

## Chapter Seven

### *La vida es una sola* (Marianne Eyde 1993): Female interventions

#### Section 1: Introduction

*La vida es una sola* focuses on the experiences of the inhabitants of Rayopampa, a fictional Andean community caught between *Sendero Luminoso* and the Peruvian armed forces.<sup>1</sup> The film, like Lombardi's *La boca del lobo*, with which it shares some similarities of approach, is set in 1983, one of the most significant years in the conflict. It marked a crucial turning point in terms of the state's response to the guerrilla threat, and a heightening of danger for those living in parts of the sierra that had been declared 'liberated' by *senderistas*. As Peralta points out, 'al comenzar el año 1983 varias comunidades indígenas fueron visitadas por los militares, recibiendo la consigna de eliminar a todo aquel elemento extraño que amenazara su seguridad interna'.<sup>2</sup> Such military intrusions were part of the army's new more brutal counter-insurgency strategy which saw the conflict referred to more generally as a "dirty war". By focusing on the interaction between villagers and soldiers as well as between villagers and *senderistas*, Eyde's film, like Lombardi's in 1988, draws attention to the fragmented nature of Peruvian society and national identity. It emphasises the part played by the state in much of the violence perpetrated against innocent villagers as a result of its determination to eliminate an invisible enemy. Another similarity to *La boca* is the manner in which the specific community and conflicts depicted in *La vida* take on a broader representational significance in terms of symbolizing the nation in crisis. The

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<sup>1</sup> Eyde is the only female director included in this study. She was born in Norway and retains close links with her country of birth although was brought up in Peru and took Peruvian citizenship at an early age. She was best known before this film as a documentary film-maker who worked mainly with indigenous subjects. Her medium length feature *Los Ronderos*, released in 1987, was also set in an Andean community and revealed her sympathy for their marginalized social status.

<sup>2</sup> Peralta Ruiz, p. 61.

main difference is that this film foregrounds issues of female identity to a greater degree and links them to alternative ways of thinking about the national image and its relationship with violence.

## **Section 2: Context**

*La vida* was not the first national film to portray the conflict between terrorists and the military, but it was the first to devote time and space to articulation of the ideologies and motives of *Sendero* in detail. It depicted individual rebels as complex characters whom the audience is invited to get to know and understand. Already dealing with controversial material, the film suffered from being completed at about the same time as the capture of *Sendero* leader Abimael Guzmán in September 1992. His long-awaited capture gave just cause for national celebration for the relatively new Fujimori regime since it marked a possible end to one of the nation's darkest eras of violence. However, it also triggered a period of widespread denial, repression of debate and national amnesia regarding collective responsibility for victims of the violence, as well as the extent of the armed forces' involvement in acts of torture, disappearance and other forms of abuse. A sense prevailed that the nation should make every effort to forget certain key aspects of its recent past, even if this entailed downplaying the extent of the violence suffered by the most marginalized communities in rural Peru. Influential sectors of the domestic mass media also supported turning a blind eye to the nature of the military's brutal counter-subversion strategies, for the sake of national unity and preservation of the political status quo.<sup>3</sup> As Hayward suggests, 'nationalisms are forged

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<sup>3</sup> This drive to promote national amnesia was hampered in the short term by the discovery, in early 1993, of the bodies of a professor and eight students from La Cantuta University, apparently killed by the military command that had abducted them a year earlier. However, headlines that appeared in the most influential national daily newspaper, *El Comercio*, continued to offer support and high praise for the success in capturing Guzmán. See Peralta Ruiz, pp. 230-7. There was a particular focus on denouncing Guzmán as the 'asesino de miles de personas inocentes de una nación que

in part in a ... remodelling of the past',<sup>4</sup> and it was undoubtedly in the political interests of President Fujimori to remodel and to rewrite certain memories of the military's involvement in the conflict so as to secure greater confidence in the regime's strategy for the future.

Nevertheless, testimonies from survivors reveal that the need to keep alive a more rounded memory of the struggle remained strong. Indeed, amongst families and communities that had suffered the greatest loss, the very act of speaking about loved ones tortured or disappeared by the military as well as by *Sendero* represented a 'stubborn refusal to acquiesce to the state's desire to erase the use of terror from collective memory'.<sup>5</sup> Eyde's film, eventually sanctioned for release by *Coproci* as part of the national cinema approval system, went even further in its defiance in that it threatened to take such a sensitive debate back into the public domain and thus confront Peruvians of all classes and cultures with some of the uncomfortable and complex realities of the battle against *Sendero*, as well as the problems of national identity. In the event, the controversial representation of the political conflict offered by Eyde's provocative film led to it being regarded by many as an ideological threat to the state, and even to the new era of relative peace that was being proclaimed by the media on a daily basis. The film was debated within the context of the 1981 anti-terrorist legislation; as a result, its release was delayed by a year, the director was accused of betraying pro-*senderista* sympathies, and some journalists demanded that those few

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repudia la violencia' and, by default, downplaying the role played by the state in such killings. See Peralta Ruiz, p. 240. This reference in the national press to all those who rejected violence is ironic given its importance in the state response that led to the killing not only of *senderistas* but also of thousands of such 'personas inocentes'.

