

# The History, Literature and Music of Peruvian Women from Ayacucho in *Warmi* by Magaly Solier

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“This music has overcome [...] it has resisted invasions and scorn For more than four hundred years”  
José María Arguedas

The Quechuan word *Warmi*, meaning woman, is the title that Magaly Solier has chosen as the title for her debut album. This features a musical text written and sung by a speaker of Quechua from the town of Huanta, also known as “The emerald of the Andes,” which is located in the Peruvian sierra in the province of Ayacucho. The name of this province is originally Quechuan and its use was approved by Simon Bolivar during the period of his protectorate. In translation, it signifies “Corner of Death” and is testament to all the blood that was spilled during Peru’s struggle for independence. It is here, in an environment of death in 1986, that Solier was born and later grew up to raise the profile of the indigenous people that had for years been ignored, their existence denied even within their own country.<sup>1</sup> Under the pall of colonization that had pressed upon the mentality of Peruvians for centuries, the people did not elect an indigenous president until July 2001 when Alejandro Toledo assumed office.<sup>2</sup> This explains why, from 1980 to 1992, an internal war broke out whose roots lay in the racial and class discrimination that had secured the country’s wealth within the tight fists of a few beneficiaries who had passed it down within their fold from generation to generation since the times of early colonization. This system was responsible for crushing the agrarian reform of the sixties in which peasants were given land but then forced to return it to the state because they lacked the technology and manpower to make it productive.

An added barrier to technical expertise for the indigenous poor has always been an education system weighted heavily in favor of those able to go private. Public secondary schools do exist but these are gender biased because girls are taught house chores and secretarial skills while the boys are trained in technical labor. However, private education, along the lines of that offered in the west

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<sup>1</sup> Magaly Solier is the first indigenous face that appears in a television commercial in the role of professional, drinking a cup of Nescafé and remembering her peasant mother, who was the inspiration of her life. This scene is reminiscent of Marcel Proust eating a piece of Magdalene cake and creating his novels. To my view, this image shows that an indigenous woman is also as capable of deep thought as any literary man of prestige.

<sup>2</sup> Being fortunate to obtain a scholarship to study in the US, he was able to enroll at the University of San Francisco and obtain a B. A. in Economics and Business Administration and later a Ph. D. in Economics of Human Resources. He came back to Peru and became the Major of the district of Lima, then the President of Peru from 2001 to 2006. The second indigenous president was elected in 2011: Ollanta Humala. However, he, like most indigenous people, did not have the luxury of having graduate studies. He enrolled in the army to get a free education.

with its emphasis on humanities, is invariably superior if one is succeed in the hierarchical society in which we live. In this way, some are earmarked to run the country, while others are raised to accept social injustice or else take the risk of swimming against the current. For poor students to enter an internationally recognized university, they must complete four years of private academies after secondary school, all the while working in the city to survive, and this is not possible for the Andean population. No record exists as to the number of such private academies, but one only needs to walk along the streets of Lima to gain a visual confirmation of their existence as valid as any written document. It is in the streets of Lima where we encounter class, racial, and especially gender discrimination because if poor families do make an effort to send their children to school, they send the boys and not the girls. Most street vendors and maids are indigenous women.

This educational structure, together with its inherent injustice, has provoked a series of reactions from various groups within society, ranging from full-blown terrorism to passive indifference. On the extreme end of the spectrum, *The Shining Path* was a Maoist group that tried to prevent delivery of mandated supplies of food to the capital and whose leader, Abimael Guzmán, declared himself president with a mission to implement communism. *The Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement* was another guerilla organization with socialist tendencies, while *The Peasant Patrol* was made up of men who lived in the countryside and did not join up with the guerillas.<sup>3</sup> Poor women, who formed groups such as *The Glass of Milk*, *The Popular Dining Rooms*, *The Mothers' Clubs*, and various feminist groups expressed non-violent protest and did not unite with terrorism. Outside these more extreme movements of discontent remain the military forces of the country and various members of the public, partly made up of the generally middle-class, mixed-white elite sector that contracts systems of security for their houses, businesses and government buildings. The middle class also comprises people whom money has “whitened”, poor people, who are mostly made up of the indigenous or darkish-skinned, and the educated misfits.<sup>4</sup> These are people who exist as “exiles” in spaces beyond those of the above-mentioned groups because their race and class are a contradiction, as are their occupations.<sup>5</sup> These diverse groups of inhabitants are subjected to robbery and rape in the less protected areas, and some are killed in car bombings, suffer gunshot, or are kidnapped for the ransom demanded by terrorists. Solier grew up in the midst of this turmoil in Ayacucho, which was occupied by the *Shining Path*, and, as she recounts in many television interviews, her response was to compose social commentary songs as her mother had done. In the light of this information, I consider it important to conduct a detailed study of Solier’s CD, since it is worthy of being accepted as a historical, literary and musical text.

