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A Cinematographic Comparison of the Representation of las Cholitas in two Bolivian films: *Los Andes no creen en Dios* directed by Antonio Eguino (2007) and *Zona Sur* by Juan Carlos Valdivia (2010)

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Dedicatoria

A las tres profesoras de español que siempre me animaron,
A mi familia que ojalá esté orgullosa de mi trabajo,
A mis amigas quienes escuchaban mis ideas cada día.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Spanish Colonialism in Bolivia..... | 3 |
| Changes in Indigenous Rights..... | 4 |
| Bolivian National Identity..... | 6 |
| Evo Morales as an Advocate for Indigenesness..... | 7 |
| Rise of Las Cholitas..... | 9 |
| A Cinematographic Analysis..... | 11 |
| Chapter One: <i>Los Andes no creen en Dios</i> | 13 |
| Separation of Space..... | 15 |
| Degrading Use of the Word Chola..... | 19 |
| Subservient Roles of Cholas..... | 24 |
| Chapter Two: <i>Zona Sur</i> | 28 |
| Separation of Space..... | 30 |
| Negative Use of Language..... | 35 |
| Subservient Roles of Domestic Service..... | 39 |
| Synthesis..... | 46 |
| Common Trends between <i>Los Andes no creen en Dios</i> and <i>Zona sur</i> | 46 |
| Advancement of Indigenous Status..... | 48 |
| Conclusion..... | 53 |
| Annotated Bibliography..... | 55 |

Introduction

Spanish Colonialism in Bolivia

Spanish conquistadors arrived in what is present-day Bolivia in the 16th century. Upon their arrival, as is the story with the rest of Latin America, the conquistadors claimed the territory as their own and enslaved the local, indigenous population. The white Spaniards installed “economic and sociocultural institutions designed to exploit and oppress indigenous people, (which) strongly shaped colonial and postcolonial trajectories of social development” (Lange 1438). These institutions were designed to exploit indigenous labor for the colonizer’s own material gain. In addition to labor exploitation, “colonial jurisdictions maintained ethno-racial hierarchies between Indians and Spaniards and legally imposed heavy taxes on the indigenous population” (Lange 1439) purposefully benefitting the white elite and worsening the quality of life for indigenous people. The colonizers had exuberant wealth while the indigenous peoples were enslaved and impoverished. This trend of colonialism was rampant throughout the region for over 200 years until 1825 when the current state of Bolivia was established. In the newly independent Bolivia, “state elites pursued the privatization of communal lands held by indigenous communities. These reforms eroded rural solidarity and kinship networks, fostered land scarcity in the countryside, and increased rural-to-urban migration” (Lange 1441) all of which had negative consequences on the development of indigenous communities. Furthermore, in the wealthy cities, where the Spaniards lived, there was access to hospitals, schools, and other social institutions but widespread ethno-racism ensured the postcolonial state did not invest in education and social services in the rural countryside, which held the majority of the indigenous population (Lange 1440). Because of its longstanding history of colonialism, the new state of Bolivia and its constitution was founded on a system of exploitation of indigenous peoples. In

this system, “los indígenas originarios permanecieron en la base de la pirámide social”¹ (Van Den Bossche 9). In the middle of the social pyramid was a racial group called by the name mestizo. Mestizo literally translates to a person of mixed-race, but it is a loosely used term to describe anyone with a mixture of European, indigenous, and/or African ancestry. They typically have lighter skin and more closely follow Western dress and culture than indigenous people. Lastly, at the top of the social pyramid is the criollo population. Criollo encompasses Bolivians who were born in the state but have Spanish or other European ancestry. The criollos, also referred to as blanco-mestizos to encompass the white passing Bolivians with mixed ancestry, were the ones “who dominated the Bolivian scene and who perpetuated the colonial mentality and social structure” (Arnade 342). Because of the years of white, Spanish domination, there was this “espacio hegemónico de los blanco-mestizo y sus patrones de lo permitido, lo adecuado, lo bello”² (Carrasco 3). The societal norm was the white criollos and mestizos, and all those who did not fit into this category were viewed as lesser than and given low social status. The indigenous population was considered inferior, so they were barred from political or economic representation. Because the mestizo population was more accepted and similar to the white, criollo Bolivians, they “consiguieron ingresar en las instituciones y la estructura de los gobiernos”³ (Van Den Bossche 10). Indigenous persons struggled for a voice and vote in Bolivia until the 1952 Revolution.

¹ *the original indigenous people remained at the bottom of the social pyramid*

² *hegemonic space of the white-mestizo and their patterns of the allowed, the adequate, the beautiful*

³ *they managed to enter the institutions and structure of the government*

Changes in Indigenous Rights

The 1952 revolution forever changed indigenous rights in Bolivia. Leading up to the revolution, the state of Bolivia had been in heavy political turmoil for many years thanks to the strain on the campesino workers from the oligarch society, where a few families and corporations owned the majority of Bolivia's wealth and land. Campesino is a term used to describe agricultural workers and peasants, meaning those in the lowest social class. Most campesinos in Bolivia were in fact indigenous people. The tin mining companies and landowners who employed mostly indigenous campesinos to mine or farm severely mistreated their workers. Their working days were long, they were majorly underpaid, and the conditions in which they worked were dangerous and negatively affected their health. Meanwhile, the mine and land oligarchs reveled in their wealth and used their economic power to control the political workings of the state. The campesino population finally had enough and revolted with arms to change the status quo that so unfairly mistreated them. With the support and encouragement from the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), headed by Dr. Víctor Paz Estenssoro, the campesino workers overthrew the military dictator and instated a government that resembled a democracy (Arnade 341). Once in power, the MNR implemented drastic economic and political changes to improve the lives of the indigenous campesinos and take the power away from the rich elite.

Firstly, universal suffrage was granted, meaning indigenous people, including women, were recognized as citizens, and given the right to vote and participate in civil society. After over 200 years, indigenous people were able to vote on the economic and political decisions of their country. An important aspect of this victory was that "el término 'indio' fue transferido

legalmente a ‘campesino’ u ‘originario’”⁴ (Van Den Bossche 11) in all documents of the state. Even though most campesinos were indigenous persons, the change of terminology in legal documents meant indigenous people were no longer singled out because of their ethnicity or race and that legally it was no longer assumed all indios were campesinos. With the right to vote, instead of being subclass Bolivians as they were before, indigenous groups were legally recognized as citizens like the mestizos had been from the beginning. The 1952 revolution caused other great changes to Bolivian domestic policy. The MNR government nationalized all natural resources and mines, taking the wealth away from the rich few and giving it back to the state and all citizens, indigenous people now included. In addition to nationalizing natural resources, an agrarian reform was implemented that looked to redistribute land back to indigenous persons, who had been the rightful landowners hundreds of years ago, and to end all unpaid labor. The fourth and final major change enacted by the revolution was an educational reform. The system of education was “reorganized along more democratic lines” (Arnade 342) though emphasis was given to the other reforms of the revolution. Therefore, the Bolivian revolution of 1952 was a turning point for indigenous rights. It was the universal vote, nationalization of mines, agricultural reform, and educational changes that helped integrate the campesino into society (Van Den Bossche 10).

