

PEDAGOGY OF VIOLENCE IN THE PERCEPTION OF YOUNG SOLDIERS IN AYACUCHO, PERU¹

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ABSTRACT: This study examines how violence operates as both a legacy and an imperative in the management of memory through the training provided to young men during voluntary military service. Perceptions of the period of violence are shaped by both direct and transmitted experiences, particularly within the context of the military lives of volunteer recruits at the Los Cabitos Barracks (Ayacucho) in the post-war era. Within this framework, a pedagogy of violence plays a central role in shaping military identity, constructing the "internal enemy", the subversive, as a figure of radical otherness. Memory of this period is defined not only by the official narrative, which exalts the figure of the "undisputed victor" and promotes a celebratory institutional memory, but also by the aftereffects of trauma and pain that often go unseen. This hegemonic memory, aimed at glorifying military triumph, stands in stark contrast to the subaltern memories emerging from communities directly affected by the conflict.

Keywords: Violence; Memory; Internal armed conflict.

PEDAGOGIA DA VIOLÊNCIA NA PERCEPÇÃO DOS JOVENS SOLDADOS EM AYACUCHO, PERU

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RESUMO: Este estudo examina como a violência opera tanto como legado quanto como imperativo na gestão da memória, por meio do treinamento ministrado a jovens durante o serviço militar voluntário. As percepções sobre o período de violência são moldadas tanto por experiências diretas quanto transmitidas, particularmente no contexto da vida militar de recrutas voluntários no Quartel Los Cabitos (Ayacucho), no período do pós-conflito. Nesse cenário, uma pedagogia da violência desempenha um papel central na formação da identidade militar, construindo o "inimigo interno", o subversivo, como uma figura de alteridade radical. A memória desse período é definida não apenas pela narrativa oficial, que exalta a figura do "vencedor incontestável" e promove uma memória institucional celebratória, mas também pelos desdobramentos do trauma e da dor, muitas vezes invisibilizados. Essa memória hegemônica, voltada para a glorificação do triunfo militar, contrasta fortemente com as memórias subalternas que emergem das comunidades diretamente afetadas pelo conflito.

Palavras-chave: Violência; Memória; Conflito armado interno.

INTRODUCTION

Rumbling voices showed their multiplying effectiveness in the Peruvian population, a post-conflict society, with messages such as: "Senderistas will go free!", "Shining Path leaders one foot from freedom!", "Terror back on the streets!"³ These news burst into the social field to generate controversy about the possible risks of releasing those who, despite having served their sentence, continue to be perceived as a threat. While some call for pardon, others advocate eternal incarceration or close monitoring by the military. From whatever position it is stated, it is evident that this debate acts as a trigger of collective memory, where the current condition of these individuals is not at stake, but the social perception imposed by the hegemonic memory of the State, legitimized by a part of the population that feeds back the frozen image of

³ Peru's National Penitentiary Institute (INPE) currently registers 486 people deprived of liberty for terrorist crimes, whether linked to the Shining Path or the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). Since 2006, 350 people have been released, and it is predicted that by 2024, only those sentenced to life imprisonment, such as Abimael Guzman, Elena Iparraguirre, Maria Pantoja and Laura Zambrano, among the best known, will remain in prison. To date, no ex-convicts for terrorism have been caught committing new attacks, which does not mean that they cannot do so in the future (INPE, 2016).

the released “terrorist”, thus perpetuating fear and mistrust in a country that is still seeking to heal the wounds of the past.

But, at the end of the day, we owe this common sense of the conflict to the Peruvian Army, which strove to seek regularities to postulate a terrorist profile, and, especially, to the ideological apparatuses of the State which, despite their efforts, placed their processes of reflection in spaces characterized by debate, but did not succeed in sowing reflective seeds in the institutions involved in the internal armed conflict. For this reason, I believe that the construction of a culture of peace becomes a tortuous path, beset by social stigmatizations that generate an intolerable radical otherness; that is, forgiveness and reconciliation among compatriots are still a glimmer of sunshine in times of storm, a distant horizon in a society that still struggles to heal the wounds of the past and overcome the deep divisions left by violence.

The little teaching on political violence promoted by the Army of Peru within its hierarchical structure causes a sea of problems that revolve around how the past is taught and educated in a founding institution, marked by political violence and the main actor, and the repercussions it generates in the perception of the “enemy”. This paper insists on dismantling the inheritances and demands in the management of memory through the education provided to young people in voluntary military service at the Fort Los Cabitos Barracks.

Both the institutional transmission of knowledge, experiences and memories to weave a sense of belonging to the subject that is incorporated, and the internalization of values, practices and imaginaries of military culture, are simultaneous and inseparable processes. That is to say, the collective perception first involves stopping to look at the symbolic scaffolding on which it is sustained, legitimized and regulated. In this sense, we first provide specificities about the young people in the military barracks through a historical connection; second, we address the inculcation of military culture, focusing on the type of violent pedagogy at work in routine life and the place occupied by the issue of political violence; third, we reflect on the internalization of military practices and logics that (re)configure the optic with which classifications are made about the “terrorist” enemy; and fourth, we summarize the findings by way of conclusion.

