneous autonomy of the pilgrimage— this parade remains a heterogeneous space where different feelings and perceptions can be felt depending on the proximity to El Señor as he moves across the streets of Lima. Thus, on one hand the ceremony legitimizes the enormous inequities in a city where power was and still divided by (racist) racial lines, where most of them have to attend their needs by their own. But on the other hand, the procession is like a baroque mourning play that provides the humble devotees with a space where everything is meant to be excessive and overwhelming—the colors, the smells, the chants, the music the amount of people, the weight and the ornate of the Anda (portable shrine), the distance vs. the slow pace of the people etc., all of which produce an emotional experience to disengage attendants from the mundane world and to connect them with a divine realm (Harth Terré, 1958).

In chapter Three, I continue my ethnographic narrative giving special emphasis to the point in the procession when the Anda – the massive ceremonial portable shrine upon which the image of El Señor is carried – reaches the Plaza de Armas, where the National Palace of Government, the Municipal House, and the Archbishop Palace are located. It can be stated that in the Plaza, civil, religious and political powers converge in a *liminal* state (Turner, 1969, 1980) because for an instant the most important politicians in Peru abandon their palaces, to come down to the streets at the level of the devotees to pay respect to the Catholic image that members of the Hermandad carry on their shoulders. This act of “humility” and reversal of everyday social values some argue, works to intensify the power of El Señor as an representative of the Catholic Peruvian devotion². It can, however, also be read as an attempt by politicians to renew their public image, and as an assertion of

² See quotation of Archbishop Cipriani, on p. 48

their right to rule. This ceremony is, in part, designed to remind people of the existence of a central government in a country where the presence of the State is largely invisible (Osorio, 2008). Considered thusly the procession of the Señor de los Milagros is a massive Catholic ritual used to legitimize a given “mundane” social and political structure. Hence, this is not a homogeneous ceremony; rather the Procession of el Señor de los Milagros is a public manifestation of Lima’s competing and silenced discourses, what Sallnow (1987) might call a “civic cult”. Finally I show how the Church and State in Peru not only blend in the procession of El Señor de los Milagros, but also this annual celebration normalizes such interactions of these powers in everyday public display.

In the conclusion the procession at last comes to an end in a destitute neighbourhood in the heart of the capital city, where the Church with its multiple institutions such as parishes, monasteries and chapels is far more visible than is the State. This zone known as Barrios Altos, highlights historically unattended inequalities and the lack of governance in the country. Recent examples of this objectionable role of the State, are the decisions taken during the internal war in the 1980s between the national government and the Maoist-Leninist armed group known as Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) (Isbell, 1985, 1992; Farmer, 1996; Kay, 1999; Poole & Renique, 1991). The military encounters in rural areas led to the displacement of many communities, which in-migrated to the very poorest neighbourhoods of Lima, thereby increasing the population in this already depressed working-class district in particular. Furthermore, Barrios Altos, which never was a safe ground, was rendered even more insecure because president Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) used coercive methods like extrajudicial executions to control the population.

Thus unlike the time when Lima was the disembarkation point for thousands of African enslaved populations; the “modern” political instability, the violence, and the economic disparities led to a big number of Peruvians to leave their country, paradoxically to work for the same economic system that has expelled them from their land. In this long process of deterritorialization a Judeo-Christian religion like Catholicism has played an ambiguous role by saving the sacred values contained in the territory in portable Catholic symbols overseen by the Church (Nietzsche, Clark, & Swensen, 1998; Foucault, 2006; Montoya Upegui, 2015) like El Señor de los Milagros, who is a window that communicates people who might live in different realities but share a connection with the same land.

Chapter One: Urban Equivocations – Stories from Lima's History

Modernity possesses antiquity like a nightmare that creeps over it in slumber
(Benjamin & Tarnowski, 1979)

I proposed that El Señor de los Milagros can be seen as sort of urban Catholic *huaca* [sacred Andean shrines-beings-places-sites] with colonial-Afro-Peruvian origins, which connects the personal and the emotional sensations of the procession to erstwhile powers. In this way, the procession is a ritual, which employs relational processes and memories to bond citizens with the historical meanings embodied in the capital of Peru, as a specific locality. In order to make this argument; it is necessary to understand that the cult of El Señor de los Milagros can be understood according to different rationalities, which might seem contradictory but in fact are complementary: each one helps to understand El Señor de los Milagros as the product of diverse populations such as the Catholic Spaniards, the indigenous and the African enslaved populations, whom placed in the image the most important and sacred values on which they depended.

In the first part of this chapter I argue that before the Spanish Conquest, the valley of Lima had important indigenous institutions and practices (Cerrón-Palomino, 2013; Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, 1981; Rostworowski, 1992) that subsequently were reorganized by the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church to serve the purposes of the new colonial rationality (Rostworowski, 2002; Osorio, 2008). Thus, with the objective of uncovering the pre-colonial history of Lima, a history often blurred by the administrative functions it took (as the Ciudad de los Reyes, or City of Kings) as capital of the viceroyalty of Peru, this chapter introduces the idea that sacred presences in the landscape that interacted with indigenous habitants, and metaphysical pre-colonial ideas are still present, like buried ruins, in the everyday language and in the city of Lima, which might be the foundations of local and meaningful practices such as the procession of El Señor de los Milagros.

In October 2013, I enter a bodega (convenience store) in front of the Convento de la Buena Muerte in Lima. While drinking a Pilsen (a popular Peruvian beer), I chat with the man in charge. He tells me that Barrios Altos -- a customary location in the procession of El Señor de los Milagros-, is made up of different neighbourhoods that today constitute the poorest but also the oldest part of the city, and for that reason official history and oral stories mingle in every corner, just like one about the Piedra Horadada or Devil's rock.

This particular rock of irregular form is about a meter and a half tall, and today can be seen in the corner of Jirón Junín and Jirón Cangallo, which is a main intersection in Barrios Altos. This story varies depending on the narrator. The most popular is that this rock was a part of an ancient huaca (Andean shrine) that was destroyed after the conquest of the valley in the sixteen century by the Catholic Church. One day, the Devil was walking in the streets and suddenly; he saw the procession of the Señor de los Milagros going his way. Afraid, the Devil tried to run away, but he tripped on this rock, and when he felt trapped, he made a hole in it in order to escape to the underworld. Since then, this street has been known as the Calle de la Piedra Horadada (Pierced Stone Street) and later as the Calle del Rastro de la Huaquilla (Street of the little Huaca Trail). Today behind this rock, there is a plaque on a wall that tells the story about the rock of the Devil, citing as its source Ricardo Palma's book *Tradiciones Peruanas* (Peruvian Traditions) (Palma, 1894).

However, when I went to consult Palma's book I could not find this story or any reference about it. Instead, I found a more "official" history of the rock in an important daily newspaper of the city, *El Comercio*. The author was one Cesar Coloma, President of the Latin American Institute for Culture and Development. He writes that based on historical records, the rock is nothing but a "guardacantón" (the term for stone posts erected in the streets to protect the buildings' corners from carts). Mocking and diminishing the popular story about the rock and its relation with the indigenous populations, Coloma argues that it is impossible that this rock could have pre-colonial origins. For him it is more plausible that the rock was a public latrine and not an ancient huaca, since the Catholic campaign in the 16th century known as Extirpation of Idolatry would not have left such evidence: "[T]he Inquisition would never have allowed the existence of an indigenous idol in public view [because] the extirpation of idolatries razed all the pre-Hispanic idols that fell into their hands."³

Coloma (2014) mocks popular beliefs and the presence of the Devil and a huaca in the streets of Lima because he looks for the most "logical" explanation to the stone's existence, for that reason he proposes different practical uses for this rock. Furthermore, for him, the impossible and fantastic stories of popular myth or oral history are the product of the uneducated people that use it to fool unsuspecting passersby. He quotes Luis Antonio Eguigure's, book *Las Calles de Lima* (Lima's Streets) (1945): "¡ We keep believing that children came from Paris in baskets [...] [and] that this rock has a hole made by the Devil ... [and] God knows in what other childlike beliefs!"

³ Coloma Cesar, February 10, 2014, Curiosidades y mentiras de la peña horadada, *El Comercio*, from <http://elcomercio.pe/eldominical/actualidad/curiosidades-y-mentiras-pena-horadada-noticia-1708639>, consulted January 2015

However, what Coloma and the prominent historians whom he quotes in his article argue is impossible, is actually not only plausible but is a phenomenon found all over the Andes [and all over the world, in fact] for the Catholic Church placed its image on top of the different huacas without necessarily erasing them from the public view, as can be seen in practices like the Quyllur Rit'I peregrination, or in places like the church of San Pedro de Andahuaylillas, and all over the Andes (Eade, 1991). Because in order to raze all the Andean huacas, the Catholic Church would have had to destroy most of the Andean landscape.

My point is not that Coloma has made a mistake; on the contrary it is common for modern scholars in Peruvian society to privilege written testimonies to oral stories. Although his evaluation of popular culture might seem offensive, this is the expectable interpretation of anything that does not fit in his own code of communication. In this way, Coloma provides one example of an understandable “equivocation”, that is to say a communicative disjuncture that happens when different interlocutors talk about the same thing using different chains of reasoning (Viveiros de Castro, 2004).

Hence, it might be illogical for Coloma to understand the world with different rules, values, and rationalities than the ones that make sense in his own “rational” world. However, an ethnographer must be aware that the logic of his or her own rationality might prevent the appreciation and the value of what might seem illogical, fantastic, or unreal to the trained Western rationality. This is why in this thesis I situate myself not just in the time and in the place of this research, but I also try to comprehend the different rationalities, laws and values that govern these places, even if they exist beyond the mundane realm. Thus, one of my tasks in this work is to recognize the value of the stories, beliefs, practices, and laws that make possible different modes of existence, which is defined by Latour as “their customs, their modes of being, their ethology, their habitats in some way, their feeling for a place” (Latour, 2013), in this case Lima, and the procession of the Señor de los Milagros. For that reason, I will occasionally step aside from the loud official discourses that come from above to hear the popular voices that whisper around and at the bottom.

Hence, regardless of whether the story about the Devil's rock was not recorded by Palma this information remains valuable because this enchanted rock might communicate a meaningful history to better understand the context in which the Procession of the Señor de los Milagros is recreated every year. Furthermore, the fact that this legend was never officially recorded in written published form, means that the local population still has the power to change it over time, which has allowed the story to remain alive in the oral tradition.

I consider in this thesis that just as the story of the rock has survived orally, also during the last three centuries Limeños have collectively and perhaps unconsciously transferred the pre-colonial meanings contained in the landscape to the image that is today the spiritual symbol of the city: El Señor de los Milagros.

To explore these meanings, I draw on an etymological study on the name “Lima” by the well-known linguistic researcher on Andean languages Rodolfo Cerrón-Palomino (2013). He notes how Inca Garcilaso de la Vega [1609] (G. De la Vega, 1991) explains that the City of Kings was founded in a valley known by its indigenous habitants as “Rimac”. Garcilaso de la Vega explains that the name of this valley comes from the Quechua term “*rimay*”, that means “word”, or “the one who talks” (cf. Garcilaso [1609] 1945: VI, XXX, 68). Additionally, based on the chronicles written by the *extirpador de idolatrias*, Cristobal Albornoz (Duviols, 1967), Cerron-Palomino explains that this name was granted due to the presence of an important oracle that was situated in the valley: the oracle of Limaq, which the Huarochirí manuscript identifies as Chaupi Ñampca (Salomon & Urioste, 2010), the wife of Pacha Camac, the most important huaca in the Andean world (Andrien, 2001). Furthermore, Rostworowsky identifies this oracle with a huaca that was destroyed to build the church of Santa Ana, (Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, 1981) one block from the current location of the Piedra Horadada.

According to Cerron-Palomino, the name Rimac and Lima are one and the same. He explains that the transposition form /r/ to /l/ is proper from the Quechua dialect spoken in the coast. Thus, the name of the territory where today is located the capital of Peru is the same name that it had before the colonial period. This means that despite the physical or political changes in the landscape, Lima remained in the voices of its inhabitants over time, for the official Catholic name of Ciudad de los Reyes ⁴ (City of Kings) was never adopted as the name people used informally to refer to the valley.

Thus, even if Lima was not “the official” designation, even if the oracles that inspired this name were physically destroyed a long time ago, and even if the landscape was radically reformed, people orally passed the name of Lima from one generation to the next just like the story of La Piedra Horadada, which is a rock that symbolizes the popular resistance to forgetting the sacred and pre-colonial past of the capital. In this way the oracles’ essential force to communicate was collectively and perhaps unconsciously saved in the name of the city until today, to tell us that this

⁴ “[T]o the Spaniards, interlopers searching in the coastal desert of a foreign land, Lima was like the Jerusalem of the New Testament sought by the Three kings” (Cummins, 1996: 158)

territory did have a pan-Andean religious importance, long before the City of Kings was built by the Spanish Crown to be the administrative capital of Peru.

... And The Power of El Señor

In order to build upon other “equivocation” that might offer some light on the context of the procession of the Señor de los Milagros, I will continue by explaining how Cerron-Palomino (2014) also amends the translation offered by Pedro Pizarro (1571) (Pizarro, 1978) of the name of an specific site, Apu-rimac. Pizarro states: “[it] means ‘the Señor who speaks’ because here the Devil talks with them [the Indians]” (Pizarro 1571 1978: 81). Cerron-Palomino notes that Señor is a non-proper translation from Quechua to Spanish for the adjective is taken as the core of the sentence. To a linguistic scholar, a better translation of Señor would be “the most important oracle” or “*mayor*” (main). Thus, etymologically speaking, Rimax and Limaq are allusions to the oracle’s capacity to communicate, and Señor is the Spanish translation for an abstract Quechua figure of authority and power.

If Pizarro interprets the word *Apu* as *señor*, it is because for this 16th century Catholic Spaniard, “talk” was a gift given to humans from God for they were the only made in Gods image (Genesis 1:26) because when non-humans such as plants or animals talk in the Bible⁵ it is in form of metaphors, parables, to transmit the word of God (Exodus: 3) or of the Devil (Genesis 3:1-6). While for the Quechua speakers, anything could talk and have social authority regardless of its image or shape, as long as it possessed the essential force of “*camay*” (Salomon & Urioste, 2010). Thus, when Catholic Europeans such as Pizarro, Albornoz, Cieza de León (1553) (De Cieza de León, 1880) or the other chroniclers of the time heard voices from the huacas, (which were not-catholic shrines) the most logical⁶ explanation they had is that it was the work of the Devil.

It should be noted that the Devil was unknown in the Andes before the arrival of Catholicism. However, there is a pre-colonial entity in the Andes known as *Supay*, whose image often is associated with the catholic representation of the Devil (de Santo Tomas 1951; Taylor 1980) for this being lives in the underworld with the “*aya*” (cadaver) of the dead people. Furthermore, these Andean entities, the *Supay* and the *aya*, which are not necessarily evil or good, often interact and communicate with the living. Thus, it can be affirmed that the Supay, the dead people that send

⁵ Bibles, F., & Store, C. B. (2000). King James Version.

