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Andean Female Representation in Peruvian Films from the Internal Armed Conflict

Representación de las mujeres andinas en las películas peruanas sobre el conflicto armado interno

Representação feminina andina nos filmes peruanos do conflito armado interno

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the representation of Andean female characters (indigenous) in Peruvian films set in the Internal Armed Conflict (IAC 1980–1999) and their relationship with male characters from the coast and from the Peruvian Andes. Using the discourse analysis method, the paper shows how this is an uneven power representation, where the female indigenous character is portrayed as the lowest step of the social-economic scale, with no agency or any self-power to free herself from her own situation. This work analyzes *La boca del lobo* (1988), the first Peruvian film set during the IAC, in which Andean women have a secondary role, stripping away from them any possibility of being empowered subjects. This way of portraying the Andean women answers to a patriarchal and racist structure, which not only shows Andean females as powerless, as subaltern subjects, victims of psychological and sexual violence, but also makes invisible the role that they had during the IAC. Women's role mainly consisted in confronting both the abuses performed by the terrorist groups and by the Peruvian armed forces. This powerless portrayal was maintained in other audiovisual Peruvian productions—as analyzed in my ongoing PhD research—and has established a vision of the Andean female as a diminished subject and also contributed to build the Andean people—mainly women—as the “other” in the IAC. To understand how non-indigenous people of Lima have built an image of the

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main victims of the IAC may help rebuild this war-torn nation, since race and gender differences are still problems Peru must resolve.

Key Words

Representation, film, Andean, Perú.

Resumen

Este trabajo se enfoca en la representación de personajes femeninos andinos (indígenas) en películas peruanas ambientadas en el Conflicto Armado Interno (CAI 1980-1999) y su relación con personajes masculinos de la costa y de los Andes peruanos. Usando el análisis del discurso, se muestra que se trata de una representación de poder desigual donde los personajes femeninos indígenas son escenificados en el último lugar de la escala socioeconómica, sin agencia ni poder para liberarse de su propia situación. Este trabajo analiza *La Boca del Lobo* (1988), la primera película peruana ambientada en el CAI, en la cual las mujeres andinas tienen un rol secundario, lo que les quita cualquier posibilidad de ser sujetos empoderados. Esta forma de retratar a las mujeres andinas responde a una estructura patriarcal y racista, que no solo muestra a las mujeres andinas como sujetos subalternos sin poder, víctimas de la violencia psicológica y sexual, sino que también invisibiliza su papel durante el CAI. El rol de la mujer fue principalmente defenderse de los abusos cometidos por los grupos terroristas y por las fuerzas armadas peruanas. Esa imagen se mantuvo en otras producciones audiovisuales peruanas y ha normalizado una visión de la mujer andina como un sujeto limitado, y ha contribuido a representar al pueblo andino, principalmente a las mujeres, como el “otro” del CAI. Comprender cómo los no-indígenas de Lima han construido una imagen de las principales víctimas del CAI puede ayudar a reconstruir esta nación desgarrada por la guerra, ya que las diferencias de raza y género siguen siendo problemas que Perú debe resolver.

Palabras clave

Representación, película, Andina, Perú.

Resumo

Este trabalho focaliza-se na representação de personagens femininos andinos (indígenas) em filmes peruanos ambientados no Conflito Armado Interno (CAI 1980-1999) e sua relação com personagens masculinas da costa e de Andes peruanos. Usando o análise do discurso, mostra-se que se trata de uma representação de poder desigual, onde os personagens femininas indígenas são apresentadas como o último passo da escala socioeconómica, sem agência nem poder algum para se libertar de sua própria situação. Este trabalho analisa *A Boca do Lobo* (1988) (*La Boca del Lobo*), o primeiro filme peruano ambientado no CAI, na qual as mulheres andinas têm um papel secundário, o



que tira delas qualquer possibilidade de ser sujeitos empoderados. Esta forma de retratar às mulheres andinas responde a uma estrutura patriarcal e racista, que não só mostra às mulheres andinas como sujeitos subalternos sem poder, vítimas da violência psicológica e sexual, senão que também invisibiliza seu papel durante o CAI. O papel da mulher foi principalmente em se-defender dos abusos cometidos pelos grupos terroristas e pelas forças armadas peruanas. Esta imagem manteve-se no outras produções audiovisuais peruanas e tem normalizado uma visão da mulher andina como um sujeito limitado, e tem contribuiu a representar o povo andino, principalmente mulheres, como o “outro” do CAI. Compreender cómo os não-indígenas de Lima construíram uma imagem das principais vítimas do CAI pode ajudar a reconstruir esta nação rasgada pela guerra, já que as diferenças de raça e gênero continuam sendo problemas que Perú deve resolver.