The methodology is based on an ethnography of the everyday, focused on glimpsing shared experiences resulting from living together for two years in the

barracks of Los Cabitos, Ayacucho (2012 and 2013). For this purpose, methods such as participant observation and unstructured interviews were used.

The purpose of this research goes beyond drawing attention to the training provided to young volunteers who are passing through the barracks. At the end of their voluntary military service, these young people become multipliers and disseminators of military rationality in their daily lives. However, a teaching that omits human rights can reinforce prejudices and common senses that validate violence, hierarchization and the exclusion of memories coming from otherness. Undoubtedly, we want to express our deep gratitude to the military, my friends, with whom I shared many joys and sorrows. They, as if they were mortar, molded my personality.

1 YOUNG MEN QUARTERED IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD

With the permission of the State, which, without clear rules, entrusted the institutionalized defenders of the homeland with the task of fighting the “armed rebels” while respecting human rights, the military began to march into regions in the eye of the storm, confident that they would do a more effective job than the forces of order (the Civil Guard, the Republican Guard and the Peruvian Investigative Police). The setbacks in the first interventions of the police forces convinced President Belaunde Terry to delegate absolute control of the emergency zones to the Armed Forces. From December 29, 1982 to June 19, 1986, the phase of “militarization of the conflict” developed, to paraphrase the CVR. The highest peak of human rights violations was recorded during this period, generating a storm of criticism and debate on the intervention of the military.

The military's shield was composed of two discursive shields: every war generates a quota of blood to achieve pacification, and the acts committed would come to constitute “excesses” without importance. In rejection of the recognition of the abuses of the Armed Forces, well documented by the CVR, the Permanent Commission of Army History published In Honor of the Truth (2010) to make the civilian population see the sacrifices of being military and sustain the closed defense of the actions of its members, with slight tinges of self-criticism but based on a unilateral view. In this

section, we want to open the window to the performance, conduct and rationality of the soldier in the internal armed conflict⁴.

The Armed Forces entered the Ayacucho region in 1983, and their stay was immediately marked by “curfews” and practices of extracting specific individuals (subjects of suspicion) from the public eye in the shadows of the night, in order to subject them to interrogations at military bases. Consequently, forced disappearance became a strategy to cover up torture, arbitrary detentions, sexual violence and, finally, extrajudicial executions. To cite a few examples, the Los Cabitos Fort, the Casa Rosada and the Huanta stadium were places where death was rampant. Subjects under suspicion had to die in the most dishonorable way possible, through dehumanizing acts such as mutilations and cremations of corpses to avoid identification, as was the case of La Hoyada.

In rural areas, the military faced the impotence of identifying the enemy (members of the Shining Path), since they did not wear uniforms or occupy barracks, but mimicked the Andean villagers. Under the cloak of racism, they applied a policy of “taking the water from the fish”⁵, which consisted of killing a hundred people in the hope of hitting two or three Shining Path members. Ulpiano Quispe (2015) argues that “the Armed Forces, upon entering the peasant communities, the first thing they have done is to reestablish order: appoint political, municipal and communal authorities and incite the population to rebel against the PCP-SL, demanding them to hand over the Shining Path leaders under threat of being razed to the ground” (Quispe, 2015, p. 186). Proof of this, the CVR managed to identify 215 massacres committed by the PCP-SL and 122 perpetrated by State agents, such as the cases of Accomarca, Putis, Hualla, Pucayacu or Cayara. In addition, almost 6,500 clandestine burial sites were registered throughout the national territory, with the greatest concentration in the central Andes. It

⁴ The internal armed conflict (1980-2000) refers to two decades of suffering, violation of human rights and respect for human dignity, but it also highlights the deep fractures and differences between Peru and its citizens. This conflict was fought by two brutal and devastating forces: on the subversive side, the Shining Path and the MRTA; and on the side defending the imposed order, the Armed Forces of the State. Both used terrorist technologies to capture the enemy, who was simplistically classified as innocent or involved, as black or white, excluding the gray areas. For the peasants, however, there were different forms and levels of involvement, ranging from giving a glass of water to actively participating in the raids carried out by the armed groups. This reductionist approach ignored the complexity of social and human dynamics in the midst of violence.

⁵ It was a military logic to which General Cisneros Vizquerra referred to when he predicted the entry of the military.

was during this period that numerous graves, burial sites and dumps of corpses emerged on hills, in places, abysses, rivers and other places, demonstrating the magnitude of the violence and horror experienced during the internal armed conflict.

Another dehumanizing aspect during the internal armed conflict was the systematic practice of conceiving women as spoils of war and the repository of men's honor. The military carried out massive sexual violations, adhering to rituals of group affirmation summarized in the phrase “we all passed”, in order to generate a brotherhood and blur individual guilt. In the villages considered to be Shining Path support bases, the military applied “la pichana” (sweeping), a practice that flaunted sexual potential and reinforced control over the communities. According to the CVR, of the total number of documented rapes, 83% are attributed to the forces of law and order, 11% to terrorist groups and 6% to unidentified groups (CVR, 2004). Lurgio Gavilán (2012), in his testimony about his time in the military bases, notes that human rights violations were “the daily bread”, a mystique that differentiated the soldier from the common man and normalized violence as part of the military identity during the conflict.