<sup>4</sup> Hayward, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Orin Starn, 'Villager at Arms: War and Counterrevolution in the Central-South Andes', in *Shining and Other Paths*, ed. by Stern, pp. 224-260 (p. 225).

cinemas that dared screen it should be burned down.<sup>6</sup> This analysis sets out therefore to examine the key features of the portrayal of conflict in *La vida*, and the context of its reception in order to help understand why this particular depiction of events provoked more hostility than any of the other films addressed in this study.

### Section 3: Synopsis

The plot begins as the annual carnival celebrations of Rayopampa get underway, and solemn images are shown of a young llama being sacrificed and offered to the mountain deities. Three students, two men and one woman, arrive in the village ostensibly to learn about Andean culture. It is later revealed that they are *Sendero* comrades who have come to lay the groundwork for the recruitment of village youngsters to the rebel cause and hence to secure the ‘liberation’ of the area from military (state) control. One of the *senderistas*, Aurelio (Jiliat Zambrano), seduces a local girl, Florinda (Milagros del Carpio), as a strategy to infiltrate the community, while his comrades befriend other young villagers who they suspect might be vulnerable to ideological persuasion. As suspicions are aroused about their real motives, the three comrades disappear back into the mountains, just before a regiment of the armed forces based nearby arrives to remind the villagers of their duty to the state. The rebels return later, this time without disguise, and execute the community leader whom they believe betrayed them to the military. They nominate two new leaders, then leave again, taking most of the young people with them. Florinda joins them out of misguided love for Aurelio but is soon

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<sup>6</sup> As an addendum to his review of this film, Fernando Vivas was moved to publish the following statement: ‘en defensa no del filme de Marianne Eyde, sino de la salud del buen cine peruano y del oficio de escribir sobre él, tengo que manifestar el malestar que causa leer y oír declaraciones de algunos colegas que la acusan de apología del terrorismo y claman por ver incendiados a los cines que la proyecten’. Fernando Vivas, ‘*La vida es una sola: un filme de una presencia contundente*’, *El Suplemento*, 31 October 1993, p.16.

repelled by the brutal methods used by the group, and deeply hurt by Aurelio's deception. When she is called upon to execute a deserter, someone she has known since childhood, she feels she has no choice but to run away herself, despite the danger to her own life. On her return to the village, she finds her home devastated and her presence is clearly a cause for concern for the few survivors of military reprisals. Florinda's father persuades her to leave again and, like *La boca's* Vitín Luna, she finally disappears into the snow-capped mountains. The focus here on a female protagonist and her horror at and rejection of violence suggests a different vision of the nation that challenges the notion of an assumed link between machismo, patriarchy and national identity.

#### **Section 4: Analysis**

Some of the features that Eyde's film shares with Lombardi's portrayal of the *Sendero* conflict include a focus on an Andean community and on a younger generation. One of the main differences, however, apart from the centrality of the female point of view, lies in the choice made by the director to place the *Sendero* group at the centre of the drama and to give them a set of identifiable faces and distinct identities. Moreover, the film provides, through its three *Sendero* characters and their recruitment mission, an intelligent and detailed articulation of the rebel group's justification for their campaign of violence. Frequent references are made to their belief in the need to destroy the current state structure and build a new, more equitable and socially inclusive system of governance in its place. As national critic de Cárdenas emphasized in his review at the time of the film's release:

Estamos ante el acercamiento más logrado al modo de actuar y hablar de *Sendero Luminoso* que haya presentado el cine peruano ... como nunca antes, el desfase entre el discurso dogmático y robotizado del senderismo y

su inadecuación fundamental con nuestra realidad campesina queda de manifiesto.<sup>7</sup>

He compares the multi-faceted portrayal of *Sendero* offered in this film with that in *La boca* in which the enemy remains ominously invisible, and with Durant's *Alias la gringa* (1991), in which the rebels are depicted as savage madmen. In Eyde's film for example, rebel comrade Roger (Javier Maraví) sets out to enlighten a select group of young villagers about the possibilities and need for change by debating their plight while they are working on the land together. He urges them to consider rejecting the notion of private land ownership and instead to work together more closely to provide for the whole community. He stirs up hostility within the younger villagers for the older generation by reminding them of how much power the latter seem to enjoy. Meanwhile, one of the village leaders refuses to work on the land with the group and insists on tilling his own plot in a gesture of defiance. Such scenes demonstrate how ordinary, generation-related frictions were exploited by *Sendero* in such a way as to destabilise the unity on which such a community depends for its survival, both in fighting poverty and in combating violent attacks. Later on, Roger urges the same young villagers to rise up against the so-called exploiters and oppressors – both within and outside the community – and take responsibility for their plight, as well as joining the armed struggle for the future well-being of the oppressed.