Palavras-chave

Representação, filme, Andina, Perú.

Background: The Internal Armed Conflict (IAC)

On May 18, 1980, Peru held its first democratic presidential elections after twelve years of military government. The day before, a group of armed men burned all the electoral material in Chuschi, a small town in the Andean Department of Ayacucho, a felony that prevented people from voting. These men were part of Sendero Luminoso (“Shining Path”), a terrorist organization that established this action as the start of the popular war against the Peruvian State, a war that lasted 20 years and left over 69,000 victims (Comisión de la verdad y la reconciliación, 2004, p.17). The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR, for its acronym in Spanish) established that the IAC lasted from 1980 until 2000, and it involved Sendero Luminoso and Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA, another terrorist group that started in 1984), against the Peruvian Security Forces (Police, Army, Navy and Air Force). The vast majority of victims of the IAC were poor indigenous people from the Andean part of the country. Almost 79% of the victims lived in Andean cities and communities of Peru, 75% of the victims spoke Quechua, (language mainly spoken by indigenous people) and around 38% of the victims came from the fifth lowest income group (Comisión de la verdad y la reconciliación, 2004, pp. 20–24). Specifically, female victims accounted for 20% of all deaths, meaning that most of the killings targeted the male population. Nevertheless, the Andean female population suffered sexual violence and the psychological distress of having their spouses and sons killed, sometimes while they were forced to witness the murders. Although the end of the IAC led to peace in the country, this wasn’t enough to wipe away the main problems that caused it, nor comforted the main victims.



Representation and Racism

To represent is to show something in the place of something else. Language is one of the main forms of representation, since words account for things, concepts, feelings and ideas that are not present, enabling others to understand the meaning of those words (Hall, 2003; Rezende, 2013). There are three perspectives about how representation occurs through language. In a “reflective” perspective, language reflects the meaning that exists in the world; in an “intentional” perspective, language expresses the meaning of who uses it; and in a “constructionist” perspective, meaning is constructed through language (Hall, 2003, p. 15). In this paper, we work under the third perspective, understanding representation as a way to build meaning through language and other forms of representation, such as films.

As Jodelet (2008) puts it, all representation is about someone or something and, through representation, the object or subject becomes a sign, making it significant (Moscovici, 1979). To understand this sign, we require a system of social conventions that must be interpreted or decoded from a classification scheme (Hall, 2010). Representation, then, works on a social group as part of its culture and helps give a concrete meaning to the world this group lives in. Once this meaning is fixed, the abstract significance is materialized and appears as normal and real, while the process of building that meaning is forgotten, making the representation seem without social reference (Rodríguez, 2002).

Nevertheless, we must not believe that this system of conventions and classifications will be fixed forever. On the contrary, it will be flexible and can be modified or changed over time, or by the cultural context in which it is used. A representation may mean one thing for a cultural group, but something completely different for another. This is what Jodelet (2008) calls the “horizons” on the trans-subjective representation systems, explaining that a representation may be looked at from various perspectives and interpreted in diverse ways from different cultural groups. This is the symbolic function explained by Hall (2010), where signs represent a concept that creates meaning, but this function leaves aside the representation’s consequences and the effects it may contain. From the discursive perspective, Foucault (1979) explains that each society has a preferred choice of discourses through a “general policy of truth,” which builds a truth regime that makes some discourses become the truth for that society (Foucault, 1979, p. 187). In that sense, when analyzing the way African Americans have been represented in the US media, Gray (2005) states that representations must be critically scrutinized, even more when they are related to power and cultural policies (p. 188).