The evident systematization of human rights violations and the initiation of judicial proceedings against military personnel generated a tense atmosphere that persists to this day. Today, the trials of military personnel are openly criticized by sectors that defend a justifying discourse. To paraphrase one of these defenders, Luis Ibérico⁶, “it is said that when there is war, God is invoked and the soldier is summoned. And when there is peace, God is forgotten and the soldier is punished”. This narrative reflects the resistance of some sectors to recognize the responsibility of the military in crimes committed during the internal armed conflict. However, it is logical and necessary that our society, albeit harshly, judge the military for the systematization of sexual violations, torture, kidnappings, extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances.

⁶ President of Congress in 2017, who on May 25, 2016 issued a speech after amending Law No. 24053 in order to extend benefits for more than 3500 former combatants who fought in the conflicts of the years 1933, 1978, 1981 and 1995, highlighted the importance of recognizing the sacrifice of these veterans. This modification sought to ensure that those who participated in the defense of the country during those historical periods would receive fair and adequate treatment from the State. For more information on this topic, Cf.: PERÚ. EJÉRCITO DEL PERÚ. **Beneficios a los veteranos**. 2016. Available at: <http://www.ejercito.mil.pe/index.php/component/k2/item/1308/1308>. Accessed on: Aug. 19, 2026.

At the same time, the internal armed conflict shaped and reinforced some of the practices in force within the barracks, which are redefined in the current context with the remnants of subversive groups such as MOVAREF and the narco-terrorists in the VRAEM. This situation evidences a continuity of practices, teachings and perceptions that give a twist in the production of a radical otherness, stripped of humanity.

The Fort Los Cabitos barracks, belonging to the Second Infantry Brigade within the Central Region, became a key institution during the internal armed conflict, energizing the Ayacucho region through operations aimed at neutralizing the enemy. However, these operations were characterized by the use of ambiguous criteria in the detention of alleged “Shining Pathists”, which resulted in the massive extrajudicial execution of people and the subsequent cremation of the corpses to avoid their identification (APRODEH, 2014).

Currently, the Fuerte Los Cabitos⁷ barracks houses young people between 18 and 25 years of age who perform voluntary military service, motivated by various reasons, such as fulfilling their aspirations to pursue a military or police career, developing an awareness of national identity, seeking opportunities for mobility and social advancement, or even family pressure to rectify their behavior. These young men, mostly from peripheral or rural areas, knock on the barracks doors and ask to be admitted under the regulations of voluntary military service. Their origin implies the reproduction of the local Ayacucho Andean culture, including the use of Quechua as a daily language.

The bulk of those entering the Fuerte Los Cabitos barracks are rural youths with incomplete secondary education, while the presence of urban youths is due, in many cases, to the need to correct their behavior. Among the entrants, the accumulation of symbolic and informational capital is more accessible to urban youth, who tend to adapt more easily to institutional dynamics. In contrast, rural youth face greater difficulties in doing so due to barriers such as verbal expression, humiliation and self-marginalization. Both groups arrive at the barracks with a situated knowledge of memory in post-war society, aware of the diverse narratives that coexist about the internal armed conflict. However, during their immersion in the barracks, both urban and rural youth reinforce

⁷ The company is located next to the Alfredo Mendivil Airport in the region of Ayacucho, province of Huamanga, district of Andrés Bello Cáceres.

prejudices that foster intolerance towards other memories, thus perpetuating divisions and stereotypes that hinder the construction of an inclusive and reconciliatory collective memory. This phenomenon reflects how military structures not only shape soldiers, but also influence the way young people perceive and process the past and the present.

It is necessary to establish some guidelines to help us better understand military life without being limited by them. In the first place, there is a prominent patriotic ritual that is staged through chants, salutes to the flag, harangues and displacements. In this context, the use of the voice becomes a fundamental means of interacting and transacting power. One hundred percent of the quartered life is shouted, roared with all the strength. Among the general punishments, such as the *plancha*, when bending the elbow, a shout “now” is emitted, and when rising, “one” is counted; so on and so forth until the end of the punishment. All movements are performed with energetic blows accompanied by shouts that reinforce patriotic ritual and military discipline.

Second, there is an identity construction of what it means to be a military man, which includes requirements such as having a commanding voice, being tough, brave, macho, self-sacrificing and a womanizer. Third, the purpose, by *antonomasia* of the Army, is the defense of Peruvian territory from possible internal or external threats, which implies preparing for war and fostering a sense of “dehumanity” (not to cry, not to have compassion for the enemy). Fourth, the organizational structure is hierarchical and vertical, where the subordinate's submission is invoked with features of paternalism, since the subordinate “does not speak or murmur”. Fifth, the existing hierarchy and the institutional purpose legitimize the use of violence to develop a potential military (resistant and ready for war) through an economy of punishments and rewards. Finally, a brotherhood is cultivated between promotions, reflected in clichés such as “the army is a fist” or “the rain wets everyone”. This principle takes center stage when an officer or officer-in-charge commits an offense, and his superior punishes not only him, but also those before him and his entire promotion. This approach is mainly used for punishing troops, reinforcing the idea of collective responsibility and group cohesion.