By articulating *Sendero* ideology in this way, Roger highlights the rebel group's main public discourse which promoted 'equality and justice for the peasants'.<sup>8</sup> Stern has

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<sup>7</sup> De Cárdenas cited by Bedoya, *Un cine reencontrado*, p. 307.

<sup>8</sup> Ponciano del Pino H., 'Family, Culture and "Revolution": Everyday Life with Sendero Luminoso' in *Shining and Other Paths*, ed. by Steve J. Stern (London: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 158-192 (p. 163).

reported that one of the main reasons for *Sendero*'s initial focus on the Andean communities rather than other rural areas of Peru was that this was where 'state support for the hacienda system and ethnic domination continued to reign'.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, efforts to enhance social inclusion in coastal areas had been more vigorous and successful since the 1960s. In her study of relations between *Sendero* and the inhabitants of the Andes, Cordero further points out that the rebel group sought to relate to the Andean people 'through a discourse of change, of a new society without poor or rich people, and with a new state'.<sup>10</sup> This echoes Mariátegui's studies of conditions for the indigenous people of Peru, in which he advocates the need to reformulate social structures and, in particular, to renegotiate issues of land ownership.<sup>11</sup> The guerrilla ideology argued that a people's war was the only way to achieve the desired new state structure, and in *La vida*, Roger further reveals his *Sendero* credentials by promoting the value of armed struggle. There is evidence to suggest, however, that those in charge of the guerrilla group despised the poor almost as much as the rich, accusing the most vulnerable of being 'parasitic burdens, useless and disposable'.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the cruelty of the group's later treatment of the villagers of Rayopampa reveals a determination to achieve power

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<sup>9</sup> Stern, pp. 14-5.

<sup>10</sup> Cordero, p. 353.

<sup>11</sup> See José Carlos Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*, trans. by Marjory Uguindi (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971). Note, however, that, as Wood suggests, Mariátegui was one of the first to reconcile the various cultural and political visions of Peruvian identity, and that 'es precisamente en esta capacidad de combinar lo europeo con lo indígena para construir lo peruano que radica la trascendencia de la obra de Mariátegui'. See *De sabor nacional*, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Del Pino, 'Family, Culture and "Revolution"', p. 163.

at all costs, showing no particular respect for the *campesinos* on whose behalf they profess to fight.<sup>13</sup>

The film is further distinguished from the previous two films, and indeed from all of those included in this study, by its emphasis on a female *senderista* leader, comrade Meche (Rosa María Olórtegui). While commentators on gender and violence such as Connell have pointed out that ‘most episodes of major violence ... are transactions among men’, *La vida* sets out to highlight the reality that within the *Sendero* hierarchy, women were offered some of the most active and demanding roles.<sup>14</sup> In his analysis of terrorism in Peru, David Whittaker speculates that ‘women overcame the subordinate role and status historically ascribed to them in Peruvian society when they participated as equals in the *Sendero Luminoso* apparatus and led many of its initiatives’.<sup>15</sup> According to Cordero, however, female participation in guerrilla warfare was not necessarily a sign that *Sendero* proposed a radical new agenda for women in Peru, but rather that ‘their presence derived more from their own expectations and desires to enter new spaces of participation’.<sup>16</sup> It is clearly the case that their involvement in this way would have presented a greater challenge to gender stereotypes that would perhaps have made the group even more threatening to a state system based on patriarchal order. The character of comrade Meche is especially provocative in this regard. Even Cordero’s more measured report acknowledges that ‘women [in *Sendero*] achieved a visibility

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<sup>13</sup> Del Pino reveals that *Sendero* in fact had a ‘hidden script that [eventually] surfaced to reveal repugnance, intolerance, and racism’. See ‘Family, Culture and “Revolution”’, p. 163.

<sup>14</sup> Connell, p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> David J. Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 159.

<sup>16</sup> Cordero, p. 349.

never before seen in any political party in Peruvian history'.<sup>17</sup> While evidence suggests that most women were restricted to traditional duties of attending to the survival needs of male recruits, others were involved in more logistical and propaganda activities. As the conflict continued, *sendero* leaders sought in fact to turn many more of its female members into brave *macha* warriors, and the character of Meche embodies, amongst others, this aspect of female participation in the *Sendero* campaign. Nevertheless, this strategy largely imitated existing patriarchal structures and reinforced the dominance of machismo as one of the dominant features of national identity. It therefore contributed little in the long term to the development of a meaningful alternative position for women within the social hierarchy.

Cordero further argues that there were two basic requirements for the acceptance of women by the Shining Path: 'capacity for leadership and readiness to give oneself over to party activities, to the point of renouncing responsibilities such as work and study and renouncing familial and affective ties'.<sup>18</sup> Meche is an idealized representation of such a woman. Indeed, critic Fernando Vivas describes her character as 'una mujer de ultraizquierda con el aura de beatitud, pacatería y asexuada "mamá coraje" que tienen todas las lideresas fanáticas, ... con un rostro dulzón que le da una perversa fascinación a su sonrisa cuando adoctrina a los niños de Rayopampa'.<sup>19</sup> She emits an aura of contentment with and devotion to her chosen path in life, and embodies the spirit of personal sacrifice that was fundamental to the *Sendero* philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cordero, p. 351.