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<sup>3</sup> These two terrorist groups were supported by some elite people and they recruited young students at public universities to spread their ideology as well as peasants to do their dirty jobs. There was even an American terrorist of the MRTA, Lori Bernson, who was in prison in Peru for 15 years.

<sup>4</sup> They live outside Lima, in Ica and Pisco, where they may escape the discrimination common in the capital.

<sup>5</sup> To this group belonged José María Arguedas, a mestizo man that gained a university degree and had the opportunity of becoming a writer. However, all his novels express the musical structure of the Andean world and the pain of suffering a double exile from the indigenous world of his youth and from the elite world that never accepted him. Arguedas eventually succumbed to depression and suicide after having created for himself a space within Andean music, dance and food through his literary festivals and plays. His texts combine the formalized and systematic Spanish language, from whose restrictions he sought to break free, and the oral tradition of Andean Quechua, which highlights the fusion, variety and changes within our existence of perpetual ambiguity.

Solier's album *Warmi* (2009), according to Sandro Mairata, is "like a film insofar as it involves characters that appear in scenes with a beginning, middle and end [...] Each song is a scene elaborated in detail by the Solier-Flores duo, in which Solier variously assumes the voices, attitudes and martyrdoms of each one of her creations" (1).<sup>6</sup> This theatrical kaleidoscope of stories involving the suffering of Ayacuchan women is expressed in poetic and musical form and in both Quechua and Spanish. However, it is noteworthy that eleven of the pieces are in Quechua, with only occasional translations of particular phrases, and that only one remains in Spanish throughout its entirety.<sup>7</sup> This study will present an analysis of the collection of pieces that make up *Warmi* from the visual presentation of the CD to its use not only of historical, literary and musical techniques, but also those of psychology and the recovery of memory.

The terrorist cause produced epic narratives telling the exploits of masculine heroes who vanquished their fears in combat with the enemy, and *Warmi* shares something of this spirit in being a historical and poetic text recounting the history of Ayacuchan women who survived ten years of terrorism in their daily lives, and it is an achievement no less epic than those of their menfolk. However, in contrast to the material on *Warmi*, the content and mood of the narratives created by guerrilla men or peasant patrols assumed a perspective of war that was aggressively masculine, and as such they reinforce the very patriarchal and military structures owned by the enemy they sought to destroy. Moreover, as the indigenous freedom fighters had always been rejected and despised by those in power, they came to feel feminized and identified as weak and dependent, and one effect of this was their impulse to assert power through the hyper-masculinization afforded by violence. It is for this reason that they come to apply the same methods as those who oppress them. Kimberly Theidon has observed that, in real terms, Peruvian citizenship is only conferred upon those who are prepared to mimic the ways of the upper class, which includes speaking and writing in Spanish, and since women "speak less Spanish and have less urban experience, they are considered more Indian [...] less developed [...] subordinated to militarized patriarchy [and] less citizens" (82). They are subjected to rape not just at the hands of drunken family members whose courage is restricted to abusing their dependents, but also by guerrillas and soldiers who seek to dominate the entire country through terror. Unfortunately, this abuse is embedded within the symbolic representation of the boy whose passage to manhood is marked by his entry into an unknown cave or the body of a woman, associated, as they are, with the taking possession of territory and dominating nature in the name of civilization.<sup>8</sup> Through song, Solier tells us the stories of women who cry and bleed stories of abandoned women that struggle to overcome strife. The recovery of such stories is important so that in the future these ills are prevented, the traumas inflicted on these women cleansed, and the women respected as they deserve.

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<sup>6</sup> Cali Flores is the musical producer of the record.

<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon is reminiscent of Mozarabic *kharjas* within Spanish literature during the XI and XIII centuries, as well as Chicano and Puerto Rican literature. During the Arab occupation of Spain from 711 to 1492, the final refrain of these *kharjas* was traditionally in Spanish. The first ones date back to the 11th century.

<sup>8</sup> Doris Sommer theorized this in her text *The National Romances of Latin America* in 1991, and Isabel Allende parodies this gender issue in *The City of the Beasts* (2002). See: "Parodia del género sexual y del discurso primitivista en La ciudad de las bestias de Isabel Allende." *Letras Femeninas* 33.2 (2007): 57-72.