Fuck! In other words, you are unprotecting your promo. Not anymore, as the Army is a fist, it is one, all in a plank position, courtesy of the Panther soldier (Field notebook, maloca, March 2013).

The testimony reflects a common dynamic within military life, specifically in the context of voluntary military service. This phrase illustrates how the principle of collective responsibility and brotherhood between promotions, a core value in military training, is applied.

In this case, the Panther soldier, upon committing a fault, not only receives an individual punishment, but his entire promotion is sanctioned, in this case, with the position of inflexions. This reinforces the idea that “the Army is a fist”, that is, an indivisible unit where the actions of one affect all. This type of practice seeks to foster cohesion, discipline and a sense of belonging to the group, although it can also generate tensions and resentment among young people, especially when the sanctions are perceived as unfair or disproportionate.

2 LEARNING TO BE A MILITARY MAN: PEDAGOGY OF TERROR AND VIOLENCE

The barracks has two seasons of influx for the population eligible for voluntary military service: the first one, from January to June, and the second one, from July to December. The first semester of the year is the favorable and complete time for military training, while in the second semester, due to the low incorporation of volunteers, the military instruction cycle is carried out “halfway through”. This temporal distinction plays a crucial role in the redefinition of the status and identity of young people, generating categories such as the “good military” (those who complete their training in the first semester) and the “half-hearted” or “incomplete military” (those who join in the second semester). Both groups are known as the “enerina” and “julina” promotions, respectively.

The volunteer, whether coming from urban or rural practices, will need to learn to live within a military culture, undergoing learning processes that, progressively, require him/her to leave – although not completely – his/her civilian practices to adopt militarized behaviors. In this process, the person becomes a recruit, initiating a path of transformation that not only involves the acquisition of technical and physical skills, but also the internalization of values, hierarchies and rituals of military life.

The contract of acceptance of voluntary military service, with a duration of two years, gives the military authority the legitimacy to impose itself physically, socially and culturally on the conscript. This agreement not only formalizes the relationship between the State and the young volunteer, but also establishes a power dynamic in which superiors assume the role of paternity in relation to what they perceive as “defenseless children” (in a situation of *waqcha*⁸). Under this logic, military commanders see themselves as responsible for molding recruits, transforming them into “good citizens” through discipline, instruction and the internalization of military values.

When I came to the barracks, I felt like *waqcha*, friendless, locked up. Everyone seemed to be my enemies, they called me a dog. They said to me: 'Hey fox, your body and soul belong to me! If you have sisters, they belong to me and, what can I say, your girlfriend!' (guard post).

This testimony evidences the dynamics of power and domination that are exercised within the barracks, where superiors use dehumanizing and possessive language to assert their authority. Phrases such as “your body and soul belong to me” or “if you have sisters, they belong to me” not only seek to subjugate the recruit, but also to reinforce a hierarchy of hypermasculinity where the individual loses his autonomy and becomes the property of the military institution.

Being a recruit in the barracks is not only a simple nickname used by the military to distinguish the new members, but this category encloses a whole scheme of symbols that justify and determine power and identity relations with the new member of the military family. It is used to highlight his military inexperience, comparing him to a child who does not know how to walk and does not know the confines of the world, and who must be educated from scratch. Being a conscript is tantamount to immaturity, inexperience, weakness and ignorance of behavior in barracks life. This implies the concealment of the power to decide, reason and give an opinion, since he is conceived as someone who has arrived at a new order in which he must submit to the established rules, hierarchies and rituals.

The recruits don't even know where they are standing. They are like babies who stop and ask for their teats as if we were all their mommy. That's why

⁸ Quechua word equivalent to “orphan”, it refers to the lack of relatives and to a situation of poverty.

here we teach them not to cry, to forget their mother, to be a cachaco [soldier] and to know their place as a dog (Black sergeant, Maloca).

The physical, psychological and cultural training process at the Fuerte Los Cabitos barracks is based on the idea of relegating and eliminating civilian attitudes in order to impart militarized behaviors. This process is only possible through the participation of recruits in the rites of passage known as “la perrada”. These rites are broken down into three phases: first, rites of separation, corresponding to the initial status of recruit, where the young man is stripped of his civilian identity and begins to be molded according to military parameters. Second, rites of margin, in this phase, the recruit acquires the necessary requirements, such as physical and moral prowess, and is categorized under terms such as “fox” or “dog”, which reflect his subordinate position and his transformation process. Third, aggregation rites, in this final stage, the recruit reaches the military profile, which is symbolized by the surrender of arms and his full integration into the military institution.