Bolivian National Identity

“La ideología nacional del siglo XX es el mestizaje”⁵ (Van Den Bossche 11) and had the purpose of creating a homogenous image of cultural unification. Bolivia proudly claimed they

⁴ the term ‘indian’ was legally changed to ‘peasant’ or ‘native’

⁵ the national ideology of the 20th century is mestizaje

were a mestizo nation with a great diversity in people's ancestry. What really came about out of this mestizo identity was a blanket image of lighter-skinned Bolivians adapting Western styles of dress and ways of life. Indigenous cultures were assimilated into the "hegemonía europeizada prioriza ideales ajenos a los autóctonos, y mantenía nociones clasistas y racistas de tiempos coloniales"⁶ (Van Den Bossche 12). Indigenous forms of expression remained isolated and shunned from mainstream Bolivian society because they did not fit into the mestizo national identity. Despite the landmark economic and political changes of the 1952 Revolution, these groups were still not included in Bolivia's presentation of their national identity. It was not until the later 20th and early 21st century that there was a change in the national identity to encompass the idea of a composite national identity and the Indianization of the Bolivian identity.

Composite identity is understood to mean the "cúmulo de identidades que el sujeto boliviano puede tener en relación a su origen étnico y nacional"⁷ (Van Den Bossche 12). The national identity is changing to be one that ties Bolivians back to their ancestry and ethnicity of when the state was founded in 1825, not based on the white criollo and mestizo image of the present.

The other component to steering the Bolivian identity away from mestizaje was the incorporation of indigenous identities or Indianization of the culture. This second transformation was all about "la inserción del elemento indígena en la propia identidad nacional"⁸ (Van Den Bossche 12). Along with cultural changes, the Bolivian government adopted indigenous policies and political restructuring to add this Indianization to their country. Some of these policies were the recognition of the collective rights of indigenous nations within the state, acceptance of the

⁶ *Europeanized hegemony prioritized ideals alien to the natives, and maintained classist and racist notions of colonial times*

⁷ *accumulation of identities that the Bolivian subject may have in relation to their ethnic and national origin*

⁸ *the insertion of the indigenous element in their own national identity*

jurisdiction of indigenous, native groups, and the official incorporation and teaching of indigenous languages into legal documents and schools (Van Den Bossche 13). With these policies, Bolivia is explicitly referencing indigenous cultures and incorporating these historical groups into the state's functions instead of trying to hide their unique identity by the lumpsum idea of mestizaje.

Evo Morales as an Advocate for Indigenism

Evo Morales was a significant proponent of indigenous rights. Morales was born into an Aymaran family who earned a living in agriculture. He herded llamas for his family in his youth and worked his way through high school until a severe drought caused the Morales family to move to Cochabamba. There Morales became a cocalero and worked in the union of coca growers. He climbed the ranks quickly in the labor union and his success granted him a position in the Tropics Federation, leading to a seat in congress, and then president of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) or the Movement Towards Socialism (“Evo Morales Ayma”). In December 2005, Morales, representing the political party MAS, won the majority vote of 53.7% needed to be elected as president of Bolivia (Van Den Bossche 46). By January 2006, Bolivia had its first indigenous president who stayed in his role until 2019. In his 13 years in office, Morales, pictured in Figure 1, advocated for indigenous rights and adopted a policy of “refounding Bolivia, which he equated to ‘making a pachakuti,’ a millennial concept locating the future in the past”⁹ (Van Den Bossche 50). By 2007, Evo Morales’ government had recognized 36 indigenous nations within Bolivia and acknowledged their languages and customs as an integral part of

⁹ A quote cited from Robert Albrow within Van Den Bossche’s dissertation

Bolivia's national identity (Van Den Bossche 11). His influence is so strong that members of his party and other indigenous activists are calling Morales the return of the Tupac Katari, an infamous indigenous leader who headed a revolt against the Spanish conquistadors in the 18th century. It is clear that Bolivia's new narrative of nationhood has switched from an assimilationist (the idea of mestizaje) to an indigenous one (Van Den Bossche 50).



Figure 1: Evo Morales photographed at the UN by Mark Garten in 2011

Rise of Las Cholitas

With the Indianization of Bolivia and Morales' presidency, the state is leaning more towards acceptance and pride in their indigenous identities rather than attempting to whitewash their

diversity away. Indeed, there has existed a “paulatino proceso de descolonización del ser, a partir de avances significativos, mas no absolutos, en la reversión de la dominación e interiorización de las y los indígenas en la vida cotidiana”¹⁰ (Carrasco 1). One such indigenous group that has seen a rise in their indigenous expression is las cholitas, also known as Aymaran women, las cholas, and women of the pollera. This indigenous culture has traditionally resided in the high-altitude region of the Andes near Bolivia’s capital, La Paz, but nowadays las cholitas are present throughout the entire country. Cholitas have permeated Bolivian popular culture in the social, political, and economic spheres. In the entertainment industry, cholitas fight in a rink and style similar to WWE wrestlers in a sport called lucha libre de cholitas. Cholitas are changing fashion standards with beauty pageants like ‘Miss Cholita.’ A group called the Climbing Cholitas scaled the Huayna Potosi mountain, the nearest mountain to La Paz, in their indigenous dress to show their strength and break barriers (“The Climbing ‘Cholitas’ of Bolivia”).

Las cholitas have an iconic image in Bolivia because their ethnic attire is so unique and distinguishable from the Western or cosmopolitical idea of dress held by the Bolivian elite and the former national identity of mestizo (Zorn 170). The essential components of that dress “unifican ‘ser una mujer de pollera’ implican, peinar trenzas, vestir una manta, un sombrero y la pollera”¹¹ (Carrasco 7). Cholitas have incredibly long hair which they plait into two, long braids. As can be seen in Figure 2, these women wear a bowler hat atop their heads, traditionally black but can be any color. Next is the shawl, or layers of shawl, the Aymaran women wear across their shoulders and fasten with a brooch. The shawls are fringed at the edge and are colorful, typically having a pattern of sorts. Lastly, what gives las cholitas the easily recognizable look is

¹⁰ *gradual process of decolonization of being, based on significant, but not absolute, advances in the reversal of the domination and internalization of indigenous people in everyday life*

¹¹ *unify 'being a pollera woman' involve, combing braids, wearing a shawl, a hat and the skirt*

la pollera, translated to English as the skirt. La pollera consists of a vibrant, outer layer, and multiple layers of petticoats underneath. The skirt ends below the knee but above the ankle so that the hem does not touch the ground. The Aymaran garb is consistently more expensive than Western style clothing, because “cholita, or urban Indian dress uses more garments, with differently styled skirts, usually with more expensive materials, and jewelry, and thus generally costs more than cosmopolitan dress” (Zorn 181). The different pieces of la cholita attire can be embellished or handcrafted with expensive textiles to increase the overall cost of the outfit. The value of the hat, poncho, brooch, skirt, and other accessories, “de acuerdo a ciertas características de calidad y parámetros de modas propias, son muestras de status”¹² (Carrasco 6).