⁶ The concept that today is known as “animism” as a proto-religion was developed after the 19th century by Tylor (Tylor, 1871) to describe the “primitive thought” that non-humans beings had souls.

messages to their descendants and the Catholic Devil might be the same entity seen under different chains of reasoning, that is to say for the Quechua as well as for the Spanish interpreters. Hence, Pizarro is right when he claimed that these voices came from somebody “the Devil” who is a “subject”; but Cerron-Palomino is also correct when he explains that these voices come from a “place” which in this case is an “object-subject” because an oracle is not only a message that comes from other plane of existence, but also the place, the idol, or the thing that represents the entity that is sending the message.

With these examples, I suggest that according to different logics, the same information regarding the Procession can be understood in different ways. If the Señor de los Milagros is taken as inert “object”, the image will reflect its ethnocentric, and colonial rationality. In addition, if El Señor is seen as a “subject” he can transmit powerful spiritual meanings, but if it-he is seen as an “object-subject” like an oracle different relational messages and non-colonial modes of existence can be discernible, which might be the case for the devotees affirm today that the Anda (litter) of El Señor is a window that El Señor uses to see and to communicate himself with his followers⁷: this is the power of El Señor.

To summarize the first part of this chapter, I argue that this oral story with frightened demons, huacas, oracles, buildings and walking shrines has to be taken seriously because it is a metaphor for Lima’s hidden history of destruction, slavery, deterritorialization and colonialism that have resisted more than three hundred years in the words and actions of the people of Lima. In words of Anna Tsing: “even fantasies deserve serious engagement. The best legacies of ethnography allow us to take our objects of study seriously even as we examine them critically. To study ghosts ethnographically means to take issues of haunting seriously” (Tsing, 2000). Thus, it should not matter if what is heard, seen or felt in this ethnography seems fantastic, evil, or divine. Even if these findings cannot be classified under one particular sphere such as of politics, religion, economy, biology, culture, or folklore because sometimes isolating meanings under a specific label can damaged connections of entire social systems.

Dead-life

The procession of El Señor de los Milagros can be described as the combination between a military march and an interment. El Señor is a painting of a Christ figure, which has his eyes closed,

⁷ Sergio Tirado, ethnography, June 18th 2012; part of the project, ‘Roman Catholic Church mediation, mediatization, and religious subjects in contemporary Latin America’.

representing his death. At his knees there are two figures praying, a man with a halo on his head and a woman with a crown. At the top of the cross there is a golden dove and at the topmost, there is



Figure 1. Source: <http://señordelosmilagros.org>
Consulted July 2015

the image of an old man emerging from the sky holding a globe in his left hand. But there is something else in the canvas, to the right and left hand of the central figure: an image of the sun and one of the moon [Figure 1].

The presence of these celestial bodies in representations of the crucifixion is not unusual in paintings before the 16th century; it can be seen for example in works from Raphael or Bramantino, but also appears in an engraving from Guaman Poma de Ayala from the 16th century [Figure 2]. In this drawing the sun and the moon have faces and are situated at the right and at left sides of the central figure, and beneath them there are two male figures that might be *yanaconas* (deterritorialized servants) wearing different crowns and carrying a litter on which sits a crowned mummy, who like Jesus in the Catholic tradition, had the ability to return to his dead body to communicate messages to the people.

This drawing by Guaman Poma shows how the deceased have been remembered in Peru since pre-colonial times, especially in the *Aya Marçay Quilla* or *fiesta de los difuntos*, the indigenous celebration of the dead. This celebration that is still carried out today during the first days of November matches the summer sowing season of maize in rural areas of Peru, and also with the end of the procession of El Señor de los Milagros in Lima, when the image of El Señor is taken back to his temple to rest until the next year. In the *Aya Marçay Quilla*, people used to place the human remains of their ancestors in the dining room to share the meal⁸ and today in cities like Lima where many residents, originating from elsewhere in the country, may have lost access to manipulate the dead bodies of their relatives, just after the El Señor de los Milagros celebration, people visit the cemeteries bringing food and beer to dine and drink with their ancestors (De Ayala & Gy, 1980; Saavedra, Gamboa, & Cuadros, 2005; E. de la Vega & Stanish, 2012).

⁸ “[People] sang and danced in their presence putting them [the deceased] on a bier to carry them from house to house, on streets and squares. After all this, in the return journey to their pucullos (vaults), they [the deceased] received meals and dishes, the most important also received gold and silver...” my translation (Saavedra, Gamboa, & Cuadros, 2005).

My point is that just like both celebrations, the procession of El Señor de los Milagros and the *Aya Marqay Quilla*, intersect in time and space, and so the profound meanings of both ceremonies might overlap.

People refer to El Señor as *Mi Viejo, mi padre* (*my Old Man, my father*), which are adjectives and nouns that denote familiarity, thus there might be a substrate to these Andean concepts of life and death as under layered meanings in today's celebration of El Señor de los Milagros in Lima, specially when this image is brought back to life by his devotees.

In the Andean world these concepts of life and death were not mutually exclusive but rather were complementary, thus the rulers or the ancestors could be brought back to life to be consulted if they were able to retain their *camay* vital force after death (Salomon & Urioste, 2010). These ancestors were the source of *camay* because they made it possible for all of their descendants and members of their extended family groups or *ayllus* to be in the world (Gose, 1996). The more descendants an ancestor had, the bigger the *Ayllu* was, and the larger the power, wealth and influence the ayllus and the ancestors possessed. (Murra, 2002; Revel, Wachtel, & Murra, 1986; Beck & Littell, 2005; Gose, 1996; Taylor, 1974)

The most powerful of these ancestors could keep their *camay* after death on their mummified body, or transmit it to objects, idols or other entities that would become an extension of themselves. These ancestors could then transmit this energy to topographical elements (features) like mountains or rocks, which then became *huacas* or shrines. Thus ancestors were not just dead people, they also became one with the landscape, some even became ceremonial centers, through which oracles mediated the communication between the living and the past. But also, during the Inca domination, these entities that were not fully alive or dead, would be used as important political tools by the imperial power to mediate between the conquered people and the living king (Gose, 1996).

I suggest that this concept of *camay* which seems to have represented communication with higher powers through praying, reasoning, and consultation (ibid); might be somehow embodied



Figure 2. De Ayala, F. G. P., & Gy, F. P. (1980)

today in the Señor de los Milagros procession, not just because for the devotees during the ceremony this image is alive⁹, but also because for people in these ceremonies seems to be reinforcing their bonds with the present members of their families and those from the past, and with the city of Lima as particular place, “*pacha*” or locality.

The Vessel

In order to explore the characteristics of El Señor de los Milagros as a visual representation, it is important to note the original image of El Señor de los Milagros was depicted as a painting on the surface of a wall. (Pini, 2005; Rostworowski, 1992, 2002; Vargas Ugarte, 1966) but it does not mean that the wall is an essential part of the image nor the image an essential part of El Señor. In 1955, after the 1940 earthquake, La Hermandad del Señor de los Milagros brought two experts from Italy, Francesco Palessoni and Luigi Pigazzini, who detached the image from the original wall and placed the figure higher on a new wall¹⁰ (Vargas Ugarte, 1966). Thus, the Señor de los Milagros is not attached to a fixed location nor to a specific visual representation.

The image in the wall also has changed over time acquiring new characters¹¹ like Maria Magdalena and St John, which according to Vargas Ugarte (1966), were painted when the original mural was retouched, just like the Holy Spirit Dove and the image of God at the top, which were commanded by the Viceroy Conde de Lemos in 1671. Hence the Señor de Los Milagros is most accurately seen as the force that is evoked by the image, which can be infused into other vessels like the replicas that are brought by the devotees during the blessing ceremonies in the daily masses, or like the canvas that is taken out during the procession. Thus, these different bodies or vessels can be seen as continuous with each other if they contain the same force. However, how people react to this power is not static. Rather, it changes over time.

Names, Spirits, Power and Souls

El Señor de los Milagros is known by other names that convey quite different ideas through the same image. Some of these names include: El Cristo Moreno (Brown Jesus), El Cristo Morado (The Purple Christ), among others. However, the Christ figure that appears in the canvas that is taken out on the holy anda on the Señor’s procession is not brown-skinned and he is not wearing

⁹ Sergio Tirado’s ethnography, June 18th 2012; part of the project, ‘Roman Catholic Church mediation, mediatization, and religious subjects in contemporary Latin America’.

¹⁰ Interview with Manuel Orrillo, Mayordomo General of the Brotherhood, July 2014, Lima, Peru

¹¹ Interview with Mother Superior Soledad Garcia, July 2014, Lima, Peru

anything purple. Thus, these names might not correspond to physical characteristics of the image, but rather might mirror personal experiences and relationships of Lima residents or Limeños at different periods of time.

According to Walter Benjamin, names are powerful because they are the same as the “thing” that has been named (Benjamin & Tarnowski, 1979; Ferris, 2004). Therefore if the names of El Señor are not necessarily attached to the fluctuating changes of its image, these names might encompass the force, the “spirit” or the substance that differentiate him from other entities alike. If so, these names might mimic the essence of El Señor, his substance because by receiving these names, people incorporated him into their world. Furthermore, if El Señor has had different names it is because he has been incorporated into different worlds, also, if these names have changed, it is because his essence and his relationship with the people has changed as well over time. Thus, by exploring the interconnection between the different names of El Señor de los Milagros and the people throughout time, I will search in the history of the Procession for alternative, divergent or forgotten connections concerning the past and the present of the Procession.



Figure 3. Changes in the mural. Madre Soledad Garcia and Archbishop Cipriani, museum of El Señor de los Milagros, Lima. Source: hermandaddelseñordelosmilagros.org, Consulted July 2015

El Señor of Pachacamilla

There are different versions, both written and oral, of the origin of the name of El Señor of Pachacamilla, although all of them connect the image with the earliest origins of the cult, the African enslaved people and the indigenous population in Lima (Pini, 2005; Rostworowski, 1992, 2002; Vargas Ugarte, 1966). One of these descriptions states that the place where an Angolan paint

apprentice drew the mural was an old indigenous neighbourhood of Lima called Pachacamilla (Vargas Ugarte, 1966). However, Maria Rostworowski (1992) offers a different explanation that may be much more complete for it incorporates the indigenous and the Afro- Peruvian origin of the image. Rostworowski affirms that in the 16th century, the Spaniard Hernán González, “*encomendero*”¹² of Lurín-- a district located some 30 kilometers from Lima acquired land in the City of Kings. One of these properties, known as the Garden of Pachacamilla, had several indigenous workers from the Sanctuary of Pacha Camac.

The Sanctuary Pacha Camac, which in a translation from Quechua, means “animator or ruler of the earth”, is located in Lurin, and was the most important oracle and pilgrimage site in the Andean world during the pre-Inca and Inca civilizations (Gose, 1996). Rostworowski (1992) also identifies the deity Pacha Camac with an ancient pre-Incan god of earthquakes. She claims that the indigenous people who lived in this estate secretly worshiped the God by painting an image of Pacha Camac on a wall in a warehouse, arguing that this cult persisted over time and was transmitted to the enslaved people from Angola when they arrived. Then, in 1650, when the indigenous people of the estate “disappeared”, the enslaved workers might have protected the image and their cult from Catholic Church campaigns such as the *extirpación de idolatrias* (extirpation of idolatry) by means of painting a crucified Christ on top of it, thereafter forming a brotherhood to gather and keep worshipping the God (Helg et al., 2004).

Rostworowski’s argument might seem highly speculative, especially because there is not evidence of the existence of a Pacha Camac painting on the wall where the image of el Señor de los Milagros was drawn. Furthermore, Pacha Camac is a three-dimensional wood column, similar to a totem figure, which shows different carved figures around its male-female body that represents different relationships between humans, animals, plants and celestial figures, that can be seen today at the Pacha Camac Museum. Each of these carved figures represents equally important entities that are in relation with the others, which would make dubious the possibility of a complete two-dimensional representation of its full body in a mural.

Nevertheless, the encounter of indigenous with African workers in the capital of the viceroyalty of Peru is not only highly probable, it is also the manifestation of various economic, theological and philosophical events that took place around the world during the 16th century

¹² The head of a colonial institution called *encomienda*. The encomendero had the task to look after the catechization of the indigenous populations “encomendados” and also to use them to exploit the land assigned by the King in the viceroyalty.

onwards, which not only affected the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and civil powers in Peru, but also might have posed a social order over the world.

De-formed Souls

The indigenous populations in America could not be “legitimately” tagged as slaves after the Papal Bull “*Sublimis Deus*”, by Pope Paulo III (1537), which officially recognized indigenous souls and their condition as humans, making it heresy to enslave them. The Papal Bulls had significant importance for the Spanish crown because it was by means of the Alexandrine Bull in 1493 that Spain acquired an international recognition that legitimized their right to administer and to evangelize the new territories (Weckman, 1976). Therefore, to deny the rights of indigenous groups bestowed on them by the Pope, would jeopardize the right of the Spanish Crown to control the new world.

After the Junta de Valladolid (1550), the Spanish Crown decided that the indigenous were people but not fully citizens. In fact, they were more like children since they did not know the “right” faith, thus they might have rights, but they had to be watched by the Church (Losada, 1971). Hence indigenous populations in viceroyalties were entrusted to missionaries like the Jesuits to be educated into the Catholic faith, and to live in designated locations in rural areas clearly apart from the citizens of Lima (Andrien, 2001; Schwaller, 2000).

Thus, the “disappearance” of the indigenous population as the main labour force at the beginning of the 17th century from the Pacific coast of Peru, as noted by Rostworowski (1992), might be partially explained because “legally” the indigenous population could not be enslaved by the Spanish regime after the 16th century. But also because in less than a century, common European diseases like smallpox killed more than 10 million recently recognized indigenous souls throughout the once Inka empire Tahuantinsuyo (Wachtel, 1976).

However, Africans could “legally” be enslaved, which does not necessarily imply that their souls were unrecognised by the Church. Rather their souls, stained and deformed by ancestral idolatries, needed to be cleaned and reshaped by means of servitude and discipline (Bowser, 1977; Pagden, 1982; Gose, 2008). Such redemptive rationale was very convenient for a preindustrial society in an incipient capitalist stage, since the only way of acquiring profits or surplus was through the exploitation of the workers during endless days of labour. Like this, housework, mining and farming performed by indigenous workers were gradually replaced during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries by the enslaved African people, especially after the discovery of large silver mines such as

Potosí, which demanded increasing numbers of cheap labour force (Bowser & Mastrangelo, 1977; Matory, 1999; Marx, 1887)

Thus, during the colonial period, public demonstrations of faith and conversion, like processions, might have gone beyond the duty of the Church to catechise indigenous and African enslaved populations, because these subordinated groups in Lima, might also have had an interest to embrace Catholicism to be recognized as political persons. For that reason, this procession can be seen as performative messages from subordinated populations towards political equality, and against the racist discourse that justified their subjugation.