Using Arnold Van Gennep's (1969) classification, the *perrada* ritual can be understood as a process that includes: preliminary rites (separation), the recruit is separated from his civilian life and begins his transition; liminal rites (margin), the recruit is in a state of transition, where he acquires military skills and values; and postliminary rites (aggregation), the recruit is formally incorporated into the military institution, culminating his transformation.

This ritual, which lasts three months (from January to March, the most intense, or from July to the end of August, depending on the volunteer's income), includes a series of emblematic rites and other less visible but equally important ones. Among the emblematic rites are the shooting practice, which symbolizes the acquisition of essential skills for combat; the patrolling outing, which represents preparation for real situations; the warriors' trot into the streets of Ayacucho, which reinforces physical resistance and military presence in the community; and the handing over of weapons, which marks the culmination of the process and formal incorporation into military status.

On the other hand, there are less visible but fundamental rites, such as military instructions and review lists, which reinforce discipline, order and the internalization of military values. These rites, although less spectacular, are crucial for the formation of the recruit, since they shape his behavior and his adaptation to barracks life.

Together, these rites, both emblematic and unnoticed, make up an integral process that transforms the young civilian into a military man, preparing him physically, psychologically and culturally to assume his new role within the military institution.

Within the ritual of the *perrada*, the recruit assumes, in a forced manner, the position of “dog” or “fox”, terms that place him at the bottom of the military hierarchy and subject him to an infinite number of humiliations. Upon entering this hierarchical structure, the recruit becomes the property of the Army, and his condition of “dog” or “fox” is not only a discursive label, but implies a profound process of moral, physical and cultural training:

- Moral training: The recruit must internalize that the ritual of the “dog” will give him the necessary strength and motivation to develop psychological resistance to punishment. He must accept that, if he is subject to sanctions, he must comply with them without question or reproach, assuming that this is part of his training.
- Physical training: The recruit is subjected to rigorous body strengthening to prepare him for battle in the field. Physical punishments, such as planks or strenuous jogging, are recurrent and are integrated into the daily life of the barracks, normalizing suffering as part of the training.
- Cultural training: The recruit undergoes behavioral, emotional and rational changes that align him/her with the demands of military life. This involves abandoning civilian attitudes and behaviors to adopt a militarized mentality, where obedience, discipline and submission to hierarchy are fundamental values.

2.1 Institutional Memory Residence

Every day I get up very early, I raise my hand and I pray to God that I never lack a damn *terruco*, that I never lack someone to kill and that I never lack the thirst to kill, and one two, three four (Warriors trot before the target list).

I bring up one of the many war songs that resonate in military installations on a daily basis, precisely in order to consider the type of education on political violence that is imparted. This presents us with a set of challenges consisting of detecting how and when this topic is discussed, in which spaces it is mentioned and in which it is conspicuous by its absence, what type of memory is admissible and which is not, and,

above all, the contents that an older generation, direct participants in the conflict, transmits to the next and passing generation.

I am referring to the Army of Peru as a founding institution, guardian of the state order, which played a leading role in achieving its established goals and proclaiming itself as the undisputed victors. The memory coming from this sphere is clothed with the winning element in situ and, therefore, imposes itself over other memories. Heroism is conferred on their memory and they pompously boast about their maneuvers, their courage, courage, strength and resistance, and they are proud of their fallen heroes. All these actions would come to constitute emblematic memory, in the words of Stern (2002). The other configurations of memory, characterized as those that provoke pain, trauma, crying and aggravation of the emotional state, are very marginalized⁹. And the fact is that they respond precisely to who the listener is, and as long as there is no horizontal relationship of empathic understanding between the speaker and the listener, the choice will be to show only the tip of the iceberg.

In the barracks, the memory that circulates is characterized by being eminently festive. The guilt of human rights violations is banished; the torments they may cause are silenced; the negative consequences of their intervention in the war and its failures are omitted, and the successes of the “potential military” are highlighted, wrapped in a justifying discursive mantle to save democracy.

Guido Chati (2015, p. 55) notes, in Onqoy that “personal or loose memories represent the massacre as a disturbing memory, while collective memories do so as a festive memory”. Following his argument, the festive memories become the most representative and worthy of recounting, even more so when it is a matter of forming military men who comply with the socially constructed prototype.

Taking into account the above, teaching about the internal armed conflict does not aim to create reflection on the legacies of the past, but the past is undisputed because soldiers are precisely conceived as possessing the strength to fight and defend, depriving them of their political and social agency. Despite the legal introduction of the

⁹ It should be specified that memories should not be catalogued as solid, nor should we only glimpse the painful part, much less imagine them as such or such, but as those that move through gray fields. Following Bauman's logic (2008), they are liquid memories that, according to the framework that summons them, can become of different shades; they are performed in each act or staging in which the past and history itself are accommodated; some are silenced and greater emphasis is placed on others; agency can be invoked or denied, being this exercise a sign of its agency, worth the redundancy.

human rights approach in the military institution¹⁰, in practice, human rights remain distant and unimaginable.