Figure 2: a woman posing in her cholita garb photographed by Delphine Blast

¹² according to certain characteristics of quality and parameters of their own fashion, they are samples of status

Status and wealth can be displayed through the Aymaran outfit, but “muchas de ellas vuelven a utilizar las polleras y la vestimenta característica como forma de reafirmación identitaria”¹³ (Carrasco 7). An interesting aspect of Aymaran culture is that the cholo (Aymaran men) dress does not vary significantly from Western dress. The colors are typically more vibrant and there will be the occasional hat or shawl, but the cholo attire largely matches that of the cosmopolitan style. Even though the cholo garb is similar to Western fashion, Aymaran men are still more likely to modify or change their clothing to entirely represent cosmopolitan style dress so as to avoid the discriminatory idea that cholos are inferior in the workplace. It is the easily identifiable dress of the cholita and cholo that “constituye una forma de segregación y diferenciación interna y externa”¹⁴ (Carrasco 6). Traditionally, men have been the breadwinners who receive discrimination in the workplace, while women remain at home as caregivers to children and the elderly. Therefore, las cholitas are the ones who carry on the Andean dress and continue the expression of the Aymaran culture. Because the expression of this indigenous identity is dependent on the “women of the pollera,” their representation in all components of Bolivian society is crucial to the survival and renewed cultivation of indigenous cultures.

A Cinematographic Analysis

This essay will focus on the changing cinematographic presentation of las cholitas in Bolivia. To do this, two movies set in different time periods over the course of 90 years will be examined. The first movie is *Los Andes no creen en Dios*, set in the 1920s that tells a story of a white engineer who moves to Uyuni (a gold mining town up in the Andes) and falls for an exotic cholita woman. In this movie, cholitas are treated as subpar citizens, always pictured in servient

¹³ many of them return to use the skirts and the characteristic clothing as a form of identity reaffirmation

¹⁴ constitutes a form of internal and external segregation and differentiation

roles, and discussed as lower-class persons. The second movie *Zona sur* occurring in 2010 is about two indigenous domestic workers employed by a white, upper-middle-class family. Cholitas are treated as inferior, partially due to the power dynamic between employee and employer. The wealthy family's high status in society is under threat, and there are moments throughout the movie where las cholitas represent the upper-class. The representation of las cholitas in both films shows an increase in Bolivia's societal acceptance and the improving image of indigenous cultures.

Chapter One: *Los Andes no creen en Dios*

Los Andes no creen en Dios is a Bolivian film written and directed by Antonio Eguino. Although the film was released in 2007, the story takes place in the 1920s in the Andean mining town of Uyuni. The protagonist, named Alfonso, is a former poet who moves to Uyuni and works as an engineer to earn his piece of the lucrative gold mining industry. While in Uyuni, Alfonso stays at a luxurious hotel with the other engineers, accountants, and businessmen. Near the beginning of his stay, Alfonso encounters a beautiful, exotic cholita named Claudina. The two become romantically involved but, while Alfonso is away on a work visit, Claudina seeks attention from one of Alfonso's friends Joaquin. Claudina and Joaquin get married, though their relationship deteriorates with time, while Alfonso pursues a new mining adventure of his own. Throughout the movie, the protagonist frequents a restaurant with cholita servers and a brothel with Chilean prostitutes, both groups of women are marginalized and suffer discrimination. At the end of the movie, an angry mob sets the brothel on fire and attacks the Chilean head mistress. Claudina, a cholita, stands up for the brothel leader and disperses the crowd but not before an angry member of the mob throws a rock and murders the Chilean woman. In the final scene of the movie, many years later Alfonso passes through Uyuni with his wife and children many years in the future where he finds Joaquin on the train platform, still stuck after his failed marriage and career in the Andean mining town.

Los Andes no creen en Dios presents the marginalization of multiple ethnic groups: the Chileans and the cholitas. Chilean resentment in Bolivia began after the War of the Pacific from 1879 to 1883 when Chile won the Antofagasta region, thus taking away Bolivia's only access to the sea and making it a landlocked country (Van Der Ree 213). As discussed above, indigenous marginalization began with Spanish colonialism and continues to be an issue in Bolivian society

to this day. This movie occurred in the 1920s, showing indigenous rights and acceptance 100 years ago. Many monumental changes and movements have happened since the 1920s leading to more Bolivian acceptance of the cholitas, like the constitutional reform to grant universal suffrage in 1952 and the country's first indigenous president in 2006. *Los Andes no creen en Dios* shows the lack of societal acceptance of the cholitas and the treatment of this indigenous group as subclass citizens. This treatment of indigenous groups as lower-class beings can be seen through the separation of space between white characters and indigenous people, the diminutive tone and language the white persons use to refer to the cholitas, and the subservient roles of the cholitas throughout the film.

Separation of Space

The movie begins on a train. The camera slowly makes its way through all the compartments, showing how the train is not only divided by wealth, but by ethnicity too. The film starts with the first-class section, showing a row of private carriages with one of them occupied by a white Bolivian family who receives personalized service from the train worker. This family is Alfonso with his future daughters and wife who all pass-through Uyuni on their way elsewhere. Next, a flashback happens many years prior when Alfonso was on his way to Uyuni for the first time. Young Alfonso is sitting in what can be assumed to be the business class carriage pictured in Figure 3. Its occupants are still white persons, and they sit in a nice carriage and wear expensive, Western style clothing. The compartment looks orderly, and the people are well-composed. The camera finally reaches a change in demographic when it comes to the third and final section of the train. Figure 4 shows the occupants are no longer well-fashioned, white passing Bolivians, but rather indigenous, darker-skinned persons. The men are dressed in a mixture of cholo and

Western fashion, but the women are exclusively adorned in cholita style dress, including the bowler hat, shawl, skirts, braids, and all. This segment of the train is overfilled with riders and cargo and seems to be disorderly. It is obvious just by appearance that this carriage had the most inexpensive ticket and thus filled with the poorest, lower-class citizens, all of whom are indigenous persons. This is a clear instance of the physical separation between white and indigenous groups of people. European passing Bolivians travelled in one train carriage while cholitas travelled in another. In addition to the separation of people, the space designated for non-indigenous passengers was classier and better maintained than the space for Aymaran people. This shows a priority and greater value given to white groups of people over indigenous Bolivians. Separating passengers, and then giving white people a superior carriage, is an exemplification of Bolivian “procesos de discriminación en los que la etiqueta de cholo implica inferiorización y menosprecio”¹⁵ (Carrasco 7). Thus, demonstrating Bolivian society’s acceptance of white people and discriminatory treatment of cholitas.