The power of representation stresses that power is wielded not only physically or with threats, but also in symbolic ways, where it classifies the individuals,



creating a “representation regime” (Hall, 2010). Film is one of the representation systems in society that answers to mental images and promotes their construction. For this reason, Mulvey (1989) says that the way individuals are shown and constructed in those representations must be questioned, since they are always built from a specific perspective.

Meaning isn’t only constructed by assigning a definition to a certain sign. Its construction also implies to be compared to what it doesn’t mean, to what it is not, to what is built in a different way, to the other signs and meanings -e.g. the meaning of “Andean” is built by defining its characteristics, but also by comparing it to everything that is not “Andean”. When we represent individuals, we talk on their behalf from a specific perspective (Spivak, 2003), building meanings about those individuals’ identities, since the way people are represented is directly related to the way they are imagined.

Peru is a racial and ethnically mixed country. Among its inhabitants are the original indigenous people (77 ethnic groups are recognized, the Quechua and Aymara Andean groups being the main ones), European descendants, African descendants, Asian descendants, and a mix of all these groups, which are generally identified as “mestizos.” The Peruvian government praises the country’s ethnic diversity and states it is one of its main assets, but this appraisal only denies the underlying racism that still exists in Peruvian society. Callirgos (2015) stresses the difficulty Peruvians have to classify themselves as belonging to a certain race, and the fact that most people call themselves “mestizo” is a way to displace racism, putting themselves in the middle (Callirgos, 2015, p. 101). For this author, the “mixed races” discourse is democratizing and useful to deny the existing racism in Peru (Callirgos, 2015, p. 120).

Wade (2008) states that colonizing nations used to solve class problems by creating racialized spaces, since race and class usually went hand in hand. In Peru, the Spanish Crown established what was known as the “White” Republic and the “Indian”¹ Republic, to separate the Spaniards and their descendants from the indigenous people. Burns (2008) shows how this idea failed from the beginning because by that time the conquerors had already taken Andean women as servants, sex slaves or wives, mixing both cultures and races and tainting the “blood purity” that Spain wanted to maintain on the Colony. Although races mixed, a hierarchy was created depending on the lineage of both the Spaniards and the indigenous people (Wade, 2008). Nevertheless, Spaniards had to coexist in America with people of different races and religious beliefs, which they had previously learned to despise (Burns, 2008).

¹ Referring to the indigenous people, mainly Andean Quechua and Aymara groups.



After the Peruvian independence, the differences and hierarchies remained unchanged. Spanish descendants were replaced by “criollos” (high class mestizos, who identify themselves as “whites”) at the top of hierarchy. At this point, we can make a parallel to Said’s remark about Africa, when he says that independence was regarded as a “white’s thing” by Europeans, and that “inferior people” could only be ruled (Said, 2004). In Peru and Latin America—as in other colonies throughout the world—there is an ideology based on the idea that indigenous people are inferior, almost halfway between men and animals, providing a means to discriminate against them (Callirgos, 2015; Wade, 2008).

In most of South America the independence quest seemed to be a “criollo” concern, despite the evidence of participation of “Indians,” “negros,” or “cholos,” because a picture of a resigned and passive “Indian” helped to ignore their political actions (Callirgos, 2015, p. 109). Racial categories like these, mixed with ethnic properties and class, were inherited from the Colony era, but more have been created through the Republican years. Thus, an idea and its ideological weight is fixed on a word like “Indian” or “cholo,” which becomes a representation that seems to be the reality or that becomes reality (Said, 2013).

The ethnic and racial status may seem to be fixed, even among the indigenous people, but some identities are constantly negotiated through dynamic processes. For indigenous people in Peru, there is an identification between race and class, so when someone is seen as a certain race, he or she is also assigned to a certain class, allowing a “racial modification” (De la Cadena, 1992). Since the political and economic power has traditionally been in the hands of white people, any people from a different race who move up on the social scale may be seen as “whiter” than he/she was before (Callirgos, 2015, p. 133). Wealth, education, property or being a member of some institutions can provide social mobility, but only to a certain extent. An indigenous individual from a rural background can become “whiter” in his community through a professional career, working in the city, or being accepted in a military branch, for example. Nevertheless, among peers in the city he or she may still be looked down on as an “Indian.”