El Cristo Moreno

Among all the different names for El Señor de los Milagros, “Cristo Moreno” is perhaps the one that may best reflect the ambiguity of the relationship of the Catholic Church with the City and the cult of El Señor de los Milagros. This is because often the evangelization work was associated with the racist discourse in the colonial imperialism, which naturalized a hierarchical religious-political and social order in Lima, where indigenous and African descendants were at the bottom.

Ego Garcia, the “Sacristán Mayor” (parish clerk), who is in charge of the public affairs of Church of Las Nazarenas, explains the origin of the worship of El Señor de los Milagros:

“...In the 1600s, during the conquest of Peru, in the suburbs of Lima, what is today Tacna Avenue, were the backyards the conquerors’ houses. The owner of the land where today sits the church of the Señor de los Milagros had a warehouse so that the blacks that the Spaniard had ‘acquired’ to work in his cotton fields could rest...One of those unrefined blacks [*que no tenía cultura*], touched by Divine Providence, painted the picture of the Redeemer, recreating the image of the Golgotha [in Aramaic, ‘skull mountain’, the site where Jesus was crucified]. The mulattos who lived here took the presence of the Lord according to their customs-- singing, dancing and then getting drunk...”¹³(interview, Garcia E, 2014).

Ego Garcia brings information about the relationship between the Church, the Spanish crown and the major labour force in the viceroyalty of Peru. During the 17th century the City of Kings was also the city of slaves: in fact, Lima housed the largest population of black slaves in the whole western hemisphere, a group who constituted most population of the city (Bowser & Mastrangelo, 1977). African enslaved populations were brought from many ports of Africa such as

¹³ My translation, Interview with Ego Garcia, parish clerk of the Nazarenas’ church, June 2014, Lima, Peru

Santa Caterina, Mayumba, Quiloa, Loango, Malembe, Cabinda and Ambriz on the coasts of Congo, Angola, and Niger, and once they arrived to Lima they were divided into groups according with their place of origin (Harth-Terre, 1961; Morgan, 1997; Carrillo, 2002).

Unlike the indigenous groups, the different African enslaved populations in the new continent did not have a common vernacular language other than Spanish, nor a free space in which to gather. Moreover, because they were subjects of religious/judiciary institutions like the Inquisition, these African populations mediated the relations between Spaniards and indigenous people by extending catholic values that subordinated indigenous practices to the colonial rationality (Lewis, 2003). Like this, in places like Lima, African descendant populations were charged with taking care of Catholic icons such as Our Lady of the Kings, Our Lady of the Holy Water, Our Lady of the Rosary (Held et al., 2004) and El Señor de los Milagros, who was delegated to one of the largest African groups in Lima, “the Angola” (Sánchez, 2002).

Members of these groups, named *cofradías de color* or *hermandades* (brotherhoods) had to attend masses in Latin during their “free” time, however, they used the same spaces to dedicate themselves to dance and sing offerings at night to their own gods, the “good gods” (Banchero Castellano, 1976). Thus, as is the case in other places in the continent with larger African populations, such as Brazil, Haiti or Colombia, Catholic saints in Peru were also infused with the essence of African deities, which enabled the continuation of the enslaved populations’ beliefs (Brown, 2001; Bowser & Mastrangelo, 1977; Helg et al., 2004; Matory, 1999)

This could be the reason why today most people I talked with while in Lima thought that the lay institution known as the Hermandad del Señor de los Milagros de Nazarenas (Brotherhood of the Lord of Miracles of Nazarenas)- HDSM, composed mostly of African descendent Lima residents (“Limeños”), has always been in charge of the procession. A popular belief that has been supported by the articles published each year by the most important newspapers of the city¹⁴, which maintains a widespread public recognition as the institution in control. This recognition empowers its members to carry the two-ton image with pride every year (October and Holy Week or Semana Santa) through the streets of Lima, and to dedicate several hours every day to other religious and charitable activities.

However, *cofradías* in Lima were not autonomous groups since black-skinned people were not allowed to belong to these organizations without the presence and guidance of a priest (Campos

¹⁴ Diaz Alexandra, Diana Safrá and Eliana Caballero, 2013, Informe de Medios, 2013; part of the project, ‘Roman Catholic Church mediation, mediatization, and religious subjects in contemporary Latin America’.

and Fernández de Sevilla, 2014). Instead, *cofradías* were civil stewardship organizations that worked with the Catholic Church, managing properties like hospitals, watching over relics, and collecting donations, all of which were exempt from paying taxes (Walker, 2008). Moreover, *cofradías* needed the consent of the Spanish Crown, the Pope, the Archbishop and the *cabildo* (council) of Lima to exist (Vargas Ugarte, 1966), and the *cofradia* of El Señor de los Milagros never had all of these approvals (*ibid*) and as such it never “legally” existed before the 20th century. Created in 1878, the Hermandad del Señor de los Milagros was only officially recognized by the Peruvian government and the Church in 1920 during the republican period (Vargas Ugarte, 1966).

Thus, it is possible that the name Cristo Moreno denotes the relationship with the black African enslaved population that was brought to Lima between the 16th to the 18th century, as history tells. However, the image is not known as “El Cristo Negro” (Black Christ), perhaps because in Lima the word *negro* (black) has historically negative connotations, as it can be seen in Ego García’s mention in his testimony of a “*negro que no tenía cultura*”. When he spoke about the same group of people in association with the Church, the *negros* in his speech became *mulatos*, which was the colonial denomination for the first generation of descendants between African and Europeans.

Today words like *mulato*, *moreno* (brown-skinned person) and so on, are euphemisms used in everyday conversation to politely refer a dark-skinned person. The word *moreno* however is not used to refer only to African descendants, but to all people who are not considered white. Hence *moreno* not only encompasses the black population but the indigenous as well. Thus by using “moreno” instead of “negro” to discuss the Señor de los Milagros, the color of the image itself has not been semantically bleached, but Garcia intends to link in a polite manner the Church with the non-white populations of Lima, which is today the stronghold of this devotion.

El Señor de los Milagros

The name Señor de los Milagros was once adopted by a pious devotee known as Antonio de Leon who built a hut to protect the painting in 1670 and was miraculously cured from a tumour. The news spread by word of mouth and ever since many people in Lima started to visit the image in order to obtain divine intervention to cure their health afflictions (Vargas Ugarte, 1966). In his testimony Ego García echoes this historic version:

“...The warehouse was then abandoned, [facing different natural phenomena]. One earthquake devastated Lima and the sidewalls of the warehouse collapsed—but not the wall.

Time passed and the wall remained intact despite the sun and the rain. A Spaniard named Antonio de León saw this and was touched, he was attracted to the image and as an offering he wiped out the debris from the area, as history tells he had a disease, now we call it cancer, and suddenly he began to heal...” (Interview Garcia E, 2014)

Ego Garcia, in his account situates the power of El Señor de los Milagros in his strength to *resist* natural forces or phenomena. He also underlines that it was after the recognition of such power that El Señor de los Milagros granted his first miracle by healing Antonio de Leon from a deadly disease. Nevertheless authors like, Sanchez (2002) and Banchero (1976) claim that the name of El Señor de los Milagros was the product of the Franciscan interest to associate the Cristo Moreno with Nuestra Señora de los Milagros, an image deeply popular among the indigenous population in the neighbourhood of El Cercado, which is today part of Barrios Altos.

The Marvelous Señor de los Temblores

The name of El Señor de los Temblores begins after the 1746 earthquake and a tsunami that devastated Lima, knocking down most houses as well as government buildings and churches. The result was a break in the stability of political and ecclesiastical power, a rupture with the everyday and so far known order (Sánchez, 2002). In Ego Garcia’s words:

“... After another earthquake the ceiling fell...The Viceroy Amat intervened to rebuild the temple and monastery, so Sebastian [the first Mayordomo] ordered the first canvas in order to raise money during the first procession that began with four “*cuadrillas*” [crews]. (Interview Garcia E 2013)”

This relationship between natural disasters and the power of El Señor de los Milagros, is explored by Susy Sanchez (2002). She argues that the devotion the image inspires is not due to its protecting power against natural disasters for this Cristo Moreno was not the first nor the only religious figure entrusted with the prevention of earthquakes. El Cristo de Mayo (Christ of May) or El Señor de las Agonías (Lord of Agony) in Chile, as well as Nuestra Señora de las Lágrimas (Our Lady of the Tears), the Virgen de las Nubes, Taytacha Temblores , and the Cruz (Cross) de Baratillo in Peru, are all sacred figures called on by people to protect them from earthquakes since 1647.

Her argument is that El Señor de los Milagros began to take distance from other Catholic images to become the symbol of the religious devotion in the City, after the 1746 earthquake in Lima, when the black population took advantage of this moment of crisis to steal and loot whatever

they could, which became a major concern for the Lima's elite classes. In that moment different repressive and military measures were deployed by the Viceroy of Peru to contain and to calm the chaos. But other more subtle methods were also used that underlined the moral boundaries between the people and the hierarchical religious order, such as the use of El Señor de los Milagros, a religious image associated with enslaved populations, and later, a survivor of the earthquake and of the riots, who was reinforced by the government as a protector of the city to activate the self-regulatory mechanisms, or to morally control the social disengagement (Bandura, 1990) of the African enslaved populations.

Sanchez explains that the miracle accomplished by the Señor de los Temblores was to turn the dangerous enslaved population into devotees in order to protect the interests of elites during moments of crisis, such as those following earthquakes and the massive destruction of emblematic buildings. In this appreciation, she agrees and quotes Tardieu, when he affirms that “the best way to keep blacks dependent on the social and moral norms was to make them beneficiaries of Christian supernatural manifestations” (Tardieu, 1997).

Sanchez argument echoes Victor Turner's idea of “social drama”. A “social drama”, in a few words, encloses the ritual actions and adjusting mechanisms taken after a social norm has been broken in public, like the return of the transgressor in a public ceremony, which indicates reconciliation between the parties (Turner, 1980). At the same time, a social drama also legitimises power by exhibiting the punishment and subjugations of the aggressors. In this case the transgressors were the African Peruvian population who returned to a status quo in Lima, after the moments that compromised the political and moral order in the city, in which they were at the lowermost.

Sanchez (2012) and Ego Garcia provide different interpretations to link the name of El Señor de los Temblores with the 1746 earthquake and the first procession of the Señor de los Milagros. However, the importance of el Señor de los Milagros is previous to this point of Lima's history, for it was after the 1687 earthquake, that El Señor de los Milagros became the official *patron* of the city, in 1718, and when he received the title of El Señor de las Maravillas, thereby becoming a symbol against natural calamities and social uncertainty (Vargas Ugarte, 1966), perhaps mimicking the Santo Patron of Cuzco “Taytacha Temblores”¹⁵.

¹⁵ Who is in fact a “Black” statue of Christ, and since 1650, he is also know as El Cristo Moreno and as El Señor de los Temblores, because people believe that he stopped the 1650 earthquake in the once capital of the Inka empire (Stanfield-Mazzi, 2013), which by the time was competing with Lima to be the legitimate capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru (Cummins, 1996). Thus El Señor de los Milagros might be the Limeño answer/counterpart/nemesis of Taytacha Temblores.

Also, neither of them mentions that following the 1746 earthquake, all the different images that survived the cataclysm, including the Virgin del Rosario, Nuestra Señora del Aviso, the Santo Cristo de Burgos, Jesus Nazareno, as well as the urns of the Peruvian saints such as Santo Toribio, San Francisco Solano and Santa Rosa were carried out to the streets, and circulated in unceasing processions through the streets of the City of Kings (Walker 2008). According to Vargas Ugarte, the purpose of these processions was to bring different religious images to other institutions ruled by the Church such as temples, churches, hospitals, convents, monasteries, and so on, so that cloistered nuns and the sick could also plead for protection and forgiveness from God (Vargas Ugarte, 1966). Thus, the earthquake and the destruction of the city cannot be the reason why in Lima, the image of the Señor de los Milagros is the only one that has attached earthquakes to his identity. Nor does it explain how this particular image became more prominent than other Catholic images in the city.

I propose that the different processions that took over the streets of Lima after the 1687 and 1746 earthquakes; might have had a less institutional and more personal reasons for being observed, namely, to commemorate the numerous people that lost their lives during this period, who by that time were being buried around churches and hospitals (Ramos, 2010). Thus the procession of El Señor de los Milagros, like the others that departed from local parishes each year, might have originally had the goal of paying respect to the dead and not to any institution.

Although, Sanchez, Vargas and Ego Garcia agree on an important aspect: the direct participation of the viceroy in supporting the cult and the procession of the Señor de los Milagros, which transformed El Cristo Moreno into El Señor de las Maravillas, the official Patron of the city.

This support from the viceroy is central because the 1746 earthquake represented not only the destruction of Lima, but also the beginning of the reconstruction and reformation of institutions in the capital. The cataclysm was an opportunity for the new king of Spain, Fernando VI, from the royal house of the Bourbons, to re-order the power in the viceroyalty, which particularly affected Lima's elites and the role of Roman Catholic Church in the new continent.

Fernando VI, began to implement large administrative transformations in the viceroyalty, known as the Bourbon Reforms (Walker, 2008). These transformations aimed at increasing the efficacy and the income of the kingdom by adjusting the administration of people and resources in a more profitable way for the economic purposes of Spain. Basically, these reforms consisted in developing Enlightenment ideas to separate the religious and civil powers to optimize the political, administrative and economic apparatus of the kingdom. As result the Viceroyalty was divided into smaller administrative spaces, which led to the economic and political weakening of Lima vis-à-vis

the new capital cities, especially Buenos Aires and the viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata, which took charge of the most important silver mines in Peru like Potosi (Anna, 1979; Anna, 2003; Walker, 2008; Buechler, 1810).

The Bourbon reforms however were not about breaking relations with the Church, rather they reduced its power by limiting the spaces it controlled and the public roles it could take. Thus, these reforms implied the movement of religion into more private areas, while the central government tried to take control of the public space, and also to the mechanisms of social control previously assigned to the Church, such as education and public health (Ramón, 2002). Consequently, the Crown restricted the privileges and tax exemptions enjoyed by religious orders, which led to the expulsion of the Jesuits from the new continent and the confiscation of their properties in 1767. Thus, the elites and the Church in Lima had to find a way to implement the new reforms without completely losing their power in the city. For that reason the secular and religious powers in Lima were fused longer than in any other city to the early colonial order (Boylan, 2014; Cummins, 1996; Gandolfo, 2009; Melchor, 2002; Mujica Pinilla, 2010; Osorio, 2008; Ramón, 1850; Walker, 2008; Anna, 1980).

In this context, Viceroy Manso de Velasco rebuilt the city after the 1746 earthquake according to a more secular spatial organization centered in civic buildings rather than in churches or religious institutions, a change materialized in the neoclassic style of these new constructions instead of the traditional baroque (Walker, 2008). This transformation also saw a taming of many elaborate religious festivals in the city (*ibid*), like the Corpus Christi and other public religious demonstrations, to the point that only the procession of the official patron Señor de los Milagros remained in the month of October, drawing devotees from all the different parishes in the city. In this way, the presence of the dead buried around the Catholic institutions, and the procession, which might have had different meanings to the indigenous, African and European populations, granted a sacred status to specific Catholic places in Lima (Ramos, 2010), and also empowered the cult of El Señor, who gradually monopolized the space where civil and religious institutions publicly came together.