Figure 3: Alfonso's train carriage on the way to Uyuni in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*

¹⁵ *processes of discrimination in which the cholo label implies inferiorization and contempt*



Figure 4: the train carriage with predominantly indigenous people in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*

Finally, the train arrives in Uyuni and Alfonso disembarks. Upon arrival, Alfonso's escort sent by La Candelaria (the major mining company in Uyuni) to pick him up from the train station and deliver him to the hotel is nowhere to be seen, so another white passing Bolivian named Joaquín offers to take Alfonso to the international hotel. Joaquín is sure Alfonso is staying at the same accommodations as himself as the international hotel is "el único hotel que vale la pena, el resto de los alojamientos son para cholos"¹⁶ (*Los Andes* 7:45). The lobby of the international hotel is ornately decorated with a beautiful, wooden front counter, gold handles on the doors, and lit by a chandelier hanging from the ceiling. Alfonso and Joaquín are greeted by the concierge, who is wearing a suit minus the blazer, has cleanly slicked back hair, and is accessorized with a nice pair of silver glasses. After checking in, a luggage boy is called to carry Alfonso's bags to

¹⁶ *the only hotel that is worth it, the rest of the accommodations are for cholos*

his room. The luggage boy appears to be indigenous. This is another example of the separation of space between white Bolivians and cholitas. The luxurious international hotel is for the wealthy, European passing persons while the other lodging options are for the poorer indigenous citizens. There is no mixture of ethnicity in these spaces. Nearly all guests of the international hotel are white, with the exception being Genaro who is a Jewish adventurer searching for gold in the mountains. There are only instances in which indigenous people are present in the international hotel as employees, like the luggage boy. Lighter-skinned Bolivians “consiguieron ingresar en las instituciones”¹⁷ (Van Den Bossche 10) especially those of higher calibre, whereas the cholitas and cholos were excluded and ostracized to the poorer, lesser quality institutions like Joaquín mentioned in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*. This way white Bolivians did not have to interact with the indigenous groups.

The physical separation in the film extends to the entire town of Uyuni, just as the entire state of Bolivia was segregated in the 1920s. During the mayor of Uyuni’s dinner party at his wealthy estate, Collins’s (a British engineer having an affair with Claudina) wife commented in front of all the dinner guests that she believed cholitas were the most dangerous thing in town and that Claudina was the worst of them all. When Collins knocks on Claudina’s door the following night looking for some company from his mistress, she responds sarcastically with “en el barrio de las cholas, pues, ay qué es lo que va a decir la gente”¹⁸ (*Los Andes* 34:31). In Uyuni, the cholitas were confined to one area of the town and the wealthy engineers and businessmen, all of whom were fair skinned individuals, lived in another part of the town. It would be viewed as disgraceful and shameful for a classy, wealthy man like Collins to be seen in the lower-class area of the cholitas. This separation of space in Uyuni reflects the “categorización racial que distingue indio

¹⁷ *managed to enter the institutions*

¹⁸ *in the neighborhood of Las Cholas, well, oh what people are going to say*

y blanco, rural y urbana, hacia atrás y moderno”¹⁹ (Van Den Bossche 29). Being a cholita meant one was associated with negative stereotypes, and therefore lacked acceptance and integration into Bolivian society.

Degrading Use of the Word Chola

In addition to the physical separation of racial groups, the degrading use of the word chola is another indicator in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* that the cholitas were not seen as equal members in society like Bolivians who are European passing. Throughout the movie, white characters like Joaquín and Tina (the leader of the Catholic legion) use the term chola in a negative manner and always refer to them as the inferior other. The first time viewers hear the usage of the word chola is actually by Alfonso’s indigenous escort as he takes the new engineer to his place of work. The pair walk past Claudina, who catches Alfonso’s eye. As shown in Figure 5, his escort responds to Alfonso’s glance by agreeing that she is beautiful but warning him “eso es lo único que hay por aquí, cholas y chilenas”²⁰ (*Los Andes* 14:51). The reference to cholas and Chilean women in Uyuni has a pejorative tone and connotation. Alfonso’s escort is referring to these two ethnic groups as if they are part of the scenery or a popular activity in the region, and cholas are different than what Alfonso is. Instead, if cholitas were valued the same as mestizos in Bolivia, the escort would not have referred to them with the perception of otherness. Even though the escort himself is indigenous, he understands that Alfonso is not and therefore regards cholitas as lesser than, so the escort adapts his speech to please his interlocutor. This is just one way in which the word chola is used to create a marginalized and pejorative perception of the cholitas.

¹⁹ racial categorization that distinguishes Indian and white, rural and urban, backward and modern

²⁰ that’s the only thing around here, cholas and Chileans



Figure 5: Alfonso's first interaction with Claudina, a chola in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*

Chola is also often paired with insulting words to further create derogatory expressions. After Claudina rejected Collins, he returned another night drunk and angry banging on her door. Once Collins realized he was being ignored, he shouted, “chola ingrata”²¹ and mumbled “bloody Indians” as he walked away (*Los Andes* 45:12). When insulting Claudina, Collins did not say disrespectful comments simply about her but referenced all cholitas and indigenous people, blaming Claudina’s actions that enraged him on her characteristic of being a cholita and that is their behavior. Another moment of anger where the viewers see a white Bolivian speaking derogatively about the cholitas is during the march against evil (a protest against Chilean presence in the town suggested by the mayor to appease Tina and her angry complaints against the Chilean population). Tina and her crowd of Catholic protestors march violently to the house

²¹ *ungrateful chola*

of Chileans with the intent on murdering Clota (the woman in charge of the Chilean prostitutes) and burning the house down. They begin to charge at Clota when Claudina interferes and defends the Chilean woman. Tina's response to Claudina is an insult, "¡Chola atrevida! Entre putas se defienden!"²² (*Los Andes* 1:33:11). Again, a white person references the entire indigenous group of cholitas to insult Claudina. Tina equates cholitas to another ethnic group she despises, the Chileans, and puts both on a lower level to herself by calling them "whores." Including the word chola in an insult compounds the strength of the negative comment because chola is used as an offensive term in addition to the offense using words like "ingrata" and "atrevida" causes. The term chola as an insult certainly does not show acceptance of this indigenous group in Bolivian society.

Lastly in regard to the term chola, the white characters use the phrase "esa chola" to assign blame. The discussion on the character of cholitas begins at the mayor's dinner party where Collins' wife vocalizes her opinion that cholitas are the worst danger on the street. This theme carries throughout the movie, so that cholitas are nearly always blamed for the poor behavior of white men. Alfonso and Joaquín are relaxing at the bar after a long day and strike up a conversation about Claudina. Instead of referencing her specifically as Claudina or Mississimi as is her name, the white businessmen call her by the word chola. They even reiterate "that chola is the worst of all street danger" (*Los Andes* 33:33). This was foreshadowing for later in the movie when Claudina is blamed for turning men into disgraceful drunks. Even when the blame is assigned directly to Claudina, her name is almost never used. Instead, she is constantly referred to as "esa chola." The day after Collins' drunken rampage outside Claudina's gate, Tina barged in and interrupted the mayor's meeting because she was enraged and disgraced that her husband

²² *daring chola! Among whores defend themselves!*

had caused a scene in the chola neighborhood. Tina blames Claudina for her husband's behavior, stating "por culpa de esa chola un hombre tan distinguido como el ingeniero Collins convertido en un borracho cualquiera!"²³ (*Los Andes* 45:51). Instead of attributing the poor decisions of Collins to his own character, Tina insinuates that the atrocious qualities of a cholita have corrupted a good man and that indigenous group is to blame for Collins scandalous behavior. By doing this, Tina and the other white Bolivians marginalize and perpetuate negative stereotypes about the cholitas through generalization by attributing to a group the actions of a person. An example of this generalization is when Claudina was accused of the loss of character of Joaquín. Consistently throughout the movie, Joaquín is shown to have difficulty managing money and instead spends his paycheck on indulgences like cigarettes, alcohol, and prostitutes. Eventually Joaquín becomes involved with Claudina, but his ability to rein in his indulgences and save money has not improved. Joaquín becomes greatly indebted and ultimately loses his job but continues to drink and party. Alfonso has an intervention with Joaquín but instead of assigning the blame to Joaquín himself, Alfonso states "entre el alcohol y esa chola, el caracter y la voluntad desaparecen y vas a terminar por destruirte"²⁴ (*Los Andes* 1:08:17). Again, blaming Claudina, shows the white Bolivians associating the entire ethnic groups with negative stereotypes. Tina and Alfonso both use the phrase "esa chola," and referring to "ellas como 'mi chola,' o 'esta chola,' acompañando esto por adjetivos peyorativos son formas de expresión que continúan siendo utilizadas por algunos sectores, como confirmación de la superioridad y diferenciación"²⁵ (Carrasco 18). Therefore, by using "esa chola" to blame Claudina for a white, male Bolivian's character, the negative stereotypes of cholitas are perpetuated and the word is