It is also possible that someone is considered to be a member of an upper social scale in the community, but in the city he or she can be seen—and treated—as inferior, as De la Cadena (1992) explains in her research. The identity is based on an intersectional hierarchy that, in this particular case, has to consider race, economic power, gender and literacy. A poor illiterate Andean female will be at the bottom of the scale. For example, De la Cadena establishes how Andean women’s “work” as market vendors, which is not regarded as real work by men and, since they don’t “produce,” their value is diminished and they become dependent on their relationships with men (De la Cadena,



1992, p. 6). As I said earlier, these identities may seem fixed but, actually, they are continually negotiated with other members of society, but in an unequal power structure.

As I said at the beginning of this text, most of the victims during the IAC were Andean people, mainly indigenous people who are called by the derogatory term “Indians.” From the point of view of Sendero Luminoso, they should have been the first to embrace the “popular war,” and those who didn’t abide or opposed were killed, sometimes in a public meeting in front of the rest of the town. The armed forces were suspicious of the Andean people, fearing them to be terrorists or supporters, just because of their race. Boesten (2014) explains that Peruvian armed forces were unable to make a difference between the terrorists and the civilians. For them, “an Andean peasant was seen as Indian, and the Indian as violent and savage, therefore a terrorist” (Boesten, 2014, p. 24). This was a racist logic, where policemen and soldiers saw themselves as mestizos, coastal people who were under attack by the Andean “savages,” even though the armed forces members were Andean descendants, or Andean themselves. However, as I said earlier, being part of an institution such as the armed forces made them feel a little “whiter.” Testimonies of a Peruvian marine during the IAC show that he justified the sexual abuse and death of Andean peasants because he was a “non-cholo powerful male” (race, gender and institutional membership mixed), but he and his colleagues felt they were in a lower class compared to the marine officials who they referred to as “gringos” (Callirgos, 2015). Boesten (2014) also tells of a soldier who claimed that the troop thought it was fine to rape an indigenous female captive, but felt that a woman who was a dentist—also captive in the barracks—could only be “touched” by the officials.

The impossibility of differentiating the civil population from the terrorist and the racist stereotypes made the human rights abusers target in a larger way the indigenous population. In the intersectional hierarchy of the ethnic, race, class and gender scale, the poor indigenous female represented the lowest step, and was targeted by male combatants (from both sides) as the territories of their power: raping, taking sexual slaves, making them witness how their family was killed (mainly Sendero Luminoso), among others (Comisión de la verdad y la reconciliación, 2004). While Spivak (2003) sees that rape is a metonymic celebration of the territorial acquisition, Boesten (2014) believes that, although performed during times of war, they speak to inequities that are present in the society even in times of peace. She disagrees with the perspective that “boys will be boys,” which justifies rape by soldiers because they are away from their wives and girlfriends, and says that rape is a weapon of war, but also a consequence of how society works in the country in times of peace (Boesten, 2014).



The Lion's Den

La boca del lobo (*The Lion's Den*, in its English version) is a Peruvian film released in 1988, directed by Peruvian Francisco Lombardi. Although, prior to its release, there had been news and TV special reports about the IAC, this was the first film that set its argument on the IAC, portraying a reality that seemed to happen in some place far from the coastal and mestizo population. This article focuses on the way the film—made when the IAC was still going on, and with different versions and information of what was happening—represents the IAC, and specifically the Andean female population. This analysis is about this film and should not be read as an analysis of all representations of the IAC. It is a first step to other works about film representation of the IAC.

The film tells the story of Vitín Luna, a policeman who arrives in a very poor and isolated town on the Andes as part of a new force of policemen, after the previous policemen in town were massacred by Sendero Luminoso a couple of years prior to his arrival. Luna is young and believes that serving his country in the “emergency zone” will help his career. His friend Kike—unethical and undisciplined—and Lt. Roca—who believes in strong actions to fight terrorism—are among the twelve men who, with scarce resources, must keep the town safe. By the end of the film, Luna has faced difficult ethical choices, which he regrets, and has lost his faith in friendship after Kike raped a young woman and in the Police institution, when Roca ordered them to massacre much of the population. At the end of the film, he resigns from the police force and leaves town.