Institutional teaching is discursively present in the areas of instruction and disciplinary training of the body. The thematic components do not respond to a systematic structuring that provides a global panorama facilitating its comprehension. On the contrary, it is evoked with a view to depositing hatred on the enemies. However, we can distinguish two forms of teaching about the conflict: objective and subjective. The first is characterized by a direct approach. It is presented on exceptional occasions with the dual purpose of instilling fear and highlighting the bravery of the actor.

The recurrent space of the NCO is usually, after a massacre, an arsenal of exercises for some fault committed by the troop, insisting on weaving a brotherhood based on: “I educate your miserable body to make you a good soldier”¹¹. Normally, the night is the propitious space for this type of activity and conversation in which the person in charge relates his feat memories, the confrontations he had and his bravery. All of this is often referred to as the soldier's mystique.

The second form corresponds more to the symbolic sphere that operates in the most subtle way, being war songs a privileged vehicle in which virility, superiority, the need to kill terrorists or Chileans, mysticism, sacrifice, among other behaviors assigned to the military, are shown. Warnings such as “if you don't kill, they kill you”, “if you can't, you will be a terrorist”, are used to reinforce the sense of belonging through symbolic violence that is wielded to achieve greater performance in the military. The exhortations are frequent in surveillance posts and in military instructions. and in military instructions.

When you are a *cachaco* you don't have a choice. Either you kill and you look like a hero, or they kill you and you look like the worst military man. With the pride we have, we all want to look good. So shitty dogs, don't be sleeping at your guard posts and stop with the bullshit that you are military. Comply with the slogans that the enemy is lurking (Non-commissioned officer on cover duty).

¹⁰ On July 31, 2007, the government of Alan García approved Law No. 29075 with the purpose of establishing a Center for International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, which would be in charge of instructing military forces personnel in the aforementioned subjects.

¹¹ “When you are like me, you will also sanction others, so I am just helping you to educate that wretched body” (Field notebook, drill yard, soldier).

3 ENEMY COMPATRIOTS: PERCEPTION OF “TERRORISTS”

The preeminence of the enemy finds fertile ground to reproduce itself and is supported by the use of excessive violence. It is not only an instrumental issue, but also generates passions, emotions, since authority deals with human beings, but insists on the idea of uprooting feelings, of not feeling pity or compassion for the punished subject. Acting in this way causes raining mockery by resorting to figures associated with tenderness and motherhood, to the care of the other, such as “*teta*, because very much like a mother”. such as “*teta, muy tata*” or “*eres una madre, una madrezota*” (you are a mother, a great mother).

There are authorities that screw you for the roe, as if they had nothing to do. That's why I don't like to punish, but they tell me to do it to do the same to terrorists (Soldier, rest block).

It is necessary to bring up the feelings experienced by the military authority when it punishes the subordinate and the emotions felt by the subordinate when he is punished. In the daily conversations, the sergeants enunciated a satisfaction, a reward for what they had gone through, which gave them the right to enjoy the moment, to humiliate him and to forge an idea of superiority. On the other hand, the subordinate experiences emotions of impotence, the desire to rebel and strike the authority, but does not act in this way because it implies a greater risk of retaliation. In such a scenario, the subordinate has two options: first, to cultivate and keep the grudge inside, longing to let off steam with a new recruit; and second, to “take it as a sport”, to activate a capacity for constant resilience where doing the exercises strengthens the body without paying attention to the humiliations.

I distinguish three types of authority that prevail in the social relations of military culture: abusive authority, passive authority and radical or transformed authority. The abusive authority is characterized as a person full of hatred, either by personal experience in the basic training stage or by family problems, who tries to “unburden the heavy burden through the very reproduction of the fact sustained by explanations of a continuum of violence” (Ramos, 2016, p. 81). In this sense, there is a widespread practice of the use of the economy of violence linked to the economy of

affections, which allows denying the humanity of the subordinate, breaking the sense of belonging and practicing the debasement of the heart.

On many occasions I perceived how the military add to their personality a symbolic, distinctive and hegemonizing element, such as the cap, beret, belt, etc., with the purpose of generating anxiety in the subordinates due to their transgressive attitude. The subjects may have a passive or abusive authority, but there is a breaking point that generates a transformation of the sense of authority into a more radical and forceful one. Before entering into this performance of authority, a warning is given about the dangers that acts of disobedience entail for the subordinate. Phrases such as “don't do it” or “watch out” foretell the transformation of gentle treatment into a more drastic one. But if disobedience insists on permeating the environment, it is conducive to the performance of authority.

Don't make me put on my beret and the Pachacutec comes out. Then I don't want to be listening to complaints and lamentations. You guys earn your treatment on your own and then you say I am bad. Now the red sauce party is about to start (Sergeant, Botija, military rest room).