<sup>18</sup> Cordero, p. 349.

<sup>19</sup> Vivas, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> This notion of self-sacrifice was labelled "the quota", which is described by Gorriti as 'the willingness, indeed the expectation, of offering one's life when the party asked for it'. See 'The Quota', p. 324.

Alongside the traditionally ultra-masculine qualities of warrior-like courage and a fierce determination to succeed, Meche is depicted as intelligent and articulate. Little is offered regarding her background except that she was a university friend of Aurelio and Roger. In fact she takes over from Roger the role of indoctrination of the youngest villagers, interrupting their lessons to instruct them about an alternative version of their nation's history that emphasises the deep-rooted struggle between exploiters and exploited of Peru. She thus attempts to reinvent national history in such a way as to prevent the development of any emotional tie with the official state version of the founding of the nation. She is aware that 'history is ... a crucial player in the construction of nation'.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, she demands absolute commitment to the party from those around her, and throughout the film issues orders that constantly test that devotion. As Cordero suggests, women like Meche were 'characterized by their total identification with the project and their great will to work and to struggle'.<sup>22</sup> The creation of such a compelling and enigmatic female insurgent as someone to be reviled for her actions, but perhaps also admired for her commitment and defiant transgression of cultural boundaries, undoubtedly contributed to the hostility displayed towards Eyde's film by audiences, critics and authorities alike.

A further controversial aspect to Eyde's film lies in its condemnation of the violence perpetrated by the military. While Lombardi's *La boca del lobo* was also critical in this regard, Eyde's film risked upsetting the state further by neglecting to offer much

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<sup>21</sup> Hayward, p. 90.

<sup>22</sup> Cordero, pp. 349-50. Rosa María Olórtégui reported in an interview with Fernando Vivas that she based her character on university peers, whom she suspected were *Sendero* members because of their behaviour and opinions. See '*La vida es una sola: un filme de una presencia contundente*', p. 16.

discussion of the reasons for the actions of the armed forces. Moreover, the film offers only a single character, Tigre (Aristóteles Picho) through whom to portray the approach taken by the military, representative of the state, to both the *Sendero* enemy and the Andean communities. Indeed, some critics believed this to be the most controversial aspect of the film due to the context of its release in 1993 ‘cuando la captura de Guzmán y otros avances en la lucha antisubversiva han dado cierta venerabilidad a las fuerzas armadas’.<sup>23</sup> At this point, the military’s much debated and criticized counter-insurgency strategy ‘based on the indiscriminate use of terror against the peasantry’ was more or less forgotten and the press was discouraged from discussing it.<sup>24</sup> Hence, this big screen depiction of a lieutenant leading his regiment against *Sendero* by striking fear into the rural inhabitants they had been sent to protect would have been unwelcome at the very moment of triumphant state victory and apparent restoration of peace.

Moreover, Tigre is depicted ambivalently as both perpetrator and as victim, subject to the demands of the military institution and the nation-state to which he has committed his life, together with the fierce desire to win a conflict that has come to define him. He reveals to the community leader that he considers himself dead inside thanks to his time spent battling against the largely invisible *Sendero* enemy with an ill-equipped and under-prepared army. He, like Lieutenant Roca in Lombardi’s film, has been driven mad by the apparent impossibility of curbing the violence of the guerrillas, and by the reluctance of the villagers to collaborate with his efforts. He considers their refusal to

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<sup>23</sup> Vivas, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Manrique, ‘The War for the Central Sierra’, p. 193. Indeed, the scale and consequences of such a strategy were not publicly acknowledged until the revelations of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in 2003, and even then were greeted with further denial by some former members of the military. The implications of this report and its relationship with national cinema are discussed in the analysis of Fabrizio Aguilar’s *Paloma de papel* (2003) in Chapter Eleven of this project.

name traitors, to take down the *Sendero* flag, and to bury a villager murdered by the rebels as acts of betrayal on the part of the whole village. As a man who has given himself to the protection of the state and its institutions, he derides the villagers' fears and is intensely frustrated that they prioritise a duty to the community over loyalty to the state and defence of the nation. He reacts angrily to their passive defiance and uses insulting language (calling them '*indios sucios*') that betrays an attitude of racism and misunderstanding towards the villagers. Rather than defend them, he is quick to accuse them all of having joined the *Sendero* cause, and selects at random a group of villagers for punishment who are then 'disappeared' for good. He embodies all that was despised about the armed forces by those who fought against human rights abuses committed by the military during the struggle. At the same time, he symbolizes man at his most aggressive and completely devoid of the emotional ties suggested by Freud as necessary to ward off the instinct for violence towards others.<sup>25</sup> Like most of the soldiers in *La Boca*, he does not recognise the villagers as sharing the same sense of national identity as himself; he does not recognise them as fellow citizens of the nation-state it is his mission to protect.