There are several women portrayed in the film, but with different levels of importance for the tale. We can distinguish three different female roles in the film: Julia, a young indigenous female who works in a small grocery store; a very young shepherdess, who is a silent witness to what happens in the town; and several Andean women, who are part of several group scenes in the film, with the exception of a farmer, who owns a cow that Roca later kills for food. To analyze the representation of Andean women in the film, let's look at which scenes they're in and what happens in them.

Julia's Scenes Description

La boca del lobo is comprised of 66 scenes. Julia is in only six of them, and speaks in only half of them. Male characters talk about her in two other scenes. The first time we see Julia she is at her store, where Kike is flirting with her and trying to get a free beer. Luna arrives and she shows him respect, but she shows contempt for Kike, who makes sexual comments about her to Luna. The next time we see Julia, she is on the street and watches the policemen go



out on patrol as Luna watches her from afar. The third time we see Julia, she is closing her store one night, when Kike arrives and pushes her into the store. The next scene shows Luna walking on the street. He enters the store to find Julia lying on the ground after having been raped by Kike, who tries to justify himself.

The fifth time we see Julia, she is brought to the police station by her uncle to report the rape. She accuses Kike, who denies it. She says Luna witnessed the rape, but he hesitates and at the end doesn't speak. Roca dismisses the accusation and she leaves the station with her uncle, who claims that there is no justice for them. The last time we see Julia is when Luna is brought back to the police station in handcuffs after refusing to participate in the massacre, and he watches Julia leave town in the distance. In two scenes, Luna and Kike talk about Julia. In one, Kike says he has dreamed of her and says that since he is far from "civilization," with no woman, he desires her, despite being a "chola." The next scene is after the rape, when Kike justifies himself and gives no importance to raping an indigenous woman.

Shepherdess Girl Scenes Description

There are three scenes with a little girl who looks after a herd of sheep. She is 5 or 6 years old and never speaks. She only looks at the people and barely reacts. In the very first scene of the film, she arrives at the main square and sees the dead bodies of policemen on the church stairs and in the police station. These are the policemen Luna and the others will be sent to replace. The second time we see her, she watches as the police patrol the barren parts of the Andes searching for the terrorist. She and Luna exchange glances while he passes by. The last time we see her is when Luna is fleeing town. She is on the road with her sheep. Luna stops and looks at her, and she looks back at him. Luna leaves, and she watches him go.

Town's Female Population Description

There are eight scenes with female Andean characters in the film, but they are mostly shown in a group of townspeople.

The first time we see these female characters is when Luna is ordered to put up a Peruvian flag on the police station's pole. When he finishes, he realizes that some people are on the streets looking at him: a group of men, a group of three women sitting on a corner, a man and a woman standing on the street. They just watch Luna, who doesn't seem to understand why they are looking



at him. He seems to ask himself: are they terrorists in disguise? They do not understand what he is doing? They foresee a bleak future?

In one scene, the whole town is gathered while Roca gives a speech about their loyalty and makes them sing the national anthem. Some women are shown as if they don't understand what is happening, and others can't sing the anthem.

Other scenes show them as part of a group celebrating at a party when two police officers try to enter and are repelled by the people. The officers return to the house with the rest of the policemen and arrest everyone. Women are part of the group but do not take any action. Later, we see the same group held at the police station. In another scene, the group is taken to a solitary spot in the Andes and massacred by the policemen. Some women are shown in medium shots while the bullets explode on their chests. Another scene shows the policemen in the town after an attack from Sendero Luminoso. We listen to Sergeant Moncada asking for reinforcements and supplies over the radio and is told that he should look for support from the population. While we listen to this radio conversation, we see Kike and another policeman stop a pair of elderly peasant women and take food from the baskets they are carrying.

In one scene, Roca and some policemen visit the farm of a peasant and his wife who were forced to give food to Sendero Luminoso. Roca says that no terrorist is going to eat better than them and kills the peasants' only cow, telling his troops to seize the meat. The peasant's wife is shown crying at the side of the dead cow.