In the daily life of the barracks, the phrases we collected are: “Not even I can prevent it when I become a sinchi”; “now I take my chiquitolina pills and I transform myself”; “I take off my balaclava and they got fucked”. These show the internalization not only of the military ideology, but also of the memory itself and the hidden stories that point to the tortures committed during the dirty war¹². At the same time, the use of pseudonyms in order to conceal one's identity, something common in the two bloodiest decades, became common practice in the confines of the barracks, being an essential requirement to be a military man par excellence. The “combat badges” rest in festive testimonies of the surviving military.

At the same time, pseudonyms lead us to consider the cultural construction of the enemy. However, to speak of the enemy is also to stop looking at ourselves. If the senses of belonging that we weave are inevitably linked to the intolerable radical otherness, if we need its presence to distinguish ourselves, to exist and to be fulfilled, we perceive that the very categories of identity tend to be instruments of regulatory

¹² For more detail, you can review CVR testimony 100169 which talks about a military man nicknamed “el brujo” (the sorcerer).

regimes. Military culture shapes mental structures (military language, identity model) and imposes common principles of vision and division. Taking Bourdieu (2002), symbolic capital is any property (any kind of capital) that is appreciated by social agents, whose categories of perception are in a position to know and recognize, to give it value, honor and reputation. Throughout the process of military training, a symbolic capital is acquired that imagines the terrorist as a contagious and offensive behavior.

Terrorists are like the bad apple that must be killed because they do not change. do not change. They are good at infecting. That is what they are good at. They are also good for they are also good. Because of them the war happened (Field notebook, maloca, sergeant 2).

A dangerous humanity takes effect in which a “symbolic trashing” is invoked, consisting of “the way in which we maintain the other as a radical otherness that we do not listen to, a space of discharge, a body that must be anonymously evacuated from the system so that everything continues to function” (Silva Santisteban, 2009, p. 94). The figure of the *senderista* is much more present in quartered life than in other spheres. He is mentioned every time they sing, learn and go out to parties. The VRAEM and the narco-terrorists are more fervent in their presence.

The time patrols are already in the jungle and cannot be defeated. They are monsters terrorists are monsters. They have gone into the jungle and walk at night. That is why you should be more afraid than the devil himself. you should be more afraid than the devil himself (military rest room, soldier).

Many military men “believed or convinced themselves that they were not only fighting a battle in ‘defense of the homeland’, but at the same time they made of their own compatriots the enemies they had to fight” (Aronés, 2012, p. 2). This leads us to think about the criteria of humanity that we ourselves, from the position in which we place ourselves, legitimize. According to Judith Butler (2010), every society generates cultural modes that regulate affective and ethical dispositions through a selective and differential framing of violence.

Military logics are based on this same reasoning, so that “they are capable of converting the subject's own destructibility into something justifiable and his own destructiveness into something unthinkable” (Butler, 2010, p. 77). The lives of the military are worth living insofar as they defend, while the lives of terrorists are worth

destroying regardless of their reasons. Although in practice there is no evidence of this, the same discursive sense validates it, since a “concrete life cannot be apprehended as damaged or lost if it is not first apprehended as living” (Butler, 2010, p. 13).

Thus, we have found some regularities in the perception of terrorists. In the first place, they are categorized as exotic, close to a monstrosity: “...this label fixes a person as a horror-error. A being of fright alien to the community that must be eliminated” (Agüero, 2015, p. 103). Secondly, their lives do not matter and, therefore, they are dehumanized, 'trashed', discarded, reinforcing the ethical isolating walls that prevent the proximity of radical otherness. Thirdly, the image frozen in time prevails; its political agency of transformation, of change, is omitted. Fourth, the geographical, emotional and racial division of placing the enemy in Andean zones prevails.

And fifth, finally, the use of such category evidences the positioning and understanding of political violence because it encloses a process of stigmatization, where the Andean settler is associated with “acts of bloodthirsty violence that, in turn, revealed their condition of hypocritical, fanatic, traitorous and unpatriotic and even subhuman individuals.” Therefore, they were not worthy of any consideration and even less of civil and legal rights” (Aguirre, 2011). In short, it perpetuates their initial condition by forcing them to occupy the place of the marginalized in order to condense the other as the fixer of their identity.

Voluntary military service has become for many a valid option. Young people seem to be “seduced by the paraphernalia of power: weapons, boots, voice of command, the uniform. Seduced by the prestige of institutions and as channels of social mobilization” (Degregori, 1990, p. 196). In recent years, youth demand has grown due to new educational benefits, often generating an influx of young university students (Gamarra, 2013). In addition, Ayacucho experienced a process of militarization of society, and it was common for a young Ayacuchan to have a close family member affected by political violence.

The predominance of festive memory and the internalization of military principles, however constituted they may be, clash with the personal memories of the young men in the barracks. These memories are transmitted from one generation to another by someone belonging to their direct family tree, as in many cases, the grandparents, especially in urban youth.

My grandmother lived in those days by the central market. She tells me that the military were abusive. She had her little shop and they always fucked as if it were their house. What would my grandmother say now that she finds out I'm in the barracks? But since she's already dead, what can you do... I don't know. It is hard. The military took my grandfather away and I don't know that (Cantina, cape).