*La vida* stirred up further controversy by focusing much of its sympathy on the Andean community of Rayopampa around which the drama and its central conflicts revolve. The villagers are depicted as the indisputable victims of forces that are beyond their control, whether they are the indoctrination tactics of *Sendero* on the younger villagers, or the brutal threats of the military on the older generation. Such an approach resonates with the director's earlier documentary work of the 1970s and 1980s, which cast a generous spotlight upon the daily lives of indigenous Peruvians. Through careful

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<sup>25</sup> Freud, *Civilization, Society and Religion*, p. 351.

framing and use of soundtrack, the film develops an impression of a tight-knit rural community that in many ways becomes the real protagonist of the film, trapped between *Sendero* terror and military abuse. The importance of internal unity and homogeneity in the daily lives and functioning of the community is emphasized through the use, for example, of high and wide angle shots that refuse to let the camera rest upon one individual character. César Pérez, director of photography and a key collaborator on Eyde's documentary work in the Andes, allows his camera to glide over the top of the action and thus take in the whole community in a single frame, as in the scene of mourning for the executed community leader. In early scenes, the viewer is introduced to the rituals of daily life in the sierra, with colourful, idealized images of animals, rural customs and festivities, and collective agricultural work, thus emphasising the community's closeness to the land and harmonious existence with nature. Such scenes contribute towards placing the rural community at the heart of the drama, and help to establish a sense of equilibrium which is disrupted abruptly moments later. They also contrast with the approach to the Andean landscape in *La boca del lobo*, which emphasized the harshness of life in the mountain terrain, for newcomers and inhabitants alike. Eyde's vision is romantic, lyrical and slightly nostalgic, more in line with the vision of the Andean way of life promoted by the *indigenismo* movement of the 1930s to the 1950s. Certainly it shares with that movement a desire to 'cuestionar el concepto hegemónico de la identidad nacional basada en la Lima criolla' and a move to refocus attention on the diversity of Peruvian identity that includes the rural and the indigenous.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Wood, *De sabor nacional*, p. 21.

The film emphasises its view of the tragic nature of the degradation of an ancient way of life by the forces of modernity by alternating scenes of peaceful tranquillity with scenes of brutality, the latter eventually overwhelming the former as the narrative progresses and the penetration of *Sendero* members into rural life becomes deeper. What begins as manipulative ingratiation with and feigned respect for local customs and traditional way of life on the part of Roger, Aurelio and Meche turns into sadistic domination of and intrusion into all of the community's rituals. School lessons are interrupted by speeches on *Sendero* ideology, reflecting the strategy of imposing its own teaching methods on rural schools, 'even kidnapping *campesino* children for ideological indoctrination'.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, the teachings of Guzmán and his followers are spread amongst the adults as they work the land. The younger villagers remain the primary target, however, since their lack of experience makes them more susceptible than their elders to the promises of a better way of life offered by *Sendero*. Rayopampa thus stands emblematically for all those Andean communities that found themselves trapped between two violent groups: between 'the military's offensive, principally against youth and leaders labelled terrorists, and Shining Path's efforts at forced recruitment, which targeted the same groups'.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the older *comuneros* realise too late that they should have shown greater resistance by organising themselves into a Civil Defence Committee, and reference is made to other communities that have already done so. The tragedy is hence compounded for the inhabitants of Rayopampa as they come to realise that if only they had been provided with the basic resources with which to defend themselves and some

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<sup>27</sup> Mauceri, p. 127.

<sup>28</sup> Cordero, p. 354.

backup from the military, they might have been able to save the village from total destruction.<sup>29</sup>

The villagers are depicted on the whole as terrified victims of violence from all sides, accused by *Sendero* of collaborating with the army, and suspected by them of collusion with the rebels. However, the plight of one individual, Florinda, is highlighted above all others, by placing the story of her traumatic transition to adulthood amidst a context of violence within the broader political framework of the film. As Vivas points out, the whole drama is embodied in Florinda's personal dilemma:

El retrato sumario pero dinámico y vital de una comunidad entre dos fuegos, el esfuerzo por entender la militancia terrorista y la psicopatología militar, el romance como anzuelo proselitista y otros efectivos motivos dramáticos se hacían carne en Florinda, la campesina protagonista.<sup>30</sup>

Florinda does not take the conventional female position of passive observer, but participates in the action by deciding to join *Sendero*'s campaign. Arguably, her decisions are dictated by the manipulative Aurelio, but she assumes a more active and defiant position by fleeing the group in the end despite his pleas. At the same time as contributing unwittingly to the collapse of her community and the destruction of her family home, she also experiences an intense initiation to love and death. Bedoya goes further than Vivas by drawing attention to Florinda's important symbolic role in conveying the film's themes. He suggests that she is herself iconically emblematic of all

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<sup>29</sup> Ponciano del Pino notes that many communities organized Civil Defence Patrols, but also that these did not really start to take effect until the second half of the 1980s. See 'Family, Culture and "Revolution"', p. 163. Hence, at the time when this film's narrative events took place (1983), the notion of organized self-defence against a terrorist enemy was relatively unknown in Peru's rural communities. Eyde thus appears to conflate aspects of history so as to emphasize even more strongly the vulnerability of the abandoned community of Rayopampa and others like it.