Finally, these reforms led to an increase of wealth and property that the Crown desperately needed in the war against England and France. But according to Lynch, they also resulted in the proliferation and articulation of different groups that challenged the authority of the Crown in the viceroyalty, which in turn led to the independence wars; in Lynch's words, "they [the Spanish Crown] gained a revenue and lost an empire" (Lynch, 1969; Walker, 2008).

After the Independence wars, the Spanish Crown was defeated in Latin America, but rationalities from the Old World remained among the regions inhabitants. Local elites asserted their powers, imitating political models from Europe, and also reinforced the severed ties with the Church. In part because central governments, like in Peru, needed the support of the Church to morally control different populations against potential rebellions. Military leaders filled the vacuum of political power in new nation-states, intending to create national identities within imaginary borders (Poole, 1997). Flags, national anthems, local heroes, decisive battles, all were new symbols used to idealize the triumph over the colonial powers to inculcate people into new nation-states. And yet, in Lima, the once most important city of the region, the image of the Señor de los Milagros, a survivor of a baroque colonial past, seems today to be more important for many Limeños than any flag, national anthem, or local hero.

Today, the Señor de los Milagros' procession suggests that the Bourbon reforms, and later governmental efforts to separate the State from the Church, limiting religion and the Church's power to private spaces never fully succeeded in Lima (Walker, 2008). One of the reasons is because both the upper ranks of political leaders and the national Church hierarchy constitute the same Peruvian elites who have remained in power of the city, maintaining the status quo following the independence wars. It does not mean that these spheres always agree in public affairs, in fact they often criticize each other¹⁶. However, the morality of the economic system that keeps them in power since the beginning of the colonial period is rarely questioned.

Therefore, the importance of El Señor de los Milagros might not be based in his power against nature, as it has been noticed by Sanchez, for the image did not prevent the destruction of the city in the 1746 earthquake. However, this destruction allowed the Viceroy to use the Señor de los Milagros as a symbol of power, not just by placating dangerous populations as it has been proposed by Sanchez, but also as a symbol of the power of the Viceroy over the Church, without having to sever ties completely with this institution. This would have been possible by supporting El Señor de los Milagros as an expression of *religiosidad popular* that began in the borders of the once lonely and mighty capital city of the Viceroyalty.

¹⁶ Often, in different spaces such as sermons, interviews, TV, radio, the Internet and social networks, the Archbishop of Lima addresses the morality of legislative debates such as the “therapeutic” abortion, and the gay marriage, and others (Diaz et al., 2013). Likewise, the HDSM also has a webpage: <http://señordelosmilagros.org>, where their opinions echo the viewpoints of the Archbishop, and they also publicize different activities in which this institution participate during the year, such as charitable acts. Additionally, the Hermandad has official Facebook and Twitter accounts, which are virtual spaces where the devotees can follow El Señor and interact with him at any time of the year.

Glocal Religious Practices

Processions in the Andean region are very common, especially in Peru where every parish, every locality, every town has its own patron saint who is taken out in procession on specific dates (Sallnow, 1987). Furthermore, when people move to other places or cities like Lima they carry their *santo patron* with them, and organize small processions to the saint within these new localities¹⁷. However, this tradition is not entirely “officially” Catholic because, as explained previously, people used to carry the huacas of their ancestors and pilgrimage to important religious centers long before Spanish colonization (ibid). Thus, if today people carry Catholic images, it does not necessarily mean that they are carrying exclusively Catholic beliefs according to official Catholic doctrine.

One of the strategies of the Roman Catholic Church after the sixteenth century onwards, was the Extirpation of Idolatry mentioned above. The main objective of which was the destruction of huacas such as *malkis* (ancestral mummies), *konopas* (household shrines) and *wanq'as* (farmstead shrines) (Sallnow 1987; Duviols, 1971; Mills 1997; Gose, 2008). Nevertheless, this strategy did not substantially change the already existent practices or beliefs in the Andes because the popular response was to place catholic symbols where ancient huacas were located (Sallnow 1987). Soon the Andean landscape was repopulated and reconsecrated by catholic saints that manifested themselves to the people in forms of apparitions, dreams and miracles (ibid). However, this does not mean that, people in Peru had to paint Catholic images over ancient Gods to keep their beliefs, as Rostworowski (2002) contends, since beliefs do not dwell in the cult of specific images or symbols but in people's everyday practices. In other words, images as symbols do not necessarily give meanings to people's practices; rather it is more accurate to think that people practices give meanings to symbols.

Much has been written on how most African enslaved populations were ripped away from their territories, dispossessed of their names, languages, belongings and traditional practices, which resulted in different kinds of religious syncretism when these populations infused the significance of their deities in foreign entities such as Catholic images. But this is not entirely the case in the Andean countryside, particularly in Peru, since the indigenous populations there maintained a close everyday connection with their original languages, practices, and meanings, which are infused in the landscape (Andrien, 2001; Schwaller, 2000; Saavedra et al.; Salomon & Urioste, 2010; Bauer & Stanish, 2001; de la Cadena, 2010; MacCormack, 1993; Ramos, 2010; Sallnow, 1987; Stanfield-Mazzi, 2013).

¹⁷ Interview with Felipe Zegarra, June 2014, Lima, Peru

Thus, the Andean complex of sacred beliefs did not need to be camouflaged under a Catholic image to exist. On the contrary, if something needed to survive using images in order to position itself as intermediary between the people and higher powers, it was the Roman Catholic Church.

Felipe Zegarra, the former Chair of the department of theology in the Universidad Catolica del Peru, mentioned to me: “[Pope] John XXIII already said it and it has been said in all episcopal conferences ever since. ‘Numerically and statistically speaking, Latin America is the most Catholic continent, nevertheless it [Catholicism] does not permeate the culture’ (My translation, Interview, Zegarra 2013). Thus, as is well known in Rome, in Latin America and particularly, in the Andes, the Catholic images were adopted by the people but without deeply compromising ancient cultural practices (de la Cadena, 2010; MacCormack, 1993; Ramos, 2010; Sallnow, 1987; Stanfield-Mazzi, 2013). Hence, ancient Andean elements were used as the foundations of new Catholic structures, which literally can also be seen in the landscape where churches were built on top of the ruins of important huacas.

This superimposition of Catholic images over ancient huacas can be seen in different contexts like the Lord of Quyllur Rit’I, a rock in the Sinakara Valley in the Cusco Region of Peru, where the Catholic Church painted an image of Christ, which still is a very important center of peregrination (Sallnow, 1987); in the church of San Pedro de Andahuaylillas (Kelemen, 1951), or even in the celebration of the Corpus Christi in Cusco that was fused with the Inti Raimi celebration (Cummins, 1996).

My point is not that sacred Andean places, practice and beliefs remain pristine and untouched under the Catholic faith. That would be to undermine the impact of colonialism in the region. Nor do I want to suggest that Catholicism is still an alien religion where local devotees follow blindly the directions of a foreign institution. Rather, I want to suggest that the Catholic Church is today the most important religion in the region because there has been a constant negotiation between the institution and the local populations, where both the Church and the people had to assimilate the importance of exogenous practices, places and also beliefs. Thus, this is not just a top-down relation where Catholicism has definitely changed the people in the Andes and their connection with the world. There is also a very important bottom-up relation where local communities are constantly reshaping the Church in the region according to their relationship with their world.

The case of the church of the Señor de los Milagros is particular because as history tells, it was not built in a place of a huaca, but rather in a *galpón* or warehouse just outside of the capital city, where the workers of a Spaniard's estate used to sleep. However, as different authors state, the hierarchy of the Church did not approve the cult of El Señor for they intended to erase the image on several occasions (Banchero Castellano, 1976; Pini, 2005; Rostworowski, 1992, 2002; Vargas Ugarte, 1966), as Ego Garcia mentioned:

“... [t]he priest of San Marcelo, authorized by the Archbishop, came for an inspection, and he deemed those acts as heresy, and demanded that the image had to be erased. Two painters who were hired to remove the image changed their minds once they faced the image, so they could not erase it. Then a soldier was ordered to do so, since soldiers are more rugged. However he began to say ‘I cannot, there is a force that holds my hand... when I'm at the portrait, I am in a special place... the Lord doesn't want to be deleted’. It became a ‘boom’ and people took it as a sign, so they started to protest. So the archbishop changed his mind as well, and said that the picture could stay...” (Interview Garcia E, 2014).

Ego Garcia's description implies two important points: first, that the image of the Señor de los Milagros has a “popular” or folk origin; and second, that it was painted in a private property that did not belong to the Church. This might explain why the Viceroy of the time supported its reconstruction after the earthquake, and why this particular image was adopted by the city, instead of the many other images that were controlled by the Church.

The Church of El Señor.

At the end of this chapter, I provide an ethnographic description of the Iglesia de las Nazarenas in central Lima. This church, also known as the temple of El Señor de los Milagros, unlike other churches was built with the support of the viceroy of Peru Don Manuel de Amat y Juniet in 1771, who in turn relied on public donations to finance this project (Vargas Ugarte, 1966).

The first time I went to this Church on the morning of the 21st of June 2014, I was expecting on my way there to see the colorful and colonial houses with balconies that can be seen in coffee table books about Lima. But the houses and the sole surviving trees matched the colour of the sky, which seemed to be always grey. In this grey zone people made their everyday living, selling goods or services in small shops and stores, and those who could not afford the rent of one of these

places were taking over the public space. Every gap was filled either with *bodegas* (convenience stores), *playas* (parking lots), *talleres* (body shops), and different peddlers who had claimed the sidewalks and the streets [Figure 4].

Before I reached the church, I walked by several candy stores selling Doña Pepa Turrone¹⁸ and by small shops selling Catholic images, candles, holy statues, and so on. Finally, I reached this



Figure 4. Street peddlers

small, austere church, the Iglesia de las Nazarenas, which happens to be the home of El Señor de los Milagros. Unlike most of the important churches in Lima, which exhibit a baroque style of overcomplicated façades that contrast with dark interiors, this temple had a rococo architectural style characterized by a modest and simple façade with a bright, elaborated interior.

Inside the church, the pink walls matched the reddish marbled floor and on the ceiling these walls turned into a small dome in the middle of the main nave. There were two rows of wood benches offering space for devotees to rest. I was expecting to see a few aged people praying in an empty church, which is the picture that I have from the churches that I have visited in other cities like Barcelona, Bogotá or Montreal. But despite the fact that it was Saturday at 10 am, all the seats were taken. There were elderly people present, younger people, men and women in their 30s, 40s and 50s, together who formed a congregation of some hundred people facing a green altar. This altar was flanked by ten golden pillars, five at each side, resembling the different roman triumphal arches that can be seen all over Europe, which were built to commemorate the death of a member of the royal family, to honour the rise of a new emperor, to commemorate victorious wars, or to celebrate the establishment of new colonies. In the City of Kings, however, luxurious arches were built by merchants to commemorate the entry of viceroys in conspicuous ceremonies that demonstrated the wealth of the city to the new rulers, who were seen as the alter ego of the king (Osorio, 2008).

¹⁸ A kind of nougat, and an emblematic food of the El Señor de los Milagros celebration, which is associated with an afro Peruvian woman who supported her family by selling this *turron* during this religious celebrations.

At the apex of the arch in the church of the Nazarenas there was the image of the archangel Saint Michael holding his sword in the middle of four pitchers of fire. In the center of the arch was the mural of El Señor de los Milagros.

This church of the Señor de los Milagros is today a focus of pilgrimage¹⁹ devotion that holds masses every day from 6 am to 8 pm, at every hour on the hour. During the month of June 2014, I attended various masses celebrated at different times of the day and I always counted approximately 100 devotees in each of the services. In one occasion, when I asked for the priest, the person in charge of the small shop in the left wing of the church, told me that there is not a single “*cura*” (priest) because the number of devotees who come to pray to the mural and the number of services require that priests from different churches in Lima take turns in offering masses.

In this way, the church of El Señor de los Milagros is today a sacred pilgrimage site, the end point of a private-public religious journey where the soul and body of devotees travel from different parts of the world in the search of a personal connection with El Señor, to gain spiritual gratification, to ask or to pay for favours (*promesas*), or to offer personal sacrifices in exchange for miracles (*mandas*) directly to El Señor.

Pilgrims may be seen to silently challenge the hierarchical emphasis of the Catholic Church for in their personal interaction with the Señor they do not rely on the intermediation of the institution. However, because the Church hierarchy oversees the physical building of the church, these personal connections are controlled by the division of the place into levels of sacredness where and when only specific people can have this connection privately.

Soledad Garcia, Mother Superior of the Carmelite convent of the Nazarenas, told me that in addition to the different visitors that came to visit the mural from Lima and from other parts of the world; the replica on the canvas that contains the image of the Señor and the Holy Anda (portable shrine) on which it sits,²⁰ rest in a special room within the church, which is often visited by important politicians and members of elite families, who request a private audience with El Señor to pray and ask for advice²¹.

Thus, apparently there are two main images of El Señor de los Milagros that dwell in the church: the original painted on a wall that is accessible to the common people who attend public

¹⁹ Pilgrimages are pre-Catholic practices with important political and religious meanings. They served in the consolidation of ruling ideologies within the different ethnic groups that inhabited the Andes. This occurred through the absorption of local shrines (*huacas*) into new hegemonic powers, like the Inca empire or the Spanish Crown, which legitimized the new social orders in the eyes of the local populations (Salles-Reese, 1997; Bauer & Stanish, 2001; Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, 1981; Rostworowski, 1992, 2002; MacCormack, 1993; Sallnow, 1987).

²⁰ Which is used during three processions of El Señor in October and during the Holy Week in April.

²¹ Interview, Garcia Soledad, July 2014, Lima, Peru

masses, and a copy reserved for exclusive members of the elite. This is an interesting phenomenon because generally an original painting has more value than a replica (Benjamin 2008), but this is not the case for both paintings seem to have the same power. Furthermore, each year there is a moment when these two images are side by side, which attracts more visitors since the Church allows common people to touch—if only for a few seconds, the Holy Anda that is usually only accessible to the elite. Madre Soledad told me that people wait in line for hours to have this honour (Interview, Garcia S, 2014).

Nevertheless, besides this two main images of El Señor there are other representations throughout the church of the Nazarenas. I was standing in front of the altar since all the seats behind me were taken; I had my arms behind my back to show respect to the congregation and to the ceremony. While everyone else was praying, I was waiting patiently for the mass to end in order to talk to the priest. Suddenly, just before the end of the ceremony, the people started to come to the front of the altar unpacking little replicas of the image of El Señor as well as statues, medals and all different sorts of objects, raising them towards the altar. Then the priest extended his arms in front of the devotees, blessing these articles as if he was transmitting an energy coming from above, from the sky and from El Señor. As a result, after the blessing, the essence or the substance of these replicas became a continuity of the power of El Señor, which now could be carried away individually by the devotees at any time.