The CD case presents the face of Magaly Solier divided by a vertical line, which clearly signals that this woman is of mixed race, split in two by the experience of having been left behind in the process of modernization or, as Gloria Anzaldúa would say,

*[she has] a new mestizo consciousness, a woman's consciousness. It is a consciousness of the borderlands [...] la mestiza is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual [...] in a state of perpetual transition [...] The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradiction, a tolerance for ambiguity [...] She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode - nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (99-101)*

Solier was supposedly “discovered” by the filmmaker Claudia Llosa, and rather than their collaboration being construed as a meeting of two minds, she was typecast as a passive object, reflecting the colonial discourse that described all natives as incapable of behaving as autonomous individuals. However, Solier has self-esteem and knows that her identity involves recognizing herself as a pioneering woman. Many times this has meant drawing from her Ayacuchan experiences in the countryside and to those of herself as the immigrant suffering discrimination in the city, but in each case she has had to survive as an intermediary and operate as a source of information and enlightenment for the outside world looking in. Solier is not Chicana but she has suffered racial and class violence in the colonial city of Lima, which abandons country people to illiteracy, poverty, and exposure to the threat of rape or murder not only within the patriarchal family structure, but also by the forces of law and order and government bodies. Like the Chicanas, she does not sever the matrilineal and communal bonds that exist among women, and functions, instead, as mediator between Andean and Hispanic cultures.<sup>9</sup>

Solier's borderline position demystifies all the myths surrounding a dependent identity. The face of the new Mestiza, divided in two, may remind us of the colors of Indian war-paint and could also be seen to represent the face of a woman that is in conflict against a society which deals unjustly with women, particularly if they are Andean. On the left side of the image, her name is written, while on the right appears the word *Warmi* [woman], which sends a clear visual signal of her borderline identity. The collection of songs seeks to provide a mosaic of country women as if they were all a new kind of mestiza, each one dedicated to “not submitting to abuse at the hands of men”, and this is a feature described by Solier in the introduction to the CD. The lifestyle choice of being forever between frontiers and with no desire for permanent attachment serves to suppress feelings of abandonment, rejection and scorn because it rides above all kinds of discrimination. It represents a borderline identity that clearly rejects injustice by severing the connection with colonial and

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<sup>9</sup> In the case of Solier, she is named “Chola” by people from the city of Lima because she is an immigrant from the Andes who is bilingual and has a more Pre-Columbian culture. However, she is also proud of her background and is aware of her responsibility and importance as cultural mediator among her own people and abroad.

postcolonial myths regarding the Other as an inferior in fixed roles, such as nature used and abused, the noble savage, the barbarian or witch?, the valiant revolutionary or terrorist? All of these representations are fixed archetypes within hegemonic historical discourse. They are the stereotypes that must be confronted before one might truly be considered on the borderline.

There are four photographs included on the lyrics sheet, and rather than all being of Solier, two are of middle-aged Ayacuchan women with one elderly woman, indicating that the CD contains songs about the particular experiences of women at various stages of their lives. In the first two photographs, the woman seen in profile from the shoulders up is the object of the viewer, but in the third, Solier looks directly at the viewer with the same profound look as the one on the front cover. The lyrics sheet has at its end the face of a woman crying through closed eyes over the deaths resulting from the massacres of Ayacucho, and is positioned next to the song "The Guitar", which tells the story of a terrorist shootout.

The lyrics are translated into three languages. In the first column we have the song such as we hear it, in Quechua with the occasional phrase or word in Spanish. The second column is completely in Spanish and the third presents the song in English. This hierarchical order illustrates the importance that Solier gives to Quechua as the language of Ayacuchan women. However, the fact of having the words translated into three languages means that this is not just an oral text, but a written one that is accessible to a large number of people and whose message and writer are important. Consistent with epic poems, this album makes abundant use of choruses as a mnemonic device, except that in this case they are presented in bilingual form. Upon being sung, the tuneful repetition of the violent acts they recount becomes a search for harmony and relief and a reminder of what ought not to happen in women's lives. The introduction is entitled: The protagonists of *Warmi* followed by the names of five women with some lines on their circumstance in life. In fact, there are six protagonists because one is initially absent but returns towards the end of the CD with an awareness of being a new kind of *mestiza*, one intent upon gaining respect and she begins by confronting her husband.