Female Representation in *La boca del lobo*

La boca del lobo is mainly a men's tale. The main male characters are part of the police force and other male characters include the town's major and a friendly guide. The ones who move the story and the actions are the policemen. The women are portrayed on different levels: Julia is the only female character who has a major effect on the story, the little girl is just a silent witness, and the rest of women are part of a larger group—only the two women whose food is taken away and the peasant whose cow is killed have a slight individual performance. To understand the way they represent the Andean female, let's analyze how they are visually depicted and how they can have some influence on what happens around them.

Since the film is about the policemen, the rest of the people are secondary characters. Only a few of them—men and women—are clearly identifiable. The focus of the story is the policemen, what they feel and the conditions they have to survive in an isolated place with almost no support from the central



command. Most of the men and women in the film are part of the town's population. There is some unbalance in the way they are shown, since some men participate on the plot with dialogue and known names. Julia is the only Andean female whose name is known in the film.

The group of people who are celebrating, taken to prison and later killed by the police are Andean men and women, but men are the only ones who have any performance: when Kike and Escalante try to enter the house where the party is taking place, men are the ones who stand up to them, accuse them of stealing their food and drink, and push them away; when they are detained at the police station, the men are the ones who talk to Luna, tell him they are not terrorists and ask him to talk to Roca to stop the torture; when they are taken to a distant place and the policemen form a line in front of them, it is the men who first realize they are going to be killed and ask why. In all these scenes, women have no participation and no reaction. They are only part of the group and their fate isn't in their hands. The camera shows them in long shots, as part of the group. The only time this changes is when they are shot during the massacre, when they are shown in medium shots.

In the scene where the town is gathered in the main square to listen to Roca's speech and sing the national anthem, men and woman are shown in long shots listening to him. When the flag is raised and the anthem is sung, there are some medium shots of women in the square. We see a hesitant woman trying to remove her hat out of respect for the flag and the anthem, a policeman singing close to another woman, as if teaching her the lyrics of the anthem. Men and women sing without much conviction, which is shown in close-up and medium shots of female characters and their children. The woman looking at Luna with the flag are silent witnesses to what is happening around them. They say and do nothing with almost no emotion, like the young shepherdess who, except for a slight smile when she exchanges a glance with Luna, looks silently on as the events of the film unfold around them.

The only time we see a nameless woman do something in the film is when the peasant's wife cries over her dead cow and asks why they killed it, in a medium-long shot. She is a victim of police abuse and can do nothing to prevent it. She and her husband have already been victims of Sendero Luminoso's abuse the day before. They are defenseless to the armed actors of the conflict. The same thing happens when the two women carrying their baskets are intercepted by the police who take their food: they don't reply, they don't defend themselves, and they don't complain about the police abuse.

All these women have no names in the film and are hardly identifiable, except for the little girl. As I said before, Julia is the only female character with any development in the film. She is different from all the others, not only because



she has a name but because she speaks and acts for the things she wants and expects. She is not just a witness of what happens in the town, but a direct victim who will face the direct abuses of the policemen. Julia is also different because she works in a grocery store in town, unlike the other women who seem to be peasants or to have no known job. She seems to have some control over what happens in that space. Kike wants a beer and she refuses because his credit is due and he has no money. She offers a beer to Luna, because he honors his debts and pays his bills. She refuses Kike's advances. The night he rapes her she tries to avoid his advances, arguing that the store is closed and that she has chores to do. Logical arguments and her decision are the tools she has to deal with a man like that. When Kike refuses to leave, she tries to protect herself by going inside the store, but Kike's strength denies her possibility of a safe place. This scene shows how Julia tries to manage the situations, managing her space and the agency as much as she can. On the power scale, she is one step higher than the other peasant women, but it isn't enough when faced with the much higher rank in the scale of a coastal armed man.

She is also the object of desire. She attracts the attention of Kike and Luna. Kike dreams of her, he talks about her and her looks. It's necessary to point out that all of the town's female characters were performed by women who lived in the town where the film was shot. Julia is the only female actress from the coast—with no Andean ancestors—who was dressed in Andean clothes and used makeup and hairstyle to make her resemble an Andean female. Peruvian actors and actresses of defined racial groups (Andean, black, Asian) seldom find parts for them, while film and television directors argue that they need to have actors who are "attractive" and "fit the character" (Callirgos, 2015, p. 142), a whitewashing problem often found around the world.