The cult of El Señor, however, encompasses more than the pilgrimage and the multitudinous masses because it also includes a well-planned procession. This procession unlike the pilgrimage, does not only incorporate spaces that are considered sacred by the devotees for the procession also encloses public and private spaces that represent political and civic powers. Furthermore, El Señor de los Milagros does not only wait passively at his temple, he literally moves through the streets in the heart of Lima, interrupting the normal flow of the city because El Señor moves at his own rhythm, slowly and differently from the rapid pace of much of today's world.

Chapter Two: A Religious Play of Mundane Powers

Disillusioned words like bullets bark, as human gods aim for their mark, make everything from toy guns that spark, to flesh-colored Christs that glow in the dark. It's easy to see without looking too far that not much is really sacred -Bob Dylan, 1985



Figure 5. The procession, Source: Señordelosmilgros.org, Consulted July 2015

In my description of the procession, I will deliberately use the temporal divergence of the ceremony to break the continuity of the journey—one in this context both sacred and ethnographic—at certain moments to step away from the procession. These occasional diversions are not attempts at escape; on the contrary, such “flashbacks” and “flashforwards” have the purpose of moving deeper into the procession to discuss aspects of the context that might give meaning to the practice. Thus the following narrative does not keep a temporal continuity for I might travel in time and to different places in order to recreate that context, but I will always return to the procession. In this way, the following pages will describe my ethnographic experience of the October 18th 2013 procession, in which I examine the aesthetics, and the attitudes of central and peripheral attendants, as well as my personal sensations among them.

The Walking Shrine

It is 6 am on the morning of October 18, 2013, I can see thousands of people in the streets of Lima, but differently from the way I might see them on any other day. They are not just filling the sidewalks; today, they are also taking possession of the streets around the Church of the Nazarenas.

Everyone around me is facing in the same direction, towards a shiny structure at the end of the street. If I look in that direction, I can only see the backs of the people, most of them decorated like the buildings, for both people and buildings seem to have agreed to wear the same purple color for the occasion.

Wondering why everyone is uniformed and what the meaning of that particular color is, Ego Garcia, the “Patron de Andas” (the person in charge of the Image, and the representative of the Nazarenas nuns), and parish clerk of the Church of El Señor de los Milagros, would tell me after the procession that the color purple means penance, it makes people recognize their sins, their human condition, and their needs, and once the person is clean of those sins they give themselves to the Lord. Thus, devotees of El Señor wear their purple habit for 30 days -- during the month of October-- as a sign of penance asking El Señor to be cleaned from all evil and all the problems (Interview, Garcia E 2014).

Madre Soledad Garcia, Mother Superior of the convent of the Nazarenas, also told me that people wear purple because back in the 17th century, Christ wearing a purple tunic came to Mother Superior Antonia Maldonado, while she was praying, and asked her to wear this colour (despite the fact that cloistered Carmel nuns were only allowed to wear brown)-- and to found the convent of the Nazarenas, who would thenceforth become the guardians of the Señor de los Milagros, wearing always this distinctive religious habit (Interview, Garcia S, 2014).

Back in the procession, if I look in the opposite direction from where people are looking at, I can actually see peoples' faces, and they can see mine. I therefore decide to turn my back to the shiny structure and to focus my attention instead on the faces of the crowd, which are composed by middle-aged men and women and also by elders and little children. At the beginning this strategy seems a little bit odd, but worth it when I encounter the eyes of some people who look back at me in the eye. That kind act I repay with a smile, and very few smile back at me, like this older man who has his arms wide open, with his face looking to heaven, as if he is receiving a blessing from the sun, which is hot even at this relatively early hour.

One might expect that when a huge number of people gather in the same place, it is because they know that something special, unusual or extraordinary is about to happen. But they do not

seem to be anxious; rather, they are quiet, not talking among themselves and they do not seem to be enjoying the experience of being with others. It does not matter if others share the same colours of clothing, or if they all are there for the same reason, they look at the others with distrust and suspicion, and they only talk to strangers to defend the place that they have claimed while they wait for the extraordinary event to take place.

It is not that the people are in silence. As a matter of fact they all are yelling at the same time, the same word, answering to a single voice coming from the end of the street. This commanding voice says: “¡Viva el Señor de los Milagros!” to which they all respond: “¡Viva!”.

Suddenly, everyone ceases, and the voice at the end of the street says “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” to which everyone responds “Amen”, while genuflecting. I find myself in a massive Catholic mass in the middle of the streets of Lima. I must admit that this is not my first Catholic mass. In fact I have attended so many that I can anticipate what the priest is about to say and how the people are going to answer. But what is special about this one? Is the mass the extraordinary event that thousands of people are expecting? In part, yes. This mass is different, and I begin to realize it when during the ceremony the Peruvian national anthem is played-- an overt mixture of religion and nationalism with which I am not familiar.

Personally I am shocked to hear the national anthem in a mass, however no one else seems to care. On the contrary people remain quiet until the mass ends. Felipe Zegarra, the former Chair of the Department of Theology in the Universidad Catolica del Peru, told me that El Señor de los Milagros is more important than the flag and the national anthem, at the level of Peruvian national identity because those symbols are “distant” for many people, instead the procession is all about popular participation and everyone see themselves as a protagonist (Interview, Zegarra, 2014).

Then, after the mass, something that disrupts the passivity of the attendants suddenly occurs. The shiny golden figure that is at the end of the street suddenly rises from the ground and starts to move away from us. Some people start to cry, others extend their hands like trying to capture the ambulant golden figure, and some others extend their arms holding photographs of their ill relatives, while others just record the event with their smartphones. Furthermore when this glittering figure starts to move away, also most of the attendants start to chase it. “Where are we going?” I ask. “We are following El Señor,” a woman replies to me. “Where is he going?” I ask again. “He is going to the Government Palace to meet the president,” she responds. Apparently the mass was just the beginning of something more extraordinary.

Determined to meet the Señor de los Milagros, I walk faster than everyone else towards the golden and shiny figure. The closer he is, the harder it is to advance, for the space becomes more crowded and tight with every step I take towards him. Suddenly I encounter a massive rope that limits the proximity between the followers and the image. But I am determined and a rope is not going to stop me, so I pass over it and under the disapproving looks of the people; then a police officer prevents me from going any further. It seems that in addition to the rope, the Señor has an armed security ring provided by the government, so people cannot approach as closely to El Señor as they would like.

Fortunately I was told that this might happen, and for that reason I had previously acquired a special identification badge, provided by La Hermandad del Señor de los Milagros. This ID works like a visa, enabling me to enter and leave the security ring freely. Once the police officer has inspected my documentation I am allowed inside the circle of security. At that moment I notice that the procession is divided into those who are inside the rope, and those who are outside the rope. This division is not evident from a distance, if one takes a photograph from a building it would only show a purple human sea around a golden figure for the rope is not visible from far away [Figure 5].

Inside the ring of security, inside the circle of La Hermandad, I am closer to El Señor's image, and the sensation of the space changes. There is enough room for mobility; people are actually talking while they walk. Hence their attitude is completely different: they are friendlier, more respectful, more relaxed, and appear more confident. An atmosphere of solidarity and camaraderie prevails, and everyone has a role. Everyone inside the rope is assumed to be a "*hermano*"--brother, even if one is a complete stranger, or at least that is how the members of the Brotherhood call me notwithstanding the fact that I am not wearing the characteristic purple robe.

The Anda

In my efforts to reach El Señor, I pass a group of very elegant Hermanos, members of the various *cuadrillas* (corps, sections) that make up the Hermandad (brotherhood)²² who are hugging and congratulating each other. I then encounter the military band of the police, which is playing while they march. In this context the police are not only protecting El Señor, they are offering a tribute to him, as if he were a dignitary. Following the band is a small group of priests, and in front of them there is the golden figure, the *Anda Sagrada*, carried by 32 of the tallest and strongest

²² The Hermandad is formed by twenty *cuadrillas*, each of these has its own history, its own identity according to the most popular characteristics of its members, and also its own nickname such as the Knights, the Police, Emergency, the Millionaires, Cradle of Leaders and so on. Source: <http://xn--seordelosmilagros-gxb.org/>, accessed, 2015-06-21.

members of that *cuadrilla* or section. The Anda resembles a big table²³, a massive structure made of wood, covered entirely with silver and gold that weighs around two tons. This enormous structure has a silver angel standing at each corner, and a canvas in the middle which is surrounded by an impressive framework made of gold and silver in the form of an arch, and on top of it, the coat of arms of the so-called “Ciudad de los Reyes” (City of the Kings), Lima.

As I walk forward in the procession I discover that the image is not of a saint as I had expected, but rather of a woman carrying a baby in her arms, the *Virgen de las Nubes*, or Virgin of the Clouds. She is the image that can be seen by the people who are following the procession. However, later as I pass the Anda, I discover that on the opposite side of the Virgin Mary is another canvas that represents El Señor—a crucified Jesus [Figure 6]. As far as I know, this is the only procession in Peru, where Mary and Jesus appear together in the same shrine.

The distribution of people and the objects during the procession is like an enlarged hierarchical pyramid of political power in Lima. One might notice that this ambulant pyramid has at the highest point, on top of the image of El Señor de los Milagros and on top of God, the coat of arms of the capital of Peru. Thus even if the representatives of the State are sometimes invisible during the whole procession, the symbol that identifies its power is always there, on top of the Catholic façade and on top of those who are always at the bottom, bearing the whole structure. One may say that the procession of El Señor de los Milagros is a representation, a play where the citizens raise a Catholic symbol, while the Catholic symbol is holding the power of the State.



Figure 6. The Anda

From the rear to front, until a certain point in the procession, the people close to the Señor are mostly men;

²³ The Anda reminds me of the 16th century drawings of Guaman Poma de Ayala (figure2), in which he represents the major dignitaries of Peru, such as the Sapa Inca (“Great Inca”), or the viceroy, carried in litters on the shoulders of “*yanaconas*” (Quechua word for retainers). These *yanaconas* were non-Inca people in the Andes that were taken away from their homelands and *ayllus* (Andean extended family groups) to work for the noble families. After the Spanish colonization some of these *Yanaconas* ended up working for the conquistadores as *criados*, which apparently led to a later association of the word “*yana*” with “*negro*” or slave, for these two populations ended up working in the service of the new elites of the viceroyalty (Revel, Wachtel, & Murra, 1986: 271).

however, after the Anda, there is a group of approximately fifty to seventy women, called “*sahumadoras*”. The *sahumadoras* are a group of mostly middle-aged (or older) women carrying silver cups with burning incense inside them, which emanate an aromatic odor. These women, like the canvas of the Virgen de las Nubes in the back of El Señor de los Milagros, are advancing backwards; they do not see the path ahead but the path that they have already walked. In front of the *sahumadoras* (or rather behind) there is another group of similar women, except that these women do not carry incense. This group, the *cantoras*, like the Angelus Novus in the Hebrew tradition, have the role of singing endless *cantos* (religious mourning hymns) to God. As the procession advances, I hear:

“Señor de los Milagros, to thee we come in procession
your faithful devotees, to implore your blessing. (bis)
Lighthouse, give guide to our souls
faith, hope and charity,
[let] Your divine love enlighten us,
make us worthy of your kindness” (my translation)

Inside the circle around the Anda, one might say that women are the ones leading the procession, even if they cannot see where they are going. Nor can they see very far from where they come from, since the clouds billowing up from the burning incense and the image of El Señor de los Milagros obstruct the view. However other authors claim that processions in the Spanish American colonies used European models, in which people marched in an increasing order of hierarchy (Beezley, Martin, & French, 1994; Fioravanti, 1999). Thus, in colonial processions like Corpus Christi in Peru, African descendants and indigenous populations used to go in the front wearing and dancing according to their own traditional costumes, to represent both the defeated populations, as in the Roman “*triunfo*”; and the female apocalyptic figure of the “*Tarasque*”, which symbolized the devil (Carrillo, 2002; Beezley, Martin, & French, 1994; Montesinos & Maurtua, 1906; Fioravanti, 1999).

The Loop

The weight and slow movement of the heavy Anda forces the procession to stop every fifteen minutes, approximately every hundred meters, so that the Brothers who are carrying it can be replaced by the next *cuadrilla*- or quadrille. In this way, over two entire days of the procession, all 20 *cuadrillas* that comprise the Brotherhood have the opportunity to carry the Anda at least once. The

Brotherhood's ritual process of transferring the Señor and his Anda from one *cuadrilla* to another is always the same.

The first step is to raise the thick rope that demarcates the ring of security in the front of the procession so that the new group of “*cargadores*” (literally, carriers) can enter the circle. Then everyone moves to their positions: the *cantoras* at the front of the procession, followed by the *sahumadoras*, then a group of the senior brothers in hierarchy, followed by the thirty-two brothers of the same size who carry the Anda (who are replaced by the new group of *cargadores*). Behind them is a sort of walking tent or *Palio* with a priest and a couple altar boys, followed by the military band (or sometimes the band of a local school or another lay organization). At the end, the rope is raised again to let the members of the *cuadrilla* that just carried the Anda leave the ritual arena that surrounds the Anda. Finally, all around there is a security ring of brothers and police holding and guarding the rope²⁴.

Crossing Borders

At one particular stop something different from the traditional change of *cuadrillas* takes place. It happens after the church of the Santa Rosa de Lima where another Anda, this one with a female statue who was identified by the person next to me as Santa Rosa, encounters El Señor de los Milagros. When those figures are face to face, the carriers keep on walking but without advancing any further, they gently swing the Andas in the same spot for a few seconds, giving the impression that those images are alive and dancing in the streets while the crowd applauds. It is a short but very emotional moment.

Inside of the security ring around the Holy Anda, all my senses are stimulated to the maximum, the bright colors adorning the buildings and the people, the music of the band, the plaintive singing of the *cantoras*, the heady smell of the incense, the sun, the air, then the rain, for a moment I cannot think about anything. It does not matter how long I have walked, it does not matter where I'm going, it does not even matter where I am in the city. I'm just there. To paraphrase

²⁴ At the beginning of each *cuadrilla's* shift, one brother in front of the Anda lights five large candles in front of each one of the canvases: these candles (*cirios*) are decorated with the number of the *cuadrilla* that is about to carry it. Then this brother hangs the emblems or the coat of arms of that *cuadrilla*, and fixes in place four floral arrangements, one at each corner of the Anda. After he finishes, another brother named “*el capataz*” (foreman) rings a bell, and the new group of thirty-two brothers of the same height (usually the tallest members of the *cuadrilla*), raise the Anda on their shoulders. This is usually a stressful event since, due to the exceptional weight of the Anda, the raising requires careful coordination and concentration on the part of the *cargadores*, and sometimes members of the group suddenly falter. Once the Anda is successfully raised however, and the crowd claps and cheers, a second bell sounds, and all the brothers under El Señor de los Milagros start to walk at a slow pace, for approximately one hundred meters more, where the next *cuadrilla* awaits. When the two *cuadrillas* meet, a third bell sounds and the Brothers place the holy Anda on the ground. At this point the whole procession stops while the brothers of the two *cuadrillas* salute and hug each other. Thus, the thirty-two new carriers situate themselves around the Anda while new *cirios*, new emblems, and new flower arrangements are located to replace the previous ones. When the bell sounds again, the former carriers as well as their flower arrangements, abandon the procession, and the whole process starts over again, to continue in a slow and constant loop throughout the day.