The protagonists are all women who refused allegiance to the wave of terrorism that surged in response to the long years of abandonment and oppression inflicted on poor natives and mestizos. Unfortunately, government centralism concerned itself only with those living in the big cities, especially Lima, the capital. According to Steve Stein and Carlos Monge, the internal crisis affecting Peru brought out different responses from its people. One was terrorism, while another was an attitude of escapist resignation, described by observer Jesús Denegri in the following terms:

*The young people of my generation rarely complain and even allow others to walk all over them: if you aren't given change on the microbus, you keep quiet; there are very few that make a fuss about this and those that do are just letting off steam ... if you have to deal with the police, you call them chief and not officer and you accept a position of inferiority ... We complain little about our rights and ask for them meekly with a "please". A common posture is to have our hands behind the back ... How do young people of my generation let off steam? They search for an opportunity to get back at someone, to do the dirty*

*on them, and to take advantage of another's ingenuousness, and then laugh at them ... And, of course, there are drugs. (Stein & Monge 113-14)*

We should observe that the letting off steam to which Denegri twice alludes is invariably violence against women. By being so emotionally and financially dependent on men, and by being the wife and mother within a large family, the woman is the person with the fewest rights in a patriarchal society; as a result, she frequently suffers violence at the hands of a husband that burns to vent his frustration against the injustice of the outside world. The acceptance of domestic violence inflicted on the indigenous woman is reflected in the following highland definition of love: "The more you hit me, the more I love you". These ideological messages normalize masochism in the indigenous female psyche by uniting it with race and the lower class within a definition of poor and marginalized love. Only in extreme cases of violence will an indigenous woman leave her husband and risk being branded a bad wife, and we will discuss this scenario as it applies to one of the songs.

Alongside these types of violence that are suffered and, to an extent, accepted in part by the indigenous woman as if her role were to suffer on behalf of the family, we have to add the pain induced by the death of her loved ones and her own rape at the hands of soldiers within the armed forces during the years of terrorism. According to Jelke Boesten:

*Starting in the 1980s, male violence against women became more visible; women grew less tolerant and feminist activism more fierce. Several studies suggest that male violence toward women also increased in the 1990's especially in areas that had been particularly affected by political violence (CEPREDEP 1997, TRC 2002, 2003). The war made a bad situation worse. According to a conservative estimate of the Encuesta Demográfica y de Salud Familiar held in 2000, 41 percent of Peruvian women were beaten at least once in their life by their partners [...] In Ayacucho 54.5 percent of surveyed women had suffered domestic violence, 30.7 percent systematically (ranging from every three months to every day, Programa Integral de la Lucha Contra la Violencia Familiar y Sexual 2005. (110)*

All this pain is expressed in a dramatized form in Solier's songs and as such, they are in concert with the feelings of Clarissa Pinkola Estés, who argues that "Stories are a kind of medicine [...] holistic healing rites, first cousins of quack medicine and *mesemondók*, all the details are weighed up carefully according to tradition: when to tell the story, what story and to whom, what length and in what style, with which words and in which conditions" (647-49).<sup>10</sup> This CD is an example of the songs that indigenous women create for their daughters and familiars. The epic events of their daily

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<sup>10</sup> Pinkola Estés describes *mesemondók* in the following terms: "I come from a long line of tellers: mesemondok, old Hungarian women who tell while sitting on wooden chairs with their plastic pocketbooks on their laps, their knees apart, their skirts touching the ground... and cuentistas, old Latina women who stand, robust of breast, hips wide, and cry out the story ranchera style. Both clans storytell in the plain voice of women who have lived blood and babies, bread and bones. For them, story is a medicine which strengthens and arights the individual and the community."

struggles as peasant women are communicated orally, according to their cultural tradition, and in the songs we hear of their struggle against the violence that afflicts them and which goes undocumented in history books and literature, their eventual deaths adding up to nothing more than a sociological statistic for official records.

According to José María Arguedas, anthropologist and indigenous writer, the *huayno*, or indigenous song, such as that by Solier, is a text that is both historical and lyrical:

*The huayno is like the clear and detailed footprint that the mestizo people continue to leave on their never-ending path of salvation and creation [...] And in the history of huayno, which is a history of the Andean village, there is something that is fundamental: huayno music has changed little, but the words have evolved rapidly and have taken on an infinite variety of forms, almost as if there were one style for each man. The Indian and mestizo of today, like the one of a hundred years ago, continue to find within this music a complete expression of his spirit and all his emotions. (59-60)*

Magaly Solier joins a group of women, which includes Domitila Barrios de Chúngara, Rigoberta Menchú, Carolina María de Jesús, and Gloria Anzaldúa, who have emerged as celebrity spokeswomen for indigenous issues. They have furthered their cause by way of translation, interviews and, in the case of Anzaldúa, creative theoretical essays. Ironically, the social injustice that they criticize is the one that excludes them from the lettered city, where they undoubtedly belong.<sup>11</sup> Traditionally the creation of meanings and discourse in both historical and literary senses has been the exclusive domain of the lettered city and women like them have been excluded for generations. Consequently, the reception, or rather rejection, of their work provides a concrete example of the unjust systems of social exclusion they describe.