Despite Julia's character having a name and being on an upper step of the scale, she is still a woman and her agency has to be defined and consolidated by the male subject of the story. She doesn't report the rape herself. She is taken by her uncle to the police station and he is the one who explains to Roca what has happened and complains about it. Her uncle is the one who argues with Roca about the way things must be handled. She remains silent and only speaks up when Roca is about to ask them to leave. She points at Kike as the rapist and, after he denies it, asks Luna to tell them what he saw, but he hesitates and Roca dismisses her and her uncle. Julia's fate is in the hands of men, but if they have no power (as her uncle) she cannot control her own life. Her only option is to leave town, away from those who abused and betrayed her, hoping for a better life somewhere else.



Discussion

The female characters in *La boca del lobo* are portrayed as the lowest step on the power pyramid, in a very hierarchic tale where policemen are ranked on the top of the pyramid with ranks among themselves: Roca is on top as the main officer, Moncada is next in line as sergeant, and then come the rest of the policemen. The town's major and the guide are the next ones on the pyramid, thanks to their relationship with the policemen—the “white” authority—, followed by the rest of the town's men. Women come last, and the way they are represented stresses their place in the pyramid.

The women in this film have almost no individual identity, no voice and no agency, understood here as the ability of someone to take direction of their lives, allowing them to fulfill their goals and build their own identity (Scott, 1996, p. 41). We could argue that the townspeople have no agency but, as we have seen, at least men try to take control of their lives. Women are mainly part of the scenery; they just watch what happens and rarely interact with those who have power. They are robbed and show no resistance; they are taken out of their houses and say nothing; they are shot and don't try to run, resist or defend themselves. Agency means the possibility to intervene in processes where reality is transformed and power is exercised, under circumstances that weren't created by them (Grossberg, 2003).

Women don't talk in this film. They are always silent, with the exception of the peasant who cries over her killed cow but doesn't talk to anybody. She doesn't ask Roca why he killed her cow and she doesn't ask her husband about why it happened. She just wonders why, unable to speak to anybody—especially to any men—about her misfortune. Julia, the only female character that has something to say, seems to have some kind of agency, but in the end it doesn't matter because she needs men to support her. The female characters have no voice in this film, or their voice is disregarded when they dare to talk.

With the exception of Julia, the female characters have no identity in this film. They have no names, they are interchangeable in their roles, we can never easily identify any of them because the camera itself seldom focuses on them. They are just a mass of people, mixed with the male characters—several of whom are identifiable and have a name—with no actions of their own. They are almost invisible.

What does this film say about the Peruvian Andean females during the Internal Armed Conflict? The film doesn't acknowledge the important role of the Andean women who were recorded by CVR as part of self-defense and support groups, as the ones who pursued justice for their loved ones, the ones who endured abuses and constantly faced the authorities looking for answers.



In this particular film—produced years before the end of the IAC and the CVR hearings—the Peruvian Andean female is represented as a quiet, calm and submissive person, with no agency but at the same time with no desires or interests of her own. They are weak and defenseless, most of them are poor and seem to speak little Spanish.

Andean people—and especially Andean women—are represented as being backward individuals, with few progress opportunities. It is important to remember that this is a film made by people from the coast, mainly male,² in 1988, and may be seen as a projection of their views and beliefs about a neglected population during of the worst periods of Peruvian history. They had to work with the information that was available, researched as much as possible during a time when things were unclear. In this sense, as any cultural product it reflects its time and the cultural group where it was produced.

A characteristic of Peruvian society is the inability to see each other, to understand and communicate with the “others,” who are seen as good, docile and quiet big boys and girls who must be guided, or as savages who have to be controlled. Those “others” were caught in the crossfire with no possibility of exerting themselves any violence (Callirgos, 2015; Degregori, 2011). In this film the possibility of a foreign group arriving to this neglected place to help the people progress is also a vain effort since they end up bringing a worse reality than before. The Andean females will suffer humiliation, injustice, abuses, neglect and death, and will have no tools with which to defend themselves. There is no hope for them. Their only solution is to die or leave town.

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² The script was written by a male and a female screenwriter, who is a white upper class Peruvian.



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