²³ because of that chola a man as distinguished as engineer Collins is turned into any other drunkard

²⁴ between alcohol and that chola, character and will disappear and you will end up destroying yourself

²⁵ them like 'mi chola,' or 'esta chola,' accompanying this by derogatory adjectives are forms of expression that continue to be used by some sectors, as confirmation of superiority and differentiation

used as an offensive term. Using chola as a derogative phrase shows their lack of acceptance in Bolivian society during the 1920s.

The only two instances in which the word cholita is used instead of chola in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* are when the white characters are discussing a cholita who has wealth and a cholita who is sexualized. For the first usage of the word cholita, Joaquín is informing Alfonso of the type of people staying in Uyuni. He runs through a list like Yugoslav businessmen, adventurers, Chilean prostitutes, and then finally “cholitas ricas” who own delicious restaurants (*Los Andes* 9:04). Instead of saying “cholas ricas,” Joaquín specifically referred to the wealthy Aymaran women as cholitas. This connects positive attributes, like wealth, to cholitas, and allows for the phrase chola to still be associated with poverty, filth, and bad character and used as a derogatory term. The second time the phrase cholita is heard in the film is by Joaquín as well. The Cochabamba native is infuriated by the cold, windy climate of the Andes, and in his frustration, he says, “lo mejor sería encamarse con una rica cholita para calentarse en estas noches frías”²⁶ (*Los Andes* 33:25). In this case, “rica cholita” has a sexual connotation and is a way to sexually objectify the indigenous group. The term chola is reserved for negative connotations, while cholita is considered to be a more respectful term though it is misused like chola as well. Aymaran women themselves have reclaimed the word so that “‘las cholitas,’ es la etiqueta que ellas han apropiado y utilizan como identidad común y colectiva”²⁷ (Carrasco 19). This distinction between the use of chola versus cholita in the film reinforces that chola is an offensive, derogatory term meant to marginalize and ostracize the indigenous population because they were not integrated members of Bolivian society.

²⁶ *what would be the best is to get in bed with a rich cholita to warm me up on these cold nights*

²⁷ *the cholitas is the label they have appropriated and use as a common and collective identity*

Subservient Roles of Cholas

Another component of *Los Andes no creen en Dios* that shows the marginalization of cholitas in Bolivia in the 1920s is the roles of cholitas in the movie. Every single occupation of cholitas in the film is in the role of servitude: waitresses in the restaurant, domestic maids in white households, and the physical labor miners. On the other hand, the Bolivians with lighter skin and European features held specialized, professional jobs such as engineers, bank leaders, and customs administration. In the scenes where viewers see cholitas in their roles of servitude, there is a stark contrast between the white, highly paid professionals and the indigenous manual laborers. By occupying the lower paying, unprofessional jobs as their form of income, indigenous people are stuck at the bottom of the social ladder. With money comes power, but the wealthy career paths are solely executed by the white Bolivians already at the top of the social ladder. Because cholitas are restricted to roles of servitude, they are placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Their voices are not heard because they do not have the finances and power of the white Bolivians. Bolivian society in the 1920s as is the setting of *Los Andes no creen en Dios* shows this ostracization of the cholita population through this portrayal of servitude.

The primary role of cholitas in the film is servers in restaurants and other commercial establishments. They are the ones preparing and distributing the food to the wealthier white Bolivians who go to these establishments to lounge and relax. In Claudina's restaurant, the favored dining place of Joaquín, there is a cholita cutting up ingredients and another preparing the platters to serve. The camera pans out to show Claudina, another Cholita, serving Alfonso and Joaquín, and more cholitas in the background interacting with the other customers (*Los Andes* 36:47). The cholitas are the ones who work as cooks and waitresses, while serving the rich gringos. They take on the roles of servitude and have the luxury to be one of the customers they

serve. This idea that cholitas are the servants, not the consumer can be seen later in the movie. Thanks to her own restaurant and recent marriage with Joaquín, Claudina begins to enjoy the luxury of money and with her wealth she goes shopping at a fabric store. As Claudina enters the fabric shop, two women with lighter skin and dressed in Western fashion are exiting. Upon seeing Claudina, the two ladies cast a dirty glare and appear to be disgusted that a cholita could afford to shop in the same store as themselves. This adverse reaction is due to the stereotype and constant presentation of cholitas as servants instead of showing that Aymaran women can be customers too. Therefore, the portrayal of cholitas as servants in commercial establishments perpetuates the negative idea that cholitas are inferior to the white customers they serve.

Another subservient role that cholitas fulfill is domestic servants. There is not an instance in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* where the housemaid was not portrayed as cholita. At the mayor's dinner party, during the meeting of the legion at Tina's residence, and in Freud's house for coffee, a cholita maid served their food and drink and followed all the orders of their white employers. The extent to which cholitas are considered lesser than in Bolivian society in the 1920s is so great that they are the domestic servants to another marginalized ethnic group, the Chileans. After Claudina ends her relationship with Joaquín, Clota welcomes him into her house and comforts him. Upon arrival, Clota asks her Aymaran maid to prepare coffee for the two of them (*Los Andes* 1:19:03). There is a secondary theme of Bolivian resentment towards Chileans due to their loss of access to the sea in the War of the Pacific in 1879, but even with this obvious discrimination against the Chileans, cholitas are still less valued members of Bolivian society. Cholitas perform this role of domestic worker, the role that even other marginalized groups do not perform, because it is so engrained in their society that these indigenous persons are inferior.

The final role in which viewers see cholitas is one of manual labor. Uyuni is a mining town, and it is the potential for extreme wealth from the gold mines that draws such a large workforce to the mountain city. Although there can be great profit from the mining industry, the fair skinned Bolivians with Western style are the ones who truly have monetary success. For the laborers, mining is incredibly dangerous, and their wages inadequately reflect the risk and hard work a mining job entails. Miners are typically associated with negative qualities like dirty, poor, and uneducated, and this unfavorable view of miners is compounded when the miners are cholitas and cholos. This is the case in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*. When Alfonso visits the mining factory, all the manual labor is done by cholitas. As he walks down the courtyard, the camera shows a line of cholitas all sitting and hammering away at larger rocks to them break down as pictured in Figure 6. The cholitas all wear their indigenous garb, though their dress is clearly covered in the dust and filth acquired from working in the mine (*Los Andes* 51:15). The indigenous laborers work in their grim, and their expressions reflect their grim position in society. They are forced to work the physically taxing job without sufficient pay that the white



Figure 6: the chola miners in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*

elite Bolivians in Uyuni do not want to do themselves, all the while their roles as cholita manual laborer place them at the bottom of the Bolivian hierarchy.