Durkheim, I feel part of something bigger than myself, something even bigger than the sum of the different people and institutions that take part in the procession. And yet, at the same time I feel unwilling, humble and powerless, a similar but potentiated sensation of what baroque cathedrals and monumental buildings are meant to evoke in its visitors (Harth-Terre, E. 1961).

After a couple hours I find myself inside of the security ring comfortably walking from the front to the rear of the procession and back again, until my speed matches the speed of the procession and I become part of this mourning play. Then I feel like a fish in a purple human river following a shiny holy hook. It is at that moment when I realize that by looking and following the shiny Anda, I'm missing whatever is happening outside the circle of comfort, outside the rope, that is to say, whatever is happening with the crowds of people accompanying the procession who are not members of the Brotherhood. Thus I decide to cross the border again, this time away from the security-ring of the golden shiny hook.

Now I'm not in the circle of comfort, but in a chaotic mass of people who behave without any order or any protocol. I find that just standing in one point without advancing demands great physical effort, for I have to fight against the current of the human river that seems to be bringing this image alive. Going in the opposite way is even harder, almost impossible. But if I let myself go, the crowd holds me, and carries me to wherever they are going. I don't have to make any effort.

The people outside the rope seem to want to get as close as they can to El Señor, so many are wearing purple, some in close imitation of the tunics of the Brotherhood. However these members of the crowd rarely talk to each other, with the only exception of brief, random and anonymous displays of power shouting in Spanish: ¡Avancen! (Advance!). Despite the fact that these people seem to be of the same socioeconomic background and share the same devotion towards El Señor, it does not seem to be any sense of community or any kind of cohesion, integration or solidarity. They strike me as a group of strangers wrestling for a space closer to El Señor.

Generally speaking, if there were any kind of organic or mechanical solidarity in Durkheim's terms (Durkheim, 1976), it can only be easily found inside the Brothers' circle, but not here within the crowd. Here by the look in everybody's faces I can tell that they seem to mistrust anyone, people grab tightly their purses and backpacks, and push away anyone in their path that might take or displace their position near El Señor. Outside the rope there is no brotherhood, and everyone is a stranger, a potential thief.

This relationship between El Señor and the sense of insecurity felt within the crowd is something that is often addressed in the multiple publications in Lima's newspapers, which are used

to show the important presence of the police within the procession. For example El Correo in its edition of October 18, 2013 mentions the presence one thousand PNP officers, 200 members of the Serenasgo from the municipality of Lima MML, Special Operations personnel - UNOES, and the support of the Municipal Police and the Canine Unit (Díaz et al., 2013)

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to think that the crowd is controlled by such police bodies, rather there is certain discipline or at least one rule this crowd seem to respect, which is not to cross the rope to break into the security ring. These people know that their place is not inside the security ring. They seem resigned to be outside just holding the rope, and they do not allow others to push too much on it. Thus, it seemed to me that even more than the police and the Brotherhood, these “outsiders” are the ones that prevent others from going beyond the limits.

Before noon I walk ahead of the procession, this allows me to see the city and the streets before the arrival of El Señor. There, I find stages that have been built by institutions such as banks or local stores, some of them powerful enough to make El Señor lean forward or to stop his march for some seconds, like the one made by the Ministry of Economy and Finances. These stages are located at points or “*paradas*” where El Señor must pass. On top of this stages, there are large soundspeakers for some of these *paradas* have live bands singing religious lyrics with rhythms of Peruvian cumbia music, also known as “chicha” (a mix between Andean traditional music and tropical melodies, loaded with electronic keyboard sounds). Generally, as the procession approaches the stages, the music stops and enthusiastic masters of ceremony take over to salute the Señor to ask him for blessings, but also to make public propaganda for the sponsoring institutions of that particular stop.

In short, this chapter describes the procession of El Señor de los Milagros, which has several baroque characteristics because every detail that can be perceived by the senses is exaggerated to produce a sort of personal disengagement, and also a connection with “something” bigger and beyond the mere corporal experience. This is a ritual that does not intend to affect only one specific individual, or groups of pilgrims: it is a “controlled” break of continuity, a well-ordered and programed ‘crisis’ (in Turner’s sense) wherein civil, religious and political spheres blend in a civic cult (Sallnow, 1987), transforming the capital city and intensifying people’s attachment to religion in the whole country. Thus, the procession can also be described as a play, which employs the streets as a public theatrical space, to focus the attention of the attendants in the Brotherhood and in the Anda as specific scenery, which presents a performance of solidarity where everyone has a role and works for a communal goal.

Chapter 3: A Political Healer

[P]ower served pomp, not pomp power. (Geertz, 1980)

This chapter describes the political staging of the procession in places like The Presidential Palace, the City Hall, the Archbishop Palace and the Congress, among others. In these sceneries El Señor reveals his political side by uncovering the strings and the machinery of control that were previously hidden behind the curtains of this play.

Who is the boss?

A couple blocks from the core of the procession is Lima's "Plaza de Armas" where the Presidential Palace is located as well as City Hall and the Archbishop's Palace. I decide to go there ahead of the procession because I anticipate that the place is going to be overcrowded. Waiting for the procession, I realize that a photograph of the scene from the air would behold thousands of people frozen in time around the Señor de los Milagros. Most of the people however, are not following the procession. Instead they appear to be waiting and meeting at certain points in the Señor's path, and after his image passes by, most of the crowd also departs. Nevertheless, when I arrive in front of the Presidential Palace I see that there are not as many people as I had expected [Figure 7].



Figure 7. Presidential Palace

This is fortunate because I am able to take a look at how the Presidential Palace is generously decorated with white and purple balloons and curtains, similarly as at the Plaza Mayor, the gardens of which are dressed with purple flowers and the streets with flowered carpets. I also have time to talk to one of the President's security guards. When I ask him who was in charge of the procession and the logistics for this encounter, he tells me that the Brotherhood, as a civil organization, is in power and command of El Señor de los Milagros and therefore, of the procession. This is a popular perception that situates the procession of El Señor de los Milagros as being entirely dependent on the Brotherhood as an autonomous lay organization. Thus, somehow El Señor is believed to belong to the people without the intermediation of any governmental or religious institution.

Manuel Orrillo, the “Mayordomo General” of the Brotherhood, told me that deciding the path and times for the procession is a complex process that takes almost one year since the Brotherhood has to evaluate invitations from local mayors and companies who have asked to be included by giving donations and facilitating the space for the stop of the Señor’s image²⁵. Ego García, the Sacristan Mayor of the Nazarenas church and Patron de Andas of El Señor de los Milagros, also spoke on this theme, situating the Brotherhood in a different role:

The Brotherhood proposes the route, the convent revises it, and the Cardinal approves it. ... The procession depends on the Archbishop, and the army of the archbishop is the Brotherhood. The Madres Nazarenas are the custodians and owners of the Andas of the Señor, then the archbishop asks for the Andas to carry them in procession. And because the Mothers cannot leave the convent, the Patron de Andas represents them and assumes the status of something like the custodian and the guardian of the Andas of El Señor... and the Brotherhood, they only carry it. (Interview, García E, 2014)

The power of the archbishop and the real role of the Brotherhood is also clear in an episode that García, Mother Superior Soledad García, and academic theologian Felipe Zegarra, mentioned, about to the existence of a mechanical vehicle that was used to carry the Señor in processions, and to bring El Señor to other localities outside the historic center of Lima, like Miraflores and Callao. They seemed to remember this occasion with melancholy since this vehicle could not be used again because of a decision by the current Archbishop of Lima, Juan Luis Cipriani. Cipriani is a member of the renowned conservative Church institution (or prelature) known as “Opus Dei”, which considers that whoever wants to be part of the Nazareno miracle should encounter the Señor in its customaries and traditional spaces (Interview, García E, 2014). Manuel Orrillo, confirmed this information in an interview, after mentioning that he had been recently named by the archbishop as Mayordomo General of the Hermandad (Interview, Orrillo, 2014), which proves the subordination of the Brotherhood to the Church’s hierarch. Hence La Hermandad might be in charge of the procession as is perceived by the common people, but they are far from being in power or command because is the hierarchy of the Church, who has fashioned and maintained the procession over time.

²⁵ Interview Manuel Orrillo, July 2014, Lima, Peru

The Presidential Stage

It takes forty-five minutes for the procession to advance just three blocks, which gives enough time to set the whole location for the encounter between El Señor de los Milagros and the most important public figures in Lima. In the meantime, the military presidential band practices, journalists seek out for the best spots, and people gradually arrive and wait in anticipation of the encounter—a key meeting of religious and secular powers— while police shoo away peddlers.

At the Plaza de Armas the blending of lay, religious and political spheres becomes evident. Until this moment, the presence of the State in the procession has been extremely discreet. Less than fifty meters before the Presidential Palace the procession stops, and the presidential military band begins to play a loud military march. Then Peruvian President Ollanta Humala, and El Señor de los Milagros start to walk toward each other. This synchronization seems to be important, however it is not customary since a member of the brotherhood explained me that all presidents before Humala used to leave the Presidential Palace to go out to the street to await the arrival of the Señor.

The year previous however, it was the Señor who had had to wait 15 minutes for Humala to show up—which caused quite a media stir. Many of those in attendance took Humala's negligence as a personal insult, which seriously affected his popularity.²⁶ So this year, the President and the Señor coincide, so no one has to wait.

After the President's floral arrangements offering are placed, Humala approaches El Señor without making any formal declaration. Instead, he prays in silence for a while, and later joins the *cargadores* supporting the Anda for a few seconds. At this moment, when the President is at same height as all the people in the Plaza, the roles in Lima's social structure are reversed. One might say that the President becomes a servant of the Señor. This act empowers the crowd and figuratively places them over the President for people, at least inside the security ring of El Señor, start to judge his political record as head of State, his private life, his relationship with his wife and his "*hombria*" (manhood) for not filling the expectations of the crowd—all of which is done in his presence. I can only imagine what people in the crowd are murmuring, however I can hear the gossips among some members of the brotherhood saying "...he only does what Nadine [the First lady] commands him to

²⁶ "...[T]his time the president was much more devout because unlike last year when he was criticized for not being very aware of what was the procession about, this year he showed a more suitable dress for the occasion, wearing purple and loading the Anda..." the newspaper also stresses that although this appearance was only for a minute, despite the context in which there is a clear rejection of the President he had a "brief bath popularity" *Ojo*, October 19th 2013.

"... Ollanta Humala, President of Peru appears... Among the people a lady about 45 years is shouting 'fuera (out) Ollanta!', also some Brothers are saying: 'Humala is an atheist.' Others comment 'The president has disrespected the Lord, that is why he is doing badly'" Sergio Tirado's *Ethnography*, June 18th 2012; part of the project, 'Roman Catholic Church mediation, mediatization, and religious subjects in contemporary Latin America'.

do ... she is not here today so he can pretend to be the president”. Nevertheless, despite the criticisms, after the President carried the Anda for a few seconds, people began to cheer. Blessed by the applause of the people the President returns to his Palace as renewed political leader, leaving all his critics behind.

The Señor then moves on to City Hall to meet the Mayor who is already anticipating his arrival. The encounter with the Mayor of Lima, Susana Villarán, is even shorter than that with the President. Nevertheless she makes a short speech asking for courage, wisdom and transparency to govern the city, and then thanks El Señor for all his blessings. She then crosses herself and returns to City Hall while the crowd applauds and the Anda moves on to the Archbishop’s Palace at the opposite side of the Plaza.

I wonder why democratically elected leaders in a secular country must pay tribute to a Catholic image in a public act. I also wonder if there is another official participation of the State associated with the Señor de los Milagros, besides this evident appearance. Explaining the presence of the State during the procession, Ego Garcia, recognized the financial support for the celebration that came from some of the most influential families in Lima, but he was sceptical about any role that the government might play in sponsoring the procession.

Is it possible that the procession takes place without any financial support from the State? In order to find an official source to explain the participation of the government, in July 2014, I went to the Peruvian Ministry of Culture, which was the only governmental institution that agreed to talk about any direct involvement in the procession. In the Ministry of Culture an anthropologist, who asked me to do not reveal her name in this investigation, told me that the procession had been declared “*Patrimonio Inmaterial de la Nación*” (non-material patrimony of the nation) accordingly with the “*Resolucion Directoral Nacional*” # 1454 since October 27th 2005²⁷.

This representative of the Ministry also said that in order to gain such recognition, the person or group in charge of the procession must have submitted an application supported by a file to the Ministry of Culture containing a study with the essential characteristics of the procession, justifying

²⁷ This resolution states: “For more than three hundred years [El Sr de los Milagros] has been developed as a cult that brings different elements that are expressions of faith and popular religion. The cult of ‘El Señor de los Milagros’ has created a holiday that is centered in his procession; this religious act is now almost a pilgrimage and one of the most important religious manifestations in Latin America and of its kind, one of the most important expressions of the multitudes in the world. ... Around the Catholic religious celebration, a festival is expressed in the music of clear black and mestizo-creole roots, in the consumption of typical delicacies and other specialties, such as hunting and imagery, which are added to the manifestation of religious mysticism. Equally, as other fairs and festivals that link religion and the popular, bullfights on the ‘Festivity of El Señor de los Milagros’ or ‘October Festival’ has been part of the tradition. ... For these features, the Celebration of El Señor de los Milagros, through a lengthy process, expresses the integration of diverse cultural traditions (Afro-Peruvian Andean, and Hispanic-Creole), around the veneration of the image of ‘El Cristo Morado’ and around the festival that has become part of the traditional identity of the country. It is a cultural manifestation of religiosity and celebration that has very important meanings in the minds and lives of large sections of the population within the city, mainly popular and creole Limeños; so it is part of our cultural heritage and as such must be stated. ...” (My translation)

the importance, value, meaning and impact of the celebration. This study had to be evaluated by a group of two anthropologists in the Ministry, then the result would have been sent to the head of the direction of Cultural Patrimony to be sanctioned as a law.

However, when I asked to have access to this file, which I was not granted, nobody in the Ministry could answer the question of who had placed the original claim because they could not find the keys of the office where this file is kept. When I asked the Mayordomo General and Mother superior about this recognition as *Patrimonio Inmaterial de la Nacion*, they told me that they never asked for it and that the government had done it on its own account, which made me wonder about the secrecy of the government in this matter.

Profane Associations

The very last thing that happened in Plaza de Armas on the day of the procession, was that El Señor de los Milagros reached the Archbishop's Palace. Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani, the man who'd denied El Señor a car, blesses the Anda and asks El Señor to bless all Peruvians, especially the ill. The Archbishop asks the Señor to enlighten the rulers of the State, and declares: "This popular devotion is the identity of the Peruvian people. Peru is El Señor de los Milagros, a holy pride that we all must take care of."

