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"Incarcerated Memories from the Margins: Shining Path Women, Race, Gender, and Violence"

This chapter of my book manuscript examines how former indigenous Shining Path women imprisoned for treason represent themselves to reclaim humanity and inscribe their victimhood in Peruvian history. Far from trying to catalogue the variety of imprisoned women's memories, here my aim is to understand the way a few of them represent the dynamics between the politics of human rights and testimony. I use the term testimonial voice to capture how racialized women demand attention, deconstruct stereotypes, and challenge dominant narratives by questioning nationalist discourses that have placed them in the margins—a site destined for monsters, witches, non-Peruvians, illegitimate victims. In order to demonstrate how the works of memory function in these testimonies, I focus on prison writings to discuss the normalization and silence surrounding the use of extreme violence exerted on bodies identified as female, insurgent, and indigenous. The notion of illegitimate victim, a cultural construct that I define as the process of imposing levels of humanities and turning victims who disobey the legitimate power of the State into beings without rights, allows me to identify the coloniality/modernity mechanisms behind the erasure of combatant women's humanity and citizenship. Although they have been subjected to kidnappings, torture, and rape, their loss and suffering are not recognized as human rights violations. In such a context, illegitimate victims are not worthy of sympathy no matter how traumatic their experiences may have been, but rather deserving of punishment for disrupting the social system. By resurging women's standpoints, propositions, and struggles, I offer an alternative approach for capturing Shining Path women's voices, experiences of war, and moments of agency. Through close readings of the circumstances surrounding women's roles in armed struggle, I deploy censored and silent memories that fissure victim/perpetrator borderlines, speak for themselves, and demand that society recognizes them as victims of systematic brutality.

This talk will be based on a chapter of Autry's book manuscript, which will be sent in advance upon completion of the meeting registration for review and to offer feedback.

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