<sup>30</sup> Vivas cited by Bedoya, *Un cine reencontrado*, p. 307.

those communities devastated by the political conflict: 'ella se convertía en el resumen, la cifra, la expresión de los que, trémulos, expresan su desconcierto ante los lugares devastados y los tiempos difíciles en que les tocó vivir'.<sup>31</sup>

The depiction of Florinda as primarily submissive to the demands of *Sendero* leaders seems to have been influenced by the Eyde's understanding of the treatment of Andean women by the guerrilla group. Her portrayal contrasts with the respect and superiority accorded to a figure like Meche, differentiated from the *campesina* by her university education and familiarity with life outside the sierra, and thus suggesting a familiarity with a supposedly more modern way of life on the coast. Cordero notes that, despite some effort by *Sendero* to address gender relations, interaction by its male members with indigenous women betrayed its preference for patriarchy and its lack of respect for inhabitants of the Andes. She noted, for example, that 'Shining Path used romance as a strategy for recruiting women',<sup>32</sup> a tactic that is highlighted in the film by its focus on the control that Aurelio exerts over Florinda. Their encounter also draws further attention to the fluidity and ambiguous complexity of Peruvian identity. It becomes clear that Aurelio was born and grew up in Rayopampa yet has also become differentiated from his childhood friends as a result of his education, life in a modern urban environment and participation in politics. His absolute allegiance to the *Sendero* dream of revolution with the promise of a total redefinition of Peruvian society suggests that he is prepared even to see the destruction of his own community, a symbol of all the oppressed of Peru. Moreover, Aurelio, like all *Sendero* members, was obliged to renounce his name and all emotional ties with the past, including family and friends,

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<sup>31</sup> Bedoya, *Un cine reencontrado* p. 308.

<sup>32</sup> Cordero, p. 350.

thus sacrificing himself totally to the revolutionary cause. Indeed, he tells Florinda she should be proud to do the same. At first she grudgingly accepts this advice, as her belief in his love for her holds sway, but the order from Meche to kill first a dog and then a friend who is accused of desertion tips her over the edge and causes her to flee. As Vivas points out, 'las pruebas de la "radicalidad" por las que debe pasar Florinda son los detonantes del quiebre'.<sup>33</sup> Her emotional bond to her community and family is too great to allow her to tolerate such separation and destruction, which makes it all the more tragic that when she does return home, her father urges her to leave and carry on running. Her time with *Sendero* has changed her irrevocably; having been forced to make the transition to adulthood more sharply and intensely than other girls in the community, she now has to leave it. Meanwhile her rejection of violence, central to the film's ideological message and linked to her identity as female, further emphasises the apparently tight link between masculinity and violence and their prominent position as integral to the prevailing national image.

In common with the young protagonist of Lombardi's film, we last see Florinda running into the Andean mountains, fleeing from both the military and *Sendero*. Her situation is dangerously ambiguous as she is now considered a traitor by both sides of the conflict. Although her future is far from certain, one miserable possibility is that, if she is lucky, she will join the masses of *campesinos* migrating from the country to the streets of Lima, like Jeremías in Nilo del Pereira's *Ni con dios ni con el diablo* (1990). Her dream of romance is shattered along with her youthful innocence; her family cannot protect her, and the state now regards her as an enemy of the nation. And yet she refuses to embrace the option offered by *Sendero*, turning her back on an approach based on destruction and an image shaped by violence.

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<sup>33</sup> Vivas, p. 16.

The projection of sympathy onto an Andean community devastated by conflict and abandoned by the state indicates a profound failure of efforts to develop a sense of national unity without excluding important communities. Although this was not a view that was popular in 1993, one prominent and controversial writer and social critic had already written much in the 1980s about the roots of Peru's social collapse. Alberto Flores Galindo examined the apparent rupture between Peruvian state and society, drawing attention to the lack of solidarity, common national image and shared collective projects in his country:

La ruptura entre Estado y sociedad es, en realidad, la expresión política de un país donde las solidaridades son escasas, no existe una imagen común, ni se comparten proyectos colectivos. Ser peruano es una abstracción que se diluye en cualquier calle, entre rostros contrapuestos y personas que caminan “abriéndose paso”.<sup>34</sup>

He continues his discussion by linking these key issues to the problem of rising tensions and structural violence in Peru. To a certain extent, *La vida es una sola* revives such debates by confronting domestic spectators (mainly in Lima and other coastal cities where commercial cinemas are located) with the devastation experienced by communities in the more remote parts of their own country. Like Lombardi's film, it also illustrates the tensions that arise from the formation and projection of a Peruvian national identity that continues to be controlled by a Lima-based social, economic and cultural elite, and that is shaped largely by notions of macho masculinity and violence. Meanwhile, Peruvian citizens living outside the capital remained excluded from such a narrow view of national identity that thus failed to embrace the virtues of cultural diversity within the nation.