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Peru – INEI²⁸, Lima holds more than 30% of the total Peruvian population, which ethnically recognize themselves as Andean, Amazon, Afro-Peruvians, European, Asiatic, among others. According to the latest Peruvian census, 90% Peruvians consider themselves Christians, from which more than 80% are Catholics. Thus, this "popular devotion" that Cipriani mention in his speech not only alludes to this religious identity shared by the diverse ethnic, political, and economic groups living in Lima; but also might place these populations in a single electoral target because beliefs are attached to behaviors, and hence religious convictions must be to political actions (Geertz, 2001).

If the procession makes it possible for politicians to be in public contact with the religious spheres at all times, it also can turn El Señor de los Milagros into a political tool. Hence, the procession that Sanchez (2002) claims turned dangerous populations into devotees, and that might represent the power of the State over the Church, can also be an instrument with the power to turn devotees into voters in contemporary Peruvian society, by giving the illusion of religious solidarity and cohesion within the crowds to legitimate the power of the executive.

²⁸ Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática INEI, <https://www.inei.gob.pe>, consulted January 2015

Catholic priest and also former Chair of the Department of Theology of the Universidad Católica del Peru, Felipe Zegarra, told me an anecdote in an interview on June 2014 about the presidential elections of 1990 in Peru. Mario Vargas Llosa a nobel prize winning Peruvian author was running against “an unknown Japanese”. In the first round of the presidential elections, the Japanese was second, and Vargas Llosa was giving his speech in one of the most important hotels of Lima. Suddenly Fujimori (the then unknown Japanese) entered, and Vargas Llosa figuratively “fell to the ground” overwhelmed by his opponent's charisma, so Fujimori took over the polls.

Because Fujimori was leading in the polls, Vargas Llosa planned to retire, but the Archbishop Cardinal then in power went to visit him. The name of the Archbishop was Vargas Alzamora, also know by the people as the ‘Cabezon’ (big head). Zegarra said that when Alzamora saw photographers in Vargas Llosa’s home, he “sank” into the seat of his car. Since then people called him the “Agachadito” (timid).

After this meeting, the Archbishop brought out the procession of El Señor de los Milagros in the month of May, that is, between the first and second round of presidential elections. And yet Fujimori won; Zegarra finished this anecdote by saying “Not even the procession could help him ...” (My translation, Interview, Zegarra Felipe, 2014).

It was unclear from the context which man and which failing Zegarra was referring to here. Was he just talking about the elections that Vargas Alzamora and Vargas Llosa lost, or was he also talking about the death of the Archbishop, who was found dead in September 2000, after assuming a strong political opposition during Fujimori’s government²⁹.

Vargas Llosa might have lost the presidential elections for several reasons including the desolated panorama caused by the Peruvian hyperinflation during the 80s, the public order, and Fujimori’s radical positions and charisma, which rewarded him with a strong support from the popular classes. Nonetheless it is interesting that an off-season procession and the Image of El Señor were used unsuccessfully by the Church to support an agnostic candidate against an Evangelical rival. At this point, one might think that popular classes identified themselves more with their economic needs than with their faith. To explain why the procession of El Señor de los Milagros did not help the Archbishop to succeed in his political intervention, it is necessary to

²⁹ La Republica, April 10 2014, “Cipriani atestiguará sobre muerte de Vargas Alzamora”, *La Republica*, <http://archivo.larepublica.pe/10-04-2004/cipriani-atestiguara-sobre-muerte-de-vargas-alzamora> consulted January 2015

La Republica, May 23rd 2013 “Montesinos Mandaba Matar” *La Republica*, <http://archivo.larepublica.pe/23-05-2005/montesinos-mandaba-matar> consulted January 2015.

understand that during this early procession, the Archbishop aim was to associate the religious image's popular recognition with Vargas Llosa, to challenge Fujimori's charisma.

However, the religious devotees did not follow the candidate of the Church into the voting polls because the popular recognition of Vargas Llosa was not substantially affected by the procession. Instead the voters picked somebody who presented himself as “the candidate of the poor” and who stood publicly for neoliberal reforms. The defeat of Vargas Llosa might also be explained by the fact that in order to blend two or more different bodies, entities, images or institutions into a single idea, it is necessary that these entities represent the same concept, just as the mural, the canvas and the replicas; or the ancestors, the mummies, the huacas and the landscape -- as it has been noted in chapter one- because nothing exist in isolation, rather things gain meaning in relationship with other things regardless if they exist in different domains.

Vargas Llosa and El Señor de los Milagros are two different entities, which in this case were not successfully aligned. Vargas Llosa represented the FREDEMO, a political party commonly associated with the “white” and wealthy³⁰ population, and El Señor with the “dark-skinned” and impoverished people. Thus the voters did not look at El Señor and think about Vargas Llosa or vice versa because these two names encompass different meanings, nor they have a direct relationship, for this was always mediated by a third party—the Archbishop.

In Felipe Zegarra's account, there is a silent transformation that takes place when the Archbishop of Lima tried to pass unnoticed in the reunion with Vargas Llosa. The archbishop received a new nickname, “Agachadito”, which as colourful as it might seem; in Gilmore's words a nickname is “a verbal representation of a collective identity” (Gilmore, 1982). Correspondingly, this nickname might not tell anything about the past, the identity or the substance of the Archbishop, for it is not entirely a name, but is a designation given by the community to associate him with a particular attitude or a role in that particular moment. Nicknames are meant to situate people closer to, or move them away from a community. They are generally assigned in comparison with ideal images beneath or above the “normal” standard of what is expected from a person.

In the case of El Señor de los Milagros, his nicknames “Papa Lindo” or “Mi Viejo”, semantically place individuals closer to the image, but also in a state of subordination when people look for his protection; whereas in this other case with the Archbishop of Lima, the nickname

³⁰ Peru 30, September 30 2010, Debate Presidencial Vargas Llosa – Fujimori - 1990, <https://peru30.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/debate-presidencial-vargas-llosa-fujimori-1990/>, consulted January 2013

“Agachadito” placed him in a subordinate state, in a weak political position, away from the popular ideal of what a leader should be. Thus, the association between an agnostic candidate like Vargas Llosa with a politically weak archbishop had a negative effect. Also, during the elections Vargas Llosa might have lost sympathy with the non-Catholic electorate, which was precisely where he had to compete with Fujimori, instead of trying to gain votes from the devotees of El Señor.

Alan’s Christ

Unlike Vargas Llosa, Alan García, a recognized member of the Brotherhood, was elected president of Peru on two different occasions (1985-1990, 2006-2011) and today (2015) is running again for the presidency of this country. When he was in power, by mixing the history, tradition, space and law of the city with its Catholic background, he positioned his political figure with the image of El Señor in a single representation.

In June 2011, Garcia, gave a personal “gift” to the capital: a twenty-seven meter replica of the world famous Brazilian Cristo de Corcovado that was placed on El Cerro Solar --Lima’s most iconic mountain-, which makes this “gift” visible at different points of the city during the whole day because this replica also glows purple at night. This massive Catholic figure is officially known as “El Cristo del Pacifico”, but is better known as “Alan’s Christ”.

Furthermore, during the October 18th procession in 2010, Garcia officially proclaimed a law that recognized the Señor de los Milagros as patron saint of Peru (specifically, “*Patrono de la Espiritualidad Católica del Perú y símbolo de religiosidad y sentimiento popular*”). The motives for such recognition are perhaps similar to those used in the declaration of El Señor de los Milagros as non-material patrimony of the nation, an affirmation of the saint’s important historical role in Peru and particularly in Lima. Also, the Law situates the Señor de los Milagros as a touristic asset that can generate “employment and local development”, however the resolution does not specify by what means.

It is possible that some people visit Lima with the purpose of praying in the church of the Nazarenas or even with the commitment to attend the procession as I noticed, however, this does not exactly makes the procession a touristic asset. It is also true that the devotion to El Señor attracts street peddlers who are evicted by the police when the procession is about to reach a specific location. But the value of this official recognition in generating employment and local development can be debated, [I couldn’t find any official document that might sustain or contradict such claim]. Likewise the legality of the norm of designating a Catholic image as a symbol of a secular country

with freedom of religion, is also controversial because the State should be neutral by not offering privileges to any particular faith (Sullivan, 2005).

Felipe Zegarra told me that:

... There is no relationship between the Church and State, it ceased to exist in 1979, however, the State pays a salary to the ‘curas de frontera’ border priests and also to the bishops, which is a trifle, except for the amount that Alan García in a hidden resolution grants to the supreme Cardinal Archbishop of Lima [Juan Luis Cipriani who has been in the office since 1999], which is greater than the amount paid to the other bishops ... a salary free of taxes... double of the salary earned by a [State] Minister in those days ... (Interview Zegarra, June 2014)

In a non-confessional State, the existence of an official relationship between the State and Catholic Church might seem illegal. However, accordingly with the 50th article of the Peruvian Constitution, the State can make alliances with any religious organization, as was done in the 1980 international agreement or *concordato* between the Roman Catholic Church and the Peruvian State.

This alliance between the State and the Church’s hierarchy reminds the Papal bulls that gave in the 15th century a “divine” right to the Spanish king to “administer” populations and territories in America, although, in this case it is the local government that is incorporating representatives of the Roman Church into its payroll, which problematizes the assumed transition in Peru from a Catholic to a secular government, and also the division between these powers.

Unhealthy Space

The next important stop after Plaza de Armas is the Plaza de Bolívar, in front of the Palacio Legislativo (Legislative building, where the Peruvian Congress meets). Under normal circumstances, the journey between the Archbishop’s palace and the Plaza Bolívar takes about ten or fifteen minutes. But today this segment of the route takes the procession about five hours to complete. Similarly to the other stops, the Legislative Palace is adorned with purple and white curtains, and a carpet of flowers has been made for El Señor to step on. Plaza de Bolívar is an enclosed space and only few people are allowed to enter with the Anda, among them the cantoras and sahumadoras, and some journalists, while other members of the Brotherhood are left outside.

The President of the Congress as well as many other representatives were already waiting for El Señor. As soon as the Anda is placed on the ground before the main door, the congressmen move toward the image to pray while the floral arrangements and the *cirios* [large candles] are

changed. But something particular takes place in the Congress. Some children—who I assume belong to the families of the congressmen—are raised in front of the *cirios* and the canvas by members of the Brotherhood in order to present them to El Señor and ask him for his blessing.

After the Congress, the procession heads to Barrios Altos, the oldest and one of the poorest neighbourhoods of the city. The narrowness of the streets makes it more difficult to walk outside of the ring of security.

It is pretty amazing to see the streets so full, something to see for sure, even if one is not interested so much in El Señor himself. This is a spectacular public celebration, so attendants do not have to be Catholics to feel the collective effervescent sensation (in Durkheim's terms) where the massive participation and the pleas of the people transforms the streets of Lima in a sort of sacred stage, in which El Señor becomes a symbolic representation of both the place and the group.

Felipe Zegarra, who has been a priest for almost 40 years in Callao, a province contiguous to Lima, helped me understand the anxieties and the pleas of the devotees in a conversation we had several months after the event. Zegarra states that in his parish he saw people that addressed the images communicating their own miseries and to recount their lives "*en colores*", in detail. He related: "Despite my deafness I could hear that they spoke with a unique familiarity to the images, which has little to do with the ecclesial practice, but there is true faith in the image and to what the image represents, which is the same with the Señor de los Milagros, no doubt about it". Felipe Zegarra continues: "I don't think they are asking for a miracle... I do not remember in detail but they ask for their families, and to resolve the economic situation, they are trying to communicate something... they are asking for help and strength to face these situations" (Interview, Zegarra, June 2014).

In his testimony Padre Zegarra suggests another reason for the devotees to attend the procession that is not completely religious, but rather therapeutic, which is achieved when the devotees communicate personal problems directly to the image. This direct relationship between devotees and higher powers, not only builds a personal and subordinated relationship with El Señor for people might feel released from their everyday anxieties when they demand the protection of El Señor; but also in a way like in the pilgrimage, defies the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, by not using the mediation of a priest. Finally, to Padre Zegarra, Catholic images rather than radiating divine powers, they communicate the inner anxieties of the devotees, which is something immanent and mundane that also transcends to economic matters.

Ego Garcia also tells me that devotees come to the procession "for the miracles that they asked for, which were mostly about health— to cure diseases, but also to solve marital matters, for

the return of lost sons, to get a job ... several things. People come to say: “Señor we have accomplished it, the Señor granted me a miracle and here I am to fulfill my promise (*“cumplirle”*). The human sea where people are pushed and bruised, they are there to say: ‘thank you Señor for the miracle’” (Interview, Garcia E, June 2014).

When I ask Ego Garcia about the anxieties and the main problems that afflict the devotees of El Señor de los Milagros, he answers:

“I think that like in other parts of the world, ‘health’, I would say. But anything can be asked for, ... And to that extent, if we have enough faith to believe that we will be granted what we are asking for, to that extent we will get it. Social problems, always the devotee asks for something for himself, because of his needs, and I imagine that in any part of the world it is the same...” (Interview, Garcia E, June 2014)

In keeping with Ego Garcia’s recount, these people are not only here to ask but to pay, which means that they are in debt with El Señor because he granted them the miracle not only to heal the ill among them, but also to keep them healthy to work and provide for their families. Ego Garcia, who is also a physician and Chair of a Social Security hospital in Lima, continues: “the health system in Peru needs a miracle, a great miracle, but it depends on the people, the people who run the health system who care more about politics than about people’s health...” (Ibid)

In Peru the health system is divided between those who can afford “private” insurance and the “formal” workers (those with social security) who are under the public system. Felipe Zegarra stated that the Peruvian health system is “*malazo*” (very bad), he also affirmed that he would never go to the worker’s hospitals because despite the fact that many were built under recent governments, those institutions do not have appropriate staff and hygiene standards. He tells me that physicians are not well paid under the public system; hence the few health professionals in the country prefer to work for private institutions. This division between the private and the public, turned health from a human right into a business that not only neglects those who cannot pay for private insurance for proper treatments, but also excludes those “informal”³¹ workers who rarely have any medical insurance, which, according to the last census, is about 70% of the population³².

As it was remarked by the Limeños interviewed for this investigation, and according to the twitter’s hashtag #cuentanostumilagro, one of the most recurrent miracles asked by the devotees is access to health, which seems to be the principal source of anxiety for the devotees of El Señor.

³¹La Prensa, August 28 2013, “El 68,6% de trabajadores en el Perú son informales”, *La Prensa*.Pe, retrieved from <http://laprensa.peru.com/economia/noticia-peru-686-trabajadores-son-informales-segun-oit-11874>

³² Source: INEI - Censos Nacionales 2007: XI de Población y VI de Vivienda, consulted January 2015

This is not a new phenomenon since the relationship between El Señor and the sick has been naturalized within the official history of the city, and in different newspaper articles published every year (Díaz et al., 2013). These discuss the miracles that the image has granted, positioning El Señor as a thaumaturgic healer for the poor, and a saint who cures in exchange for the devotion.