The overall presentation of cholitas in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* reflects the Bolivian treatment of this indigenous group in the 1920s when this film was set. At this time, indigenous persons in Bolivia did not have basic human rights, like the right to vote and the right to an education. Cholitas were treated as subclass citizens and outcasted by the dominantly Western Bolivian society. This status norm of white elitism over the cholitas is presented in the film through the separation of space, the demeaning use of the word chola, and the roles the cholitas hold throughout the movie. Aymaran women and men are separated from their fellow Bolivians, and the spaces designated for cholitas are impoverished and of lesser quality than the wealthy, luxurious train carriages, hotels, and neighborhoods reserved for white Westernized people. The term chola is constantly used as a demeaning, derogative phrase to reference an indigenous person. And cholitas are always pictures in roles of servitude and other unspecialized professions. Cholitas are not presented positively throughout the film and are portrayed as sub-tier Bolivians.

Chapter Two: *Zona Sur*

The Bolivian movie *Zona sur* was directed by Juan Carlos Valdivia and released in 2010. Unlike *Los Andes no creen en Dios*, this film was set in the same time period as it was produced. Because of this, *Zona Sur* paints a picture of a contemporary, upper-middle class family living in the southern district of La Paz, Bolivia. Historically, the southern district has been the most affluent area of La Paz, and the northern district is home to the impoverished (Van Den Bossche 77). The title of the movie translates to southern district and therefore reflects the wealthy lifestyle of the family who live there. The head of household in this family is Carola; she is a strong matriarch who provides for her family without help from her absentee husband. Carola has two college aged children named Bernarda and Patricio and one younger son named Andres. The matriarch would not be able to function though without her two domestic servants. Wilson is her butler and cook who prepares all the meals, picks up the dry cleaning, purchases groceries, and other chores demanded by Carola. Marcelina is the other domestic worker who cares for the garden and helps Wilson in the kitchen. Not only are Wilson and Marcelina both Aymaran, as can be seen through their use of the Aymaran language occasionally throughout the film, but Marcelina is a cholita. She dresses in the Aymaran garb, “con su cabello dividido en dos trenzas y vistiendo una pollera bajo un mandil”²⁸ (Van Den Bossche 90). The relationship between Marcelina and Wilson and the wealthy family they work for is the central focus of *Zona sur*.

Because the film was set in 2010, the dynamic between indigenous persons and mestizo Bolivians has improved from the indigenous marginalization seen in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* set in the 1920s. By 2010, Van Den Bossche states there are two main factors that have changed the societal status of indigenous people: “a) la promulgación e implementación de la Ley de

²⁸ with her hair divided into two braids and wearing a skirt under an apron

Regulación del Trabajo Asalariado (Ley 2450) y b) la emergencia de una nueva clase privilegiada en La Paz como consecuencia de las políticas pro indigenistas del gobierno de Evo Morales”²⁹ (Van Den Bossche 57). The passing of Ley 2450 in 2003 required employers to grant their domestic servants rest days every month, a legal contract for employment, a minimum salary, and other workers’ rights that had previously been unguaranteed and determined by their employers (Carrasco 20). Because domestic workers are stereotypically cholitas, the improvement of rights and liberties for workers of the home disproportionately benefitted the indigenous population and lifted them up in society. The beginning years of the Morales administration had a positive impact on the societal acceptance of indigenous persons too. Cholitas benefitted from the Morales administration because it empowered indigenous groups with its pro-indigenist stance and focused on the working class. A federal increase in minimum salary and other such laws directed to benefitting laborers and the lower working class which are stereotypically associated with the indigenous population helped to improve quality of life and the indigenous position in society (Carrasco 17). *Zona sur* takes place in these “primeros años del gobierno de Evo Morales. Está ambientada en estos momentos de cambio político y social en Bolivia”³⁰ (Van Den Bossche 88). Although the movie is set during this time of political transition and there are optimistic moments, the discrimination and marginalization of cholitas can still be seen throughout the film. The separation and use of space between Marcelina and Carola’s family, the terminology and dialogue spoken by the characters, and Marcelina’s role of servitude as a cholita shows that despite this time of social and political change in Bolivia, the indigenous population is still not treated as equals to Bolivia’s favored mestizo elite.

²⁹ a) *the promulgation and implementation of the Wage Labor Regulation Law (Law 2450) and b) the emergence of a new privileged class in La Paz as a result of the pro-indigenist policies of the Evo Morales government*

³⁰ *first years of the government of Evo Morales. It is set in these moments of political and social change in Bolivia*

Separation of Space

The house as a workplace presents a challenge for differing classes. The lower-class domestic servants consider the home as their space of work while for their upper-class employers the home is still an area of relaxation and intimate family matters. Because of the juxtaposition of classes in the same space and the use of that space in completely separate ways by each class, the home hosts “micropolítica en estas interacciones, así como estrategias para mantener el orden de la jerarquía social”³¹ (Van Den Bossche 65). The employers try to keep a distance between class unequals while the employees bear witness to the family’s intimate relations and engage in a sense of familial closeness with their employers. There is this balance in the home between closeness with the family, but not so close as to overstep the different classes. Marcelina’s experience as a domestic worker in Carola’s household very much so represents this struggle of the home as a workplace. The separation of spaces within the home is a way in which the wealthy family is able to create boundaries that prevent Marcelina from escaping her position as a lower-class domestic worker.

The division of space within the house perpetuates the class differences between the indigenous Marcelina and her white employers. Even though the entire home is the place of her employment, Marcelina’s workplace within the home is condemned to two spaces: the garden and the kitchen. The family of course is welcome in every space. They relax and enjoy their lives while Marcelina and Wilson wait on their every beck and call. Rarely do the viewers see Marcelina outside of the garden and kitchen as she is not welcomed in the other areas of the house. Her main purposes in the house are to take care of the plants and to help prepare meals and clean after said meals, so these are the limits to her access to different spaces. This

³¹ *micropolitics in these interactions, as well as strategies to maintain the order of the social hierarchy*

restriction to the garden and kitchen is a way of distancing shown “en un nivel material la clara delimitación de espacios”³² (Van Den Bossche 66). Carola and her family keep Marcelina in this box of otherness by creating physical boundaries between themselves and their indigenous domestic workers.

The first time viewers see Marcelina in the garden she is watering her plants and flowers with a hose while Patricio and Andres play soccer. As she makes her way around the corner, Marcelina finds that the two boys have broken many of the flowers she has been tending to. Upon her discovery of the ruined flower bed, Marcelina scolds the boys and tells them to find somewhere else to play ball. Figure 7 shows the eldest son’s response to her, which shows that Patricio “la trata fríamente ignorando sus súplicas por no jugar en el jardín y estropear sus flores”³³ (Van Den Bossche 94). When this fails, Marcelina threatens to inform their mother of their destructive behavior, but even this is not enough to convince Patricio to stop playing soccer by the flowerbeds. She resorts to spraying Patricio with water from her hose and finally Marcelina has success in stopping Patricio from destroying her plants with the soccer ball (*Zona sur* 31:32). Even though the garden is one of the few spaces in which Marcelina is welcome to move about freely in the household and it is her main place of work, she has no authority over her space. She knows Carola will not be happy with a ruined garden, so Marcelina is simply trying to do her job. But Patricio did not respect Marcelina the first nor second time she asked them to move away from the flowers, he only moved because of the inconvenience of getting wet. Marcelina is restricted to the garden as her workplace, but even there her inferior status as a cholita in Bolivian society takes precedent over any authority she has over the space.