In young people from rural backgrounds, the memory, more than intergenerational, is formed by the lack of a missing person that is lived and felt day by day. This lack is anchored in their marginalized status marginality, even more so when they belong to places marked by massacres such as Putis, Cayara, Accomarca.

No one in my family likes me being in the barracks. It's not that they fuck around. They are right. My mom used to go to the barracks to get my dad released. Ingrato called me once. once. That's why I don't go anymore, but the old lady comes here anyway. And that makes me (Visiting room, sergeant 2).

The handling of memory is striking. The urban youths claim that memory is just around the corner, while for the rural youths, memory resides in their homes, in their lives marked by their homes. However, they themselves question the use of their agency in relation to their communal memory, in relation to the memory they proclaim to impose themselves as the potential military devoid of feelings and ready for war. This shows how within the same military framework subjectivity enters and breaks the surface to manifest itself and then return.

The impasses are due to the fact that they are young men quartered in a post-war society and, being accepted within the military structure, they look for escape valves, such as talks between “promos” with much suspicion in private spaces; being the guard service, leisure days, the block and the street the favorite scenarios. However consolidated the social control in the barracks may be, the other intolerable memories form interstices to question the established order.

4 CLOSING THE OPEN OR OPENING THE CLOSED: FINAL REFLECTIONS

... a single memory translated in the form of a question can unleash a whirlwind (Chabalo, 2014, p. 50).

The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission stipulates that the Armed Forces perpetrated human rights violations and distrusted the civilian population, leading to practices of indiscriminate repression. Therefore, the recommendations are aimed at building a culture of peace through a balanced relationship between the Armed Forces and society, with a view to combating social problems such as poverty. The Peruvian Army immediately denied the relevance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, claiming that it omitted the leading role of the military. It elaborated its own explanation of the internal armed conflict, highlighting that the defense of democracy had a cost of life for the common good and that it would come to constitute “excesses” (Ejército del Perú, 2010).

Initially, Lourdes Hurtado (2005) shows that for the military, following the recommendations of the TRC is to distort the very nature of the Armed Forces. Recently, Sofia Macher (2014), former commissioner of the TRC, made a comprehensive assessment ten years after the final report was presented. In the section on defense and internal order reform, she mentions that “75% of the recommendations have satisfactory progress, 16% unsatisfactory progress and 1% in which no progress was made” (Macher, 2014, p. 76). Two antagonistic things we want to highlight: first, that there is a commitment to changes in military education and curriculum, giving room for human rights and democratic principles; second, that there is no citizen oversight capable of showing the implementation of these reforms, and as long as mechanisms are not created to account for them, they will remain at the legal level.

Apart from that, this essay gives an account of the military life experienced by young volunteers in the post-war context, in which they subordinate their memories to admit the hegemonic and festive memory. They submit themselves to a pedagogy of violence and fear that banishes their humanities in order to think of themselves as “potential soldiers”. In the process of socialization of the military culture, the internal armed conflict is thematized in order to forge hatred, look for culprits, justify their practices and reinforce their identity in relation to the inadmissible otherness. A merely instrumental teaching in which a self-critical position is not assumed, but rather visions of the terrorist are exacerbated. It was found that the theme of political violence is very

present at every moment, as a fixer of their identity or as a rudimentary reflection centered on the own experience of a non-commissioned officer who flaunts his heroism.

Then, we were able to follow the use of the economy of violence and affection by young volunteers who, after the internalization of the military ideology, establish criteria of humanity starting with the subalterns by punishing them “without mercy”; a mental device that allows them to perceive the terrorist, no matter if he is from Sendero Luminoso, MRTA or narco-terrorist, as that contaminating, monstrous, erroneous life that must be removed from the social field. The terrorist becomes the intolerable radical otherness, constituent of the military identity. That is to say, if one does not perceive the other, one cannot perceive oneself.

Although it is not a strong practice, other memories emerge in extremely cautious spaces. However, when the festive institutional memory stumbles, it tends to trample them and warns, through punishments, the chastisement. Such impasses and misunderstandings demand the presence of our gazes.

Apart from previous research on the Peruvian Army, which are few, it is necessary to continue with the thin line previously developed to make visible the political and social agencies unthinkable in founding institutions, hierarchizers and monopolizers of violence. The challenge is to demystify the traditional forms of memory, of those contradictions in the internal dynamics often silenced to simplify research or fall into a subjective field. The challenge is to translate memories into questions, to know their limits, their ruptures in order to postulate a dialogue of memories and a tolerance between them.

I sometimes think that we are amazed at how other people bet on totalitarian thoughts when we ourselves judge with closed, static thoughts, imposing our reading in relation to others. This leads us to think about our own theoretical assumptions, in our classifications of what is admissible and what is not allowed. This essay arises from this concern to analyze our lenses, the influences, inheritances and demands that shape our perception, cornering us in our positional trenches, in which we imagine the other in a limited scene without empathy. Because “we are incapable of putting the pieces of the puzzle together and we are constantly surprised that our short-term expectations are not met” (Wallerstein, 2005, p. 3).

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