The lyricism shared by all the women is, however, an indispensable feature of these musical texts and is what validates their inclusion as oral texts within the canon of western medieval literature. We shall now proceed to analyze Solier's songs and, in order to respect the structure of the CD, do so according to the sequence in which they are presented.

The first song: "Citaray" is a dialogue between two women and is a call for solidarity among women who find themselves alone in life. Maribel, we learn, "is a young woman that dares to help other women who have decided not to tolerate male abuse, and that her grandmother, who calls her Lecucha, speaks with Citarray, a mother that has lost her son because of the terrorism. This mother seems to have lost her powers of judgment as a result of the loss, and "lives as if he were still there so as not to feel his absence". The sight of Citarray spending a year wandering in search of her son worries Maribel, who asks her where she is going. We get a sense of her appearance of neglect from

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<sup>11</sup> Ángel Rama considers that it was during the Illustration that the educated elite emerged to rule Latin American nations and this power structure has remained. He gave it this name on account of its location. Things are changing, however, and although Anzaldúa died before finishing her doctorate at the age of 62, it was awarded to her posthumously in 2005.

Maribel, who comments on her “dirty, sweaty, and sunburned little face and feet”. This is quite an affectionate description of the suffering woman that has through centuries been identified as La Llorona, a mad and evil mother.<sup>12</sup> This is a woman who is the guilty source of her own pain for having killed her son and lost her reason. According to Pinkola Estes, La Llorona represents “the destruction of female fertility. It is as if the contamination of wild beauty occurs within the inner world just as it does in the outer world” (242). All aggression causes pain and psychic destruction; in this sense, the violent experiences of Ayacuchan women were wars of “terrorism enacted within as well as without”. We may observe its effects all the way from the man of the house letting off steam to the sufferings of rape trauma and the death of children, as occurred in Ayacucho. Citaray eventually loses her mind, but in keeping with the literary tradition by which the insane speak the truth, she offers sound advice to Maribel. She suggests that instead of their both waiting for a lover that never returns, they should both look after “their loving and beautiful mother”, and she asks, “Is it that your lover is more important than your mother?” to which Maribel responds, “My loving mother is more important”. A message we can draw from this is that often women who require care are abandoned to their own fate, and that women should stand by one another instead of allying themselves with a patriarchal power which perpetuates cycles of abuse against women of all ages.

In the second song we are presented with two young protagonists: Maribel and her friend Sonia. After achieving awareness of herself as a new mestiza, thanks to Citaray, Maribel helps other young women that are mistreated in the home. One day she is waiting for Sonia, who had planned to escape from her house, and when she does not appear, Maribel goes to look for her and finds her lying on the floor covered in blood. This is the tale of a father who, wishing to forget the abuses he suffers through poverty, unemployment, and mistreatment in the outside world, gets drunk and, in accordance with Denegri’s description, vents his frustrations in male fashion by beating his daughter. In the introduction, we learn that the father “mistreats her psychologically, physically and sexually after his wife fled from the rounds of daily abuse”. On this, Audre Lourde reminds us that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (110), and in the case of an oppressed subject like Sonia’s father we have an individual who appropriates the same mechanisms of violence with which he himself has been victimized, as if these were a normal response. For Lorde, patriarchal protection is nothing more than a coloration within heterosexual relations and which sometimes convert into “a self-hate which all women have to fight against ... taught us from birth” (121). We may observe this process in the violence between father and daughter, and the very common incidence of incest in the highlands and shanty towns of Peru. Maribel provides an example when she says to Sonia, “I found you naked and covered in blood in a corner of your house”, and by making the following suggestion, Maribel seeks to awaken her sense of being a new mestiza who does not have to accept such abuse, “We’ll go to your mother, come on, we’ll escape to where your mother is”. It transpires that the mother had already abandoned the father on account of his drunken violence. In Peru, alcoholism rates are high and on Fridays one may see men filling the canteens and bars spending away the week’s money ration that should have gone to the wife and children. Sonia’s mother will return in another song as the epic heroine engaged in facing her fears and settling scores after regaining the strength to realize that she must return for the sake of

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<sup>12</sup> “La Llorona” means “The Crying Woman”. She is an enduring image in Latin American culture.

her daughter and all the daughters of Ayacucho. She is a woman that has ceased to cry in order to search for practical solutions and act on them courageously.