³² *on a material level the clear delimitation of spaces*

³³ *he treats her coldly ignoring her pleas for not playing in the garden and spoiling her flowers*



Figure 7: the oldest son's response to Marcelina requesting the boys play soccer elsewhere

Patricio walks away from the garden annoyed at Marcelina, but his attitude is quick to change when he wants something from the domestic worker. Realizing that defiant behavior would not work like in the garden, the eldest son enters the kitchen happy and very affectionate. He expresses love and appreciation for Wilson. In between his declarations of love for Wilson, Patricio asks for the scotch and requests that the butler bring him up a bucket of ice. Next, he turns to “Marcelina diciendo: ‘A vos tambien te adoro.’ Estos gestos cariñosos únicamente surgen en momentos de necesidad”³⁴ (Van Den Bossche 94). Patricio has entered Marcelina and Wilson’s space, but he wants something from them, so he changes his behavior to increase the likelihood of getting what he wants. The caring attitude is not coming from respect for the domestic servants’ workplace and any authority they hold over it, but from manipulation to get one’s own way. The white upper-middle class is accustomed to having things go their way and to

³⁴ Marcelina saying, ‘I adore you too.’ These loving gestures only arise in times of need

experiencing society in their favor, so Patricio has no difficulty in ignoring Marcelina and Wilson's authority over their limited workspace and perpetuating the social inferiority of the working, indigenous class.

Another scene of Marcelina in the garden with her employers is when Carola and Bernarda are sitting in lawn chairs sunbathing while the cholita is cutting grass with a pair of hedge shears. Marcelina is working, so the “percepción de Marcelina del jardín como su espacio de trabajo es confrontada con la noción de los empleadores de ese espacio como uno de pura recreación”³⁵ (Van Den Bossche 91). She approaches the head of household and politely asks her, “señora, si puede levantarse señora. Tengo que corta el pasto señora” (*Zona sur* 1:19:49). When Carola responds with disgust saying “¿Perdón?” Marcelina explains that she has to work. She still has to arrange the roses and cut and water all the plants. In response, Carola turns to her daughter and exclaims how surprised she is at the nerve Marcelina has to ask her to move. Then Carola responds to Marcelina by scolding her for using the hedge scissors instead of the expensive lawn mower she purchased and ends the conversation with an insult, calling the domestic servant weird. Marcelina backs away, and Bernarda defends her by claiming her mother is the weird one. Even though Bernarda took Marcelina's side, she still did not offer to move nor try to convince her mom to stop their recreational sunbathe. It seems to be a reasonable request to ask Carola to move temporarily, but “la solicitud de Marcelina transgrede los límites establecidos por Carola a pesar de que el jardín es el espacio primordial de trabajo de Marcelina. Esta contradicción en el uso del espacio muestra una la jerarquía de autoridad que en este caso se refleja en los

³⁵ *Marcelina's perception of the garden as her workspace is confronted with employers' notion of that space as one of pure recreation*

espacios”³⁶ (Van Den Bossche 92). As a cholita, Marcelina’s status in the Bolivian social hierarchy is lower than Carola’s high status as a white upper-middle class person, thus giving Carola authority and control over the space even though the garden is Marcelina’s area of work. The separation of space of the garden and kitchen as a workplace and restriction from the rest of the house, as well as the lack of authority in her spaces of work, show the lower position in society of the cholita.

Although the class and ethnic divisions between indigenous persons and mestizo Bolivians can clearly be seen through the separation of space in *Zona sur*, the use of space also shows the sociopolitical change happening in Bolivia. Moments throughout the film “muestran resquebrajaduras que hacen suponer que se aproximan tiempos de cambio”³⁷ (Van Den Bossche 89). In regard to the use of space, “la escena final se puede interpretar como un futuro idílico en términos de clase y poder en la zona sur boliviana”³⁸ (Van Den Bossche 94). The last scene, shown in Figure 8, in the garden pictures Carola with all her children sitting at the table relaxing and eating. The camera angle changes to show that Marcelina and Wilson are both seated at the table too and are participating in the joyful meal with the family. Instead of serving Carola, Andres, Patricio, and Bernarda food and waiting on them, Marcelina and Wilson eat and chat with the family as equals. Marcelina is not even wearing her apron, which is the uniform for domestic servants, showing that she is not working nor subservient in the garden. Previously throughout the movie the garden had been a space for maintaining distance between the cholita domestic servant and her white employers, but the final scene shows a convergence of social

³⁶ *Marcelina's request goes beyond the limits set by Carola even though the garden is Marcelina's primary workspace. This contradiction in the use of space shows a hierarchy of authority that in this case is reflected in the spaces*

³⁷ *show cracks that suggest that times of change are approaching*

³⁸ *the final scene can be interpreted as an idyllic future in terms of class and power in the southern Bolivian zone*

classes and a change in the social hierarchy. The “contradicción del jardín como espacio de recreación y trabajo parece estar resuelta porque todos están en el mismo espacio relajados y contentos”³⁹ (Van Den Bossche 94). The change in the use of space in *Zona sur* reflects the changing status quo and societal acceptance of cholitas and indigenous people in Bolivia.



Figure 8: the final garden scene that is an idyllic image of the future of Bolivia

Negative Use of Language

The language, both in reference to the tongue and terminology, used throughout the film also alludes to the ethnic inequalities between the white employers and the indigenous domestic workers. The word cholo is sporadically used throughout the film to reference poverty and inferiority. Wilson the butler plays a larger role than Marcelina in *Zona sur*, so the characters use the masculine word cholo instead of the feminine word chola. They are not saying cholo in discussions of Aymaran culture, but rather use the word as a derogatory phrase to mention something lesser than. For example, at the beginning of the film, Wilson cooks spicy noodles, a

³⁹ contradiction of the garden as a space for recreation and work seems to be resolved because everyone is in the same space relaxed and happy

food traditionally eaten by indigenous people in Bolivia, for the family for dinner. After serving the noodles, Patricio scoffs and says, “Es comida de cholo, no?” (*Zona sur* 8:01). Instead of eating the spicy noodles, Patricio eats a steak that Carola had Wilson prepare separately for her son. Patricio uses the phrase *cholo* to insinuate that the food is not good enough for him, thus putting himself above *cholos*. Additionally, it is important to note that the English subtitles, as can be seen in Figure 9, for this film translate the above phrase to “Poor man’s food, again?” The English subtitles never use the word *chola*, instead always translate the term to poor and Indian, another offensive term. And the movie not once uses the phrase *cholita* instead of *cholo* or *chola*, which is the word that has been reclaimed by *cholitas* to move away from the derogatory implications of the word *chola*. About halfway through the film, Carola and Bernarda are having a discussion in the matriarch’s bedroom. Carola mentions to her daughter that Doña Remedios, Carola’s goddaughter’s mother, is coming to visit. The first thing she mentions about Doña Remedios is that she is a *cholita*. Carola then goes on to say, “But what a *chola* she is. She has class, not like your half-breed friends” (*Zona sur* 52:40). Although it may seem like Carola is