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<sup>34</sup> Flores Galindo, p. 189.

As already noted, Lombardi's *La boca del lobo* offered a ground-breaking portrayal of the military response to the *Sendero* conflict, and because of this it experienced some difficulty with its release, but was approved by the authorities and became a great success with critics and public alike. The outcome for Eyde's film was less positive, despite its treatment of similar material. Between 1988 and 1993, there were important socio-political changes in Peru which caused Eyde much greater difficulty in getting her film accepted by the authorities, as well as by critics and the general public. The political and economic climate had hardened as the terrorist attacks persisted and began to affect Lima with greater frequency. The authorities hence proved unwilling at this time to accept a film that portrayed the rebels in such detail. After all, they had presented a great threat to national stability for over twelve years, and placed an even more sadistic focus on the plight of the civilian victims at the hands of both soldiers and guerrillas. By now, the *Sendero* conflict was a problem for Lima as much as for the rural areas of the country and so the authorities and the cinema-going public were directly affected in a way that had not been the case in 1988. Moreover, the leader of the movement had been captured by then, and Fujimori's relatively new political regime was anxious to avoid criticism of its own aggressive anti-subversive methods. Meanwhile, the violence in Lombardi's film had been rationalized by some reviewers as the actions of one traumatized renegade officer. In contrast, Eyde's film was widely perceived as a more openly antagonistic cinematic statement on the effects on all sides of the political conflict, thus placing itself in direct opposition to the ideological position of the government.

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In addition, great pains were taken by the government, through the national press, to encourage the view that *Sendero* motives were not in fact linked to revolutionary ideals, but to self-serving economic interests reliant on drug-trafficking enabling the group's leaders to live a life of debauched luxury.<sup>35</sup> The state's clear aim was to dispel the myth of *Sendero* as a self-sacrificing opposition to a brutal government and the self-appointed saviours of indigenous traditions, and at the same time to restore and develop the image of the armed forces as defenders of national unity. Hence, it is possible to appreciate how a cinematic depiction of idealistically committed young revolutionaries might have threatened to undermine state-sponsored efforts to shape public opinion at that time.

One consequence was that the release of the film was delayed as it underwent close scrutiny by the nervous members of *Coproci*, who took the unprecedented step of sending the film to the *Ministerio del Interior* before voting on its suitability for release. Furthermore, the co-screenwriter, respected national playwright Alonso Alegría, insisted on the removal of his name from the credits for fear of persecution by the state, and hostility from audiences that might damage his reputation. The director herself was accused by many of revealing and pursuing a pro-*senderista* agenda. According to interviews she gave in 1992, none of this concerned her particularly, but she was angry that the very institution set up to oversee and promote national cinema was reluctant or scared to approve the film's release on ideological grounds. As she explained at the time:

La responsabilidad de la Coproci es emitir un voto según la calidad técnica y artística, y ellos pueden emitir ese voto. Pero no deben asumir otras responsabilidades que son competencia de otras instancias del Estado.

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<sup>35</sup> Peralta Ruiz, pp. 231-3.

Entonces ellos están asumiendo un rol de censores, que, por ley, no les compete.<sup>36</sup>

In response to the accusation that she was a terrorist sympathizer, Eyde drew attention to what she perceived as a lack of collective responsibility for a national problem, and called for institutions such as *Coproci* to enter publicly into this important debate. She considered her treatment by the state as insulting, degrading, and as an oppressive attack on freedom of expression and creative production in general. Several of the nation's most renowned and respected film-makers signed a letter to *Coproci* in support of the film, but the debate continued for over a year.<sup>37</sup> It is suggested here that Eyde's identity position as female director originating from Norway might have been part of the reason behind the treatment she received from the press and authorities in particular. Moreover, she received no funding from the Peruvian state. The \$150,000 budget was instead financed by grants from Norwegian and Dutch organisations as well as through personal loans. This brings to mind the tension between a concern for cultural authenticity and the tendency still to dismiss those films "tainted" by extra-national elements and influences' despite the need for cross-cultural collaboration in order for national films to be made.<sup>38</sup> It seems, perhaps above all, that this national topic was not to be dealt with in such a provocative manner, if at all, by someone who, despite having actively confirmed her affiliation to the Peruvian nation, was still considered an outsider.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Eyde cited in 'Entrevista con Marianne Eyde', *La República*, 9 November 1992, p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> These included: Armando Robles Godoy, José Carlos Huayhuaca, Juan Carlos Torrico, Federico García, Fernando Espinoza, and María Ruiz.

<sup>38</sup> Stock, p. 157.