Another force that acts in violent opposition to women is nature, and the elderly ones who take care of the animals and the harvest are those that are most severely hit. Maribel's grandmother is the one that sings about her hard work while trying to protect her animals from the torrential rains. In the introduction, we learn that "although she has become an invalid, she has gained inner strength. While no longer afraid of people, she continues to fear the forces of nature because they alone are capable of destroying the work of country people." The grandmother turns to God and the Virgin and begs them to reveal why they have sent the rain; however, it is her granddaughter Lecucha that comes to her assistance, and it is to her that she shouts. It has been recently observed that the survival of such women, those who have been left alone in the countryside either by the death of a man or their union with guerillas, is in part due to their learning to help one another and a developing sense of solidarity that crosses generations. Moreover, their ability to survive wars suggests that the oppressor is a much less formidable force than nature, which we must respect and with which we must work in harmony. Rather than exploit or destroy nature in the name of civilization, Andean musicians listen to nature and their song is in harmony with it. When its message is one of complaint, protest or the denunciation of injustice, the indication is that peace with the universe has been broken in some fashion. As Carlos Huamán reminds us, the song "has an onomatopoeic relationship with *runi simi* (the Quechuan language), and this has a musicality, from a Quechuan perspective, in that all the elements that make up the universe are living, communicative and musical entities" (160). Like water flowing, the wind whistling, and the workings of nature in constant flux, Quechuan song narrates each historical and literary event.

The next song is also by Citaray, but this time she tells us her story to explain why people categorize her as a beggar, a pejorative word used to describe the request for alms: "Alms, for the love of God," heard in the streets. Citaray can no longer work and lives off the charity of others. She appeals directly to the listeners, saying "Do not call me a beggar without knowing anything about me ... not without knowing ... what I have suffered". It is through our empathy and compassion for what has happened to her as mother losing her child to terrorism that she emerges as a heroine for surviving and for not having given up on life. Her moral responsibility is to young women like Maribel that need to hear about the errors of the past and pass on feminine history so that things might change. By singing and telling the story that forms the background of the injustice of her situation, Citaray ceases to be an abject creature, fearful, rejected, and ignored, in order to be seen as a mother whose suffering urges us to identify with her pain and recognize the injustice that surrounds us.

The two songs that follow are quite similar to the third in which Maribel's grandmother connects with nature and animals. Here Maribel becomes a sister to the animals and uses the pronoun "we" to then address the rain and implore, "Please don't mistreat me ... sunlight don't punish me". For Carlos Huamán, there exists "a we as a collective individual unit in its relation to the other. The root of this lies in the superstructure of the Indian I, the Quechuan I, whose collective component is decisive because it belongs to the ayllu, or Quechuan community" (161), and this includes nature. As a result of this friendship and dialogue with nature, Maribel accuses the wind of being "very cruel with the poor peasants ... destroying the cereals ... devastating old women/ destroying

villages, trees, / crops. The animism of Amerindian cultures, like those of the orient, accounts for the “we” that Maribel shares with animals and plants, and her need to communicate with the forces of nature in order to live in harmony. It is in this sense that the wind, as a subject equal to any other living creature, can be cruel and feel envy as powerful people do; however, she addresses the wind firmly and chides it by asking, “Why can no one touch you? Why can no one look at you?” as if it were a tyrannical governor. These rhetorical questions become softened when she reminds it of its kindnesses and gifts. In this indirect manner, she tells the wind that when it does not cause destruction, she has it to thank “that we can smell the aroma of the prairies / the fields and roses”. This story thus has a calming effect in that it passes from courage and complaint to reconciliation by way of the sensations that the smell of the countryside brings to us. This search for harmony and change forms a thread that connects each melody.

The seventh and eighth songs are related in that they both show what happens to two women that are supposedly rivals for, and victims of, the same macho man. When Sonia’s mother abandons the home because of the violence she receives from her husband, he goes in search of a woman to look after him. The first song is the story of the desperate lover that cannot find her *zambito* lover and does not know why he has abandoned her.<sup>13</sup> The song then uses a device that is reminiscent not only of Greek tragedy but also of traditional forms of Incan expression: a choir. In this case, it is made up entirely of women and responds to her lament by saying, “The daughter of the wind carried him away,” perhaps alluding to the woman of the next song that comes back to demand justice from the husband that once used to beat her. Sonia’s father’s lover appears to be financially dependent on him since she complains, “Now who, now who will help me/ to sow, to cover the plants, to water them, to harvest”. Despite this lament, she displays fortitude in declaring that she will work alone for the sake of her children. On hearing this, the women of the village console her and bid her not to cry, but she begs that if he remembers her, then he should return “to carry on working”. This last line demonstrates that what ties her to him is not so much love as necessity and, in fact, that the relationship is rooted in mutual benefit rather than love. In the eighth song, the women of the village give Sonia’s mother a heroine’s welcome and celebrate her as: “the woman who one day took off/ she left her daughter behind/ look at who’s coming, look”. At this point we, as spectators, see and hear what happens in dramatic form. Sonia’s mother reprimands her ex-husband: “Before you would hit me when I was pregnant or when I had my baby bundled on my back”, but now she adds, “I have come back to defend all the women in my village. All those violent men need to have their behinds well kicked and be thrown out of this village ... we’ll send them out naked so that they can be re-born”. This image of catholic exorcism or ritual to expel machismo through the humiliation of nudity is part of an indigenous hybrid culture that is frequently referenced in historical accounts of Latin America during colonization. This woman has no need of heteronomous rescue by a superman; instead, she knows that her awareness of herself as a new mestiza means taking responsibility for her own self-respect and not fearing any man, no matter how many Andean women he engages with or adds to his *concubinato*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> A mixed Indian and Black race person

<sup>14</sup> Most men do not marry in the lower social classes, but live with women and have children with them in an unwritten arrangement called *concubinato* or *cervinacuy* in Quechua.

In the next song, the focus shifts from human characters and instead personalizes a musical instrument: the guitar.<sup>15</sup> According to Solier, the guitar cries along with the singer and its melody and as “its voice”, she adds, “I feel its pain/ its harrowing shouts ... the silence remains ... the open sores remain”, like the sound of the click of a trigger and of the discarded shells as they roll across the floor. These are images and sounds that are vivid in our minds, and Solier affirms that with regard to the guitar, “never more ... will it sing”. Her association of the crying with the melody of a guitar has been one of pain since the terrorist years. However, she informs us in her blog that she has learned that “singing is better than shouting,” and adds: “Since I was born with my cry, I warned my mother of the danger that was on the way. I will sing until they bury me.” This is her social commitment, and it involves using the medium of song to alert us to the dangers of living within structures of internal and external terrorism. Insofar as she has experienced it in both the highlands and the cities is evidence that patriarchy everywhere normalizes violence against women.

The CD presents two extra songs as *yapa* or voucher, and this is an indigenous way of retaining a clientele by offering gifts similar to the purchased object. They are part of the film *Madeinusa* (2005) by Claudia Llosa. So, the collection ends with the song titled in Spanish: “Why do you look at me like that?” and another in Quechua: “Waychaucito”. These are not included on the lyrics sheet, since the listener is now ready to step beyond a purely linguistic understanding to engage with these texts on a semiotic level. In the first song, Solier twice asks the listeners why they look so strangely at her and why, when she meets their eyes, they look away. She says that she is a Manayecuna provincial at heart.<sup>16</sup> She asks them to look at her and, transfixed by the gaze, they see themselves. This alignment of vision forms the beginning of whatever dialogue and connection between two people might ensue. She demands a look of acceptance akin to that seen in a mirror, and says, “Look at me, look at yourself,” which expresses an encounter on equal terms, one in which neither party, through ignorance, is seen as inferior, ingenuous, gullible, witch, barbarian, freak or carnival character. Such a distorted vision defined the inhabitants of the New World if we think back to historical accounts in the European discourse of Christopher Columbus, Hernan Cortés, De las Casas, Cabeza de Vaca, Díaz del Castillo, among others. According to Edward Said, Columbus believed himself to be in the east, and it is for this reason that the American identity has been orientalized and characterized with all the negative attributes the west can summon in order to justify its dominion over the rest of the world. In terms of the geography of the mind, he explains to us that, “The Orient triggers a series of brain signals, a process that seems to have been in evidence with Columbus and the discovery of America, in order to establish a New World (although, ironically, Columbus himself confessed to thinking that he had discovered a new part of the old world)” (91). So as not to see the Other as an object but rather a subject like a “we” and not “they”, it is necessary to look with the ethical respect and affection that one would wish for oneself, as if one were standing before a mirror. In this spirit, the second song begs that compassion be shown to that Other who suffers and needs us. It is here dedicated to a young orphan boy of the mountains who is sad and alone and sings for his loved ones. Perhaps he is one more victim of the terrorism in

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<sup>15</sup> The ninth song, “The Guitar,” is the only one completely in Spanish and it is reminiscent of the poem by Federico Garcia Lorca about the sufferings of the Spanish Civil War, which was an internal war like that of Peru. Being an instrument that one holds like a friend with whom one shares intimate emotions, the guitar was also used by the gauchos and the Mexican peasants to sing about their misfortunes and joys in equal measure.