This devotion seems to be growing every year, even still today when Peru has turned into a modern Latin American neoliberal State. One reason for such growth might be related to the fact that the government turned life itself into another commodity, granting quality health access to only those who can pay for it. Thus, in a city where seventy per cent of the population is made up of informal workers, most of them without any kind of insurance or social security, every year, in an emotive act of hope and devotion, thousands of people take over the streets and the Plaza de Armas where many implore the Señor for health, and for the grace and impulse to keep on working without social security the very next day.

Thus illness doesn't seem to be the most recurrent problem for the devotees but the economic model that deliberately ignores the historical social economic differences of the population, by denying proper treatments and health access for those who cannot afford it. This, however, highlights an interesting relationship between scientific and religious discourses, where the former is subordinated to the latter thanks to the negligence of the State to meet the needs of the population and to guarantee health access, which is irrefutably connected with life as a human right.

Nevertheless, this relationship between health, life and death and their contemporary meanings in Latin America, needs to be problematized and researched. In Europe and North America, life and death are opposed concepts for life is advertised like a biological state that people have the power to manage through science and politics. Death, on the other hand, is a negation of life, a domain far away from the daily life of citizens to which death should only be a matter of anxiety for the old and the sick, a punishment for the criminals, a misfortune for the poor people in the third world, and a morbid curiosity on the other side of the TV screen and inside the newspapers. But here in Latin America death does not seem to work only for the State, nor can it be controlled by science or wealth. It is rather a freelancer that works for whomever might hire it for the day. Death is an informal worker, a peddler that offers its services walking freely everywhere. Here, if someone dies of old age it is considered lucky, because the healthy and the sick, the wealthy and the impoverished, the criminals and the saints, all of them may die at any minute and in any place. In Latin America, death is a daily matter, a real possibility with which people have learned to live, however death it is not necessary the end of existence.

Despite the economic inequalities, in the Andes –and specifically in Peru– life and death used to be complementary ideas that encompassed a sacred power. As it has been shown in chapter one, life-death were and might remain being relational processes that have to do more with communication than with a biological state, and because language is not exclusively human, mummies, statues, rocks, rivers, mountains, murals or canvases can come to live when they reveal themselves to people. Thus, life and death seem to be nonexclusive stages where people have the potentiality to communicate and remain active within a transcendental network. This has little to do with traditional Catholicism or with an eschatological existence, and more with personal and local history, which might explain why devotees seem to count more with El Señor than with the State itself to protect and to guarantee their life.

Conclusion: Mirrors of Abandoned **Paths**

The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he, who in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness, for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children. And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who would attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee.
(Ezekiel 25:17 in Fiction, P 1994)

To conclude this thesis, is my intention to provide a general description of Barrios Altos, the final location of the processional route of October 18th 2013. With that purpose, rather to focus in the ceremony, this last part of the thesis describes different relationships that exist outside the procession, aiming to show this reality that is hidden by the conspicuous pomposity of the procession as it march through one of the most emblematic, but also depressed neighbourhoods of Lima. Also, I want to highlight the principal migration waves that the city has suffered, which reflects the situation of millions of people that have been deterritorialized by economic reasons or by force. Many of these people have made of Barrios Altos their new home but also their territory, which sometimes challenges the authority of the State in the very hearth of the capital city, for even the police force have problems to ambulate across the spaces that this day were welcoming the arrival of El Señor.

It is late, after 6:30 pm the lights surrounding the Señor's image on the Anda are turned on so that he appears to glow in the dark. The next stop after the Legislative Palace is of the Union of Peruvian Workers (CGTP). It can be my old high school Marxist prejudices, but this surprises me for I was not expecting to find the presence of a union in a religious celebration, at least not supporting it. The apparent fervent devotion of the parade spokesman for the CGTP was also striking. In his emotional discourse I heard many of the same words as in the speeches of Archbishop Cipriani and Mayor Villaran. This spokesman from the largest labour union in Peru, as the Mayor and archbishop before him, thanked El Señor for his blessings, and asked him for wisdom and strength for the rulers and for patience and understanding for the people of Peru, it was like they all were repeating the same lines of the same script.

It is almost 8:00 pm and I walk far from the procession and its security ring, trying to reach the point where the parade must end, where the Señor will spend the night and rest. In so doing I find myself in the heart of Barrios Altos, the part of Lima that no one is familiar with aside from its own residents. There is no music, no guards, no gold, and no glittering Señor or colored Christ that glows in the dark. I ask a lonely officer who was directing the traffic for directions to go to the last stop of the procession, but instead, he stops the first *micro* (bus – though in point of fact, a van) that he sees, and gives me a word of advice, “You don’t want to go there by yourself...you shouldn’t be here...you better leave now.” I do not hesitate. I get on the van and leave.

Despite the reckless way people drive in Lima, the passengers in this old Chinese van do not seem to be worried, I am worried, mostly about the carbon dioxide coming from the engine of the van into the interior. And I am hypnotized by the noise made by the vibrating windows and other parts of the *micro*, which, combined with the non-stop honking of other cars on the streets, produce an absorbing symphony. Nothing seems to be holding this *micro* together except for the will and collective hope of the people that are on it.

My vibrating window offers me a good panoramic view of the city. It is interesting how the landscape changes as the *micro* swings through the streets of Lima. Little by little, the chaotic reality of Barrios Altos vanishes in the review mirror as the old republican houses start to disappear, while slowly, the stylish and touristic Miraflores begins to show its modern and disturbing beauty. It is on this *micro* that I realize where I was and understood why the police officer had sent me home. I realized that without the procession I was out of place, I had crossed the invisible walls of Lima (Gandolfo, 2009); I was in a place where besides the legend of the Devil’s rock, told at the beginning of these thesis, people live with other stories from a more recent past, which indicate the political tension in this part of the city.

Most of the people that were living during those days in Barrios Altos came from the sierra – Peru’s highland – in the demographic explosion of the 1940s and the 1960s (Verdera & del Perú, 1985), when mostly indigenous populations seeking stability and better economic opportunities moved to the city to live with relatives or referred people from their hometowns. These new populations located themselves in “*tugurios*” (tenements) (Gandolfo, 2009), which are old Republican houses already in ruins at midcentury where different families inhabit in each room sharing common spaces with other families, like the kitchen or the bathroom.

Twenty-two years before I stumbled upon the police officer, on the night of November 3rd, 1991, a startling event occurred, one that gives a good sense of the place. Just before midnight, six

armed and masked men entered into one of these houses where a *pollada* (party) was being held. The men ordered the revelers to lie on the floor and proceeded to fire at them for over two minutes. Fifteen people were killed (including an eight year-old child), and four others were seriously injured³³.

Fujimori's government, which was then in power, claimed that the actions were a mistake, not because it was an extrajudicial execution, but because the military that committed the crime went to attack members of a communist party known as Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) that was reunited on the second floor of the same house (ibid).

Sendero Luminoso was the Peruvian Maoist-Leninist armed response to the social inequalities in Peru. At the beginning, in the 1970s, Sendero Luminoso, had strong support from students, peasants and rural populations, especially in the central sierra, however it lost most of this popular support during a brutal war with the national government during the 1980s and the 1990s. Both sets of actors, the government and the revolutionary movement cornered the rural population, which were obliged to abandon their territories in order to protect their lives. This led large numbers of displaced populations to seek haven in the capital city, thereby increasing the numbers in the already depressed working-class districts of Lima such as Barrios Altos (Isbell, 1985, 1992; Farmer, 1996; Kay, 1999; Poole & Renique, 1991).

The violence of the conflict in addition to the "neoliberal" opening of the Peruvian economy during Garcia's government (1985-1990) that was reflected in an alarming hyperinflation, and the worsening of the internal conflict during Fujimori's presidency; led to an enormous emigration of Peruvians who sought stability and better opportunities beyond the borders of Peru. (Pastor & Wise, 1992; Huallpa, 2009).

Like this, today in North America, Europe, Australia, South America and Japan Peruvian migrants not only have formed local Brotherhoods (Berg & Tamagno, 2006) that have El Señor as their *santo patrono*, but also replicate the Señor's ritual procession in their adopted cities with the support of local Catholic churches and local governments like in Madrid, Barcelona, Milan, Genoa, Rome, Milan, Los Angeles, New York, Washington DC, Tokyo, Kyoto and Buenos Aires (Paerregaard, 2008).

This relative recent chapter of Peru is useful to show not only the context and the reality where many devotees of El Señor live, but also to state that religion has always been attached to

³³ Comision de la Verdad y Reconciliacion, <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20VII/Casos%20Ilustrativos-UIE/2.45.%20BARRIOS%20ALTOS.pdf> consulted Mar 15 2015

important contemporary processes in Peru, and also all over the world. Thus religion is not something of the past, rather it something that is always present, which affects and is affected by historical, cultural, economic, or political changes.

What anthropology has to offer is the practical experience to study religion beyond mental structures, institutions, and power relationships, by acknowledging the essential connection with the world that allows the existence beyond the mere human realm. As it has been shown in the case of El Señor, wherever its devotees migrate or are displaced, they carry him along because he is the vessel that contains the beliefs, memories, and connections from the known land, which can help to face the uncertainties and fears of the unknown. The same has been said about many human groups or about many religious images; the Virgen the Guadalupe in Mexico and in the North American Chicano culture provides a great example (Zires, 1994). Nevertheless, El Señor de los Milagros is special because he is not just figuratively but literally carried every year in the streets during public ceremonies, cohering local, global, political, and religious powers in Lima and also all over the world.

Modern urban sceneries like Lima, are supposed to be modern controlled spaces where death and life are separated by keeping the remains of the ancestors away from the world of the living (Saavedra, Gamboa, & Cuadros, 2005; Ramos, 2010); the African and indigenous heritage and dress were supposed to be obliterated and subsumed by the Spaniards indoctrination (Coloma, 2014), and the political and religious spheres in Lima were supposed to be separated after the Bourbon reforms (Buechler, 1810; Cummins, 1996; Osorio, 2008).

But despites all these assumptions, the image of El Señor has been emerging every year for more than three centuries as an ambulant shrine that disrupts the normalized flow and time in the city. Thus, perhaps the nicknames of the Señor de los Milagros—"Mi Viejito" (my old man), "Papá Lindo" (Beautiful Father) etc., denote not just a close connection between the Señor de los Milagros and the city's residents, but also might contain some vestiges of the power of the *camay*, the substance, the *geist*, the soul, and the power deprived its devotees. If so, I propose that El Señor de los Milagros can be seen as an urban Catholic huaca with colonial-Afro-Peruvian origins, who through relational processes and memories connects the personal and the emotional sensations experienced during the procession, bonding citizens with the historical meanings embodied in the capital of Peru, as a specific locality.

Over the month of October, the whole of Lima and the devotees of the Señor de los Milagros dress in the same purple colours, especially during the days of the procession. People attend the ceremony to see the spectacle of El Señor de los Milagros, request miracles, and to pay

their debts when a miracle has been granted, and because he grants so many favors, a purple human river inundates the streets of the most central space in the city every year lending the image vitality. The result is an apparent controlled chaos for the entire traffic system collapses, affecting the road transport between different points in the capital of Peru. This celebration is also an open breakdown and relief of emotions for devotees to communicate their everyday battle to exist in a world ruled by historic and ignored social inequalities.

Hence, the most common miracles demanded by the devotees are not about impossibilities but rather they ask for the things that a sickening economical system denies or takes away from them like health, economic stability, and the family togetherness. Nevertheless, while common people ask for courage to live through another day, the elite, politicians, and the hierarchical Church remain in power in part because they also support the cult. Such participation means that the devotion of El Señor goes beyond the souls of the sick and tormented impoverished populations, for religion escaped the solitude and the private spaces where it was confined after the Enlightenment. In Lima religion is everywhere is part of the collective identity of the people, it is something public insulated neither from politics or economics.

Thus, the cult of El Señor is a communal project built by different populations and powers, which has been controlled by the Catholic Church thanks to the support of the government and the use of the public space. Furthermore, despite the fact that the presence of the State is not always evident during the procession, there are symbols of this power that are permanently on display, like the authority of the police force and the coat of arms of the city that is located at the topmost point of the Anda. The political power also appears explicitly in key moments of the procession such as the playing of the national anthem at the beginning of the Catholic mass, and the appearances of the President of Peru, the Mayor of Lima, and the Senators and judges that punctuate the procession. Like this, with the solemn march of El Señor, different governmental buildings and disciplinary institutions such as the Palacio de Gobierno, the City Hall, the Legislative Palace, the prisons, the hospitals, and Catholic churches are connected as a reminder of a longstanding and tacit alliance between the Catholic Church and the political order of Lima and Peru.

Thus, the rank that the Señor de los Milagros occupies, which is higher than all other saints in the pantheon of prominent Catholic images in Lima, was not achieved in a particular moment or thanks to supernatural powers. Instead, it has been an ongoing process of the administration of people, time and space, in order to place a Catholic image as a symbol that represents the power of

the State over diverse groups and populations, which at the same time naturalizes the colonial heritage of an unequal and racist social order.

However, according to a progressive member of the clergy Felipe Zagarra, the Procession is an act where faith battles with hope, for faith, unlike hope, is not about the things that are desired, it is about finding the confidence to confront a crisis. To overcome the passivity of hope towards the active role of faith, it is necessary to see beyond the elaborate displays of power, like the pomposity of the procession, which gives the impression of a ceremony highly controlled by the same institutions that maintain the status quo of the city³⁴. But under this layer, the procession is also about social weaknesses vulnerabilities, and melancholy, which is what bonds people and foments individual strengths, and El Señor is an ancient symbol of faith for the excluded and impoverished populations.

This is precisely what is hidden under the conspicuous pomposity of this hierarchical mourning play of solidarity, which is part of a colonial spectacle, a drama and ritual designed to hook the attention of the people in a distant glittering shrine that legitimizes power. However it is hard to discern when is the State using the ceremony, or the ceremony using the State, which complicates the determination of who holds the power in the ceremony and in the capital city.

Hence, there is not a single ideological basis behind the Señor the los Milagros celebration, and this is what allows him to become such an important figure within the civil, religious, and political spheres in Peru. El Señor is an instrument to achieve power for the untold future. He is a channel of communication between those who would like to maintain the pretense of being unplugged from one another, but who in fact depend on each other to exist, like the Church and the State, the believers and the skeptics, the master and the enslaved, the capitalist and the worker, those who rule and those who are controlled, those who live and those who are gone, and thus, the present and the possible pasts.

*By the cold and religious we were taken in hand
shown how to feel good and told to feel bad
tongue tied and terrified we learned how to pray
now our feelings run deep and cold as the clay
and strung out behind us the banners and flags
of our possible pasts lie in tatters and rags
Do you remember me? How we used to be?
do you think we should be closer?
- Roger Waters, 1983*

³⁴ (Turner, 1980)

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