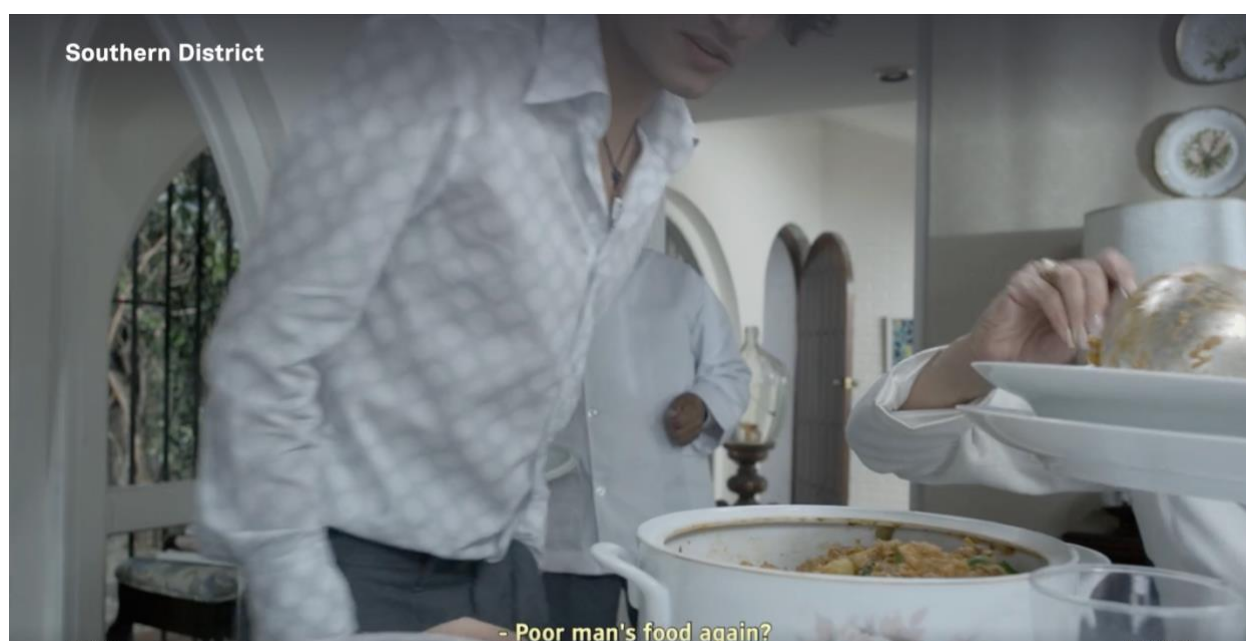


Figure 9: Patricio criticizing eating indigenous food for dinner

complimenting Doña Remedios, she is also placing indigenous people below her. By saying that Doña Remedios is not like other Indians because she has class perpetuates the stereotype that indigenous groups do not have prestige and instead are inferior. Therefore, the negative use of the term cholo, the English translations to poor and Indian, and the absence of the word cholita culminates in an overarching feeling of cholo inferiority to white people.

The use of first names and nicknames to address Marcelina are also terms used by the white family to assert their superiority. Carola and her children all refer to Marcelina by her first name or a nickname like Marcy and Marce throughout the film, an example of this being in Figure 7. They never once call her names of respect like señora. One example of this is when Bernarda is entertaining a group of her peers from college, and she sees Marcelina on her way out. Even though Marcelina is clearly dressed formally wearing her entire traditional cholita outfit, with a bowler hat atop her head and a shawl draped around her shoulders, and heading to exit the house, Bernarda uses Marcelina's nickname to get her attention to ask the domestic servant to go out of her way to bring Bernarda six sodas. When Marcelina refuses, saying in Spanish "I can't, I have to clean up Miss," Bernarda tries to guilt trip her and complains, "Oh c'mon Marce!" Marcelina stays strong in her position and suggests to Bernarda, "You can go down and get them, Miss" (*Zona sur* 57:17). In this short conversation, the role of Marcelina and the role of Bernarda is clearly shown through the nicknames Marcelina receives versus the formal address that Marcelina uses for Bernarda. Using the first name or a nickname of "una trabajadora de hogar mayor por un empleador menor significa una falta de respeto"⁴⁰ (Van Den Bossche 66). The constant use of first names and nicknames implies disrespect to Marcelina and "pueden verse como estrategias de cercanía a primera vista, pero un escrutinio de estas prácticas muestra como

⁴⁰ *an older domestic worker by a minor employer means a lack of respect*

persisten los mecanismos de distanciamiento”⁴¹ (Van Den Bossche 65). Carola, Bernarda, and Patricio calling Marcelina by the nicknames Marcy and Marce is a daily reminder that Marcelina is below them as an indigenous worker. She is unable to refer to her white employers by their first names, that form of disrespect would not go without consequence. The differences in the usage of first and nicknames are an indicator of Marcelina’s subservient role in the household and in the Bolivian hierarchy.

The last component of language that shows cholitas are “at the bottom of the urban class structure” (Seligmann 714) is Marcelina and Wilson’s use of Aymaran. The movie opens with Marcelina outside locking the gate into the beautiful compound in La Paz, but in “el diálogo inicial en aymara entre ella y Wilson, el mayordomo, señalan su etnicidad además de sugerir una procedencia rural migratoria”⁴² (Van Den Bossche 90). The use of the Aymaran language indicates a rural-to-urban migration for Marcelina, which is common amongst cholitas and is another indicator of their lower position in society (Van Den Bossche 7). Marcelina and Wilson did not come from a place of wealth and high social status like the children of Carola. Rather, the two domestic servants immigrated to an urban area, La Paz, in order to find sufficient work. Because of this, Marcelina and Wilson share a language that the rest of the family does not understand. When Marcelina and Wilson speak in Aymaran, Andres asks “¿Qué te dijo?” (*Zona sur* 4:28). Wilson translates for Andres when Marcelina and himself speak Aymaran in front of him, but both domestic servants only use Spanish in front of the other members of the household. Not speaking Aymaran in front of the adult members of the family might be for fear of being teased or the employer’s assumption her workers are talking about herself, but regardless,

⁴¹ *they can be seen as closeness strategies at first glance, but a scrutiny of these practices shows how distancing mechanisms persist*

⁴² *the initial dialogue in Aymara between her and Wilson, the butler, indicate their ethnicity as well as suggesting a rural migratory origin*

Marcelina and Wilson restrict their usage of their native tongue when their employer is present. If cholitas were viewed more equally in Bolivian society, they would not feel the need to limit their speech in their own language and their language could be more commonly used. Instead, Spanish is the dominant language throughout the film, reaffirming a mestizo national identity instead of the indigenous one.

Subservient Roles of Domestic Service

The roles in which the indigenous characters play versus the white actors show the preferable position of white persons in Bolivian society. It is no coincidence that the two domestic servants, Marcelina and Wilson, are both indigenous and their employer family is white. The relationship between “la trabajadora de hogar y