<sup>16</sup> Manayecuna is a native of this region in Ayacucho.

Ayacucho, or has been orphaned by the rejection or indifference of others on account of being considered inferior according to the orientalist vision, which adheres to the differences prescribed by hierarchical systems. It is interesting to observe that the orphan remembers that the Easter carnivals are imminent and that during the celebrations, everyone is equal. The death of Christ thus becomes a reminder of the democracy at the heart of his mission through singing. It is necessary to continue the fight against this orientalist viewpoint, and according to Carlos Huamán, “The opposition between indigenous and non-indigenous (Andean-Hispanic) has been passed down the from generation to generation since colonial times and lives with us today” (154). A consequence of this is that any expression of creativity becomes more acceptable if it approximates and accommodates the western paradigm of knowledge creation. However, we must recognize that our creativity bears the hallmark of our class, along with other differences, as Audre Lorde has suggested, and it is through this lens that we should frame our encounter with black and indigenous women in songs. As a poet, for example, Lorde observes that, “Of all the art forms, poetry is the most economical. It is the one which is most secret, which requires the least physical labor, the least material, and the one that can be done between shifts, in the hospital pantry, on the subway, and on scraps of surplus paper” (116). In the case of Solier, it may have happened in between taking care of her animals, watching over her grandmother, preparing her hot *puca* for subsequent sale in the street, resting after working the land, inducing sleep at the end of a day in which she suffered psychological abuse from her environment during the years of terrorism, or remembering her life in Ayacucho while spending some days in the city.<sup>17</sup> Since her success as an actress in 2005, she has started to travel abroad and to return to her beloved Huanta.

Solier confesses that she learned to sing from her mother and this may lead us to conclude that singing is essentially a multi-functional oral tradition that conveys history, whether this is personal or includes the collective experiences of indigenous women. On the one hand, it is, according to Pinkola Estes, soul medicine in the form of tales that have better endings than their real-life counterparts, as we saw in Anzaldúa’s awakening consciousness of herself as a new *mestiza*; on the other, it creates a whole cathartic literary-musical ritual which forms a historical compendium to the life of peasant women and their experiences in the fight against violence of gender, race, class, and age.

Solier introduces a form of social protest by making herself heard in her own language and rhythm, and, above all, in her engagement in a form of dialogue with those who for so many years have given credence to stereotypes in an attempt to deny any moral responsibility for the lives of women of a different race, class and age, and who live far from the city. Her art is an act of commitment and it extends beyond protest songs against violence on women to embrace her endeavors as an actress, which include a concern with the same feminist themes of her songs. For example, *Madeinusa* (2005) develops the theme of incest and female liberation through the icon of the Virgin Mary, as does Chicano literature; *La teta asustada* (2009) features the trauma experienced by women raped during terrorism and how the fear of being raped causes one young woman to insert

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<sup>17</sup> A dish from Ayacucho made of potatoes, roasted and ground peanuts, pork, beets, red pepper and other herbs.

a potato into her vagina as protection.<sup>18</sup> In both films, the director Claudia Llosa makes the intelligent decision to allow the protagonist to sing in Quechua as part of Andean expression. In 2009 Solier plays the leading role in a film by Peter Brosens and Jessica Hope Woodworth called *Altiplano*, in which it is announced that the industrial contamination of water has caused multiple deaths within the indigenous population. Then, in *Amador* (2010) by Fernando León de Aranoa, Magaly is an immigrant to Spain who, despite her job as a carer for the sick, forms a relationship with her boss that cannot even be broken by death. *Gods* (2008) by Josué Méndez, is a film in which Solier cannot be the protagonist because in denouncing the abuse and invisibility experienced by maids in the wealthy houses of Lima, the visual focus is on people belonging to the elite class.

Solier is collaborating in the creation of cultural, semiotic texts which help us reformulate our epistemological methods so that we may create new meanings. Her music creates a dialogue between the educated world of the city and the oral-historical texts and literary works of the indigenous. In so doing, she helps us to make some headway in solving problems of social injustice as they affect Andean women and to understand the process of psychological healing and empowerment of colonized populations.

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<sup>18</sup> Catholic women find empowerment through the Virgin Mary because she represents the mother-daughter connection that has survived patriarchy. As the subject of modern portraits, she also symbolizes the power of women and is frequently depicted as a strong independent goddess, reminiscent of those in Pre-Columbian times.

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