<sup>39</sup> Stock's article draws on the work of Néstor García Canclini who, writing at the same time as this film was being made, raised questions about the relevance of national identities in a time of globalization and interculturalism and the complications that arise when artists cross borders. See Nestor García Canclini, '¿Habrà cine latinoamericano en el año 2000? La cultura visual en la época del postnacionalismo', *Jornada Semanal*, 193

### Section 5: Concluding Thoughts

*La vida* was eventually released in November 1993, but its critical reception nationally was ambivalent despite acclaim at a number of international festivals. Furthermore, whereas *La boca del lobo* had been released at a time when a protective cinema law guaranteed exhibition on the national cinema circuit, by the time Eyde's film was released, the law had been abolished and national films were forced to compete on the open market – in a battle weighted heavily on the side of popular and highly polished Hollywood products. Moreover, while Lombardi's film was able to rely upon considerable domestic state support and co-production funding from Spain, Eyde was forced to draw on more meagre resources from Norway, Holland, and Venezuela. When her film was finally approved for release, it opened at only four cinemas in Lima, and national TV channels refused to incorporate it into their schedules for a further ten years.

Meanwhile, renowned critics Bedoya and León Frías came to the film's defence in separate reviews, the former suggesting that the director's clear, distanced and reflective approach to her subject was to be applauded, and the latter asserting even more emphatically that 'decir que la película tiene una opinión prosenderista o que le hace el

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(1993), 27-33. Here a Norwegian director, Eyde, has actively changed her national affiliation to Peruvian and who has thus crossed borders both physically and psychologically, but who is nevertheless excluded from participating in debates about issues of major concern to her adopted country. Canclini continued this debate with an article on identity and visual artists published in 1994, and more extensively and broadly in his seminal text of 1995. See Canclini, 'Remaking Passports: Visual Thought in the Debate on Multiculturalism' in *Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Nicholas Mirzoeff. (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 372-381 and *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. by C.L. Chiappari and S.L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

juego a Sendero es no haber entendido o no querer entender su clarísimo sentido'.<sup>40</sup>

Fernando Vivas reminded potential viewers that the “dirty war” really did take place, and that many innocent civilians were caught in the crossfire, writing that ‘situándonos en 1983, no dudo que esa imagen del campesino entre dos fuegos, empujado por la milicia a luchar sin armas contra un enemigo demasiado cruel, sea muy próxima a la realidad’.<sup>41</sup> All three critics were careful to put some distance between events as they were shown on screen and the political climate of the time. They were also reluctant to make any statement on the possible continuing relevance of this film’s message to the Fujimori regime of the early 1990s.

For her part, Eyde, as Lombardi had done five years earlier, insisted that her film should be interpreted on a broad level as a call for peace, a rejection of violence, an expression of a passion for life, and a statement on human rights for all, as well as a historical text that draws attention to an important period in the nation’s recent history. The director claimed to have been motivated by a firm belief that commitment to human rights must mean, above all, a commitment to the right to life, acknowledging that *Sendero* violated that right just as much as the state.<sup>42</sup> She was particularly shocked by the elaborate discourse about death used by the guerrilla group to indoctrinate youngsters, and by their strategic use of violent imagery and language that created emotive references to ancient Inca traditions in order to seduce the new recruits.

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<sup>40</sup> Bedoya, *Cine*, 8 November 1993, p. 11 and León Frías, *Caretas*, 28 October 1993, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> Vivas, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Eyde, p. 12.

When looking for evidence of her intended message of humanity within the film itself, it seems pertinent to cite the emotional drama that revolves around Florinda and thus the choice of a female protagonist as message of the film's statement against violence. Although much of the film deals with the political struggle, her story emerges as the central thread and her character as the one to whom the audience feels most attached and for whom we feel most concern. Like Vitín Luna, she is flawed in many ways – naive, foolhardy, and impetuous – but her deep emotional bond with her family and her community is what distinguishes her most. Her realisation that these ties are what matter most is what saves her ethically. At the end of the film, Florinda, having been forced into the position of killer, accepts the greatest sacrifice, leaves her family, and 'corre por su salvación'.<sup>43</sup> The focus in the final sequence on her courage to flee into the mountains and reject violence, despite the risks and personal loss involved, is what finally marks her out as heroic and iconic. Her traumatic experience thus symbolises the dilemma faced by a generation of young people growing up in the Andes in the 1980s of how to locate themselves in relation to the armed struggle. It thus embodies the film's message as a rejection of violence at the time (early 1990s) of a regime that had proved itself to be 'efficient in the control of terrorism' but which did not respect 'democratic institutionalism'.<sup>44</sup> It seems important to note that such issues would be returned to ten years later in a more receptive climate by a new generation of national film-makers committed to revisiting the past in a bid to understand the present. Finally, what the film achieves is a focus on the deep-rooted divisions and fragmentations of Peruvian national identity, with the consequent complex process of affiliation to and movement across different social groups, as well as the tensions emerging as a consequence of the struggle by each for recognition and inclusion. By seeming to lend

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<sup>43</sup> Vivas, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Muñoz, p. 463.

most of its intellectual attention to articulation of the *Sendero* view of Peruvian history and identity, however, the film and its director were subject to state oppression and remained for several years at the margins of the national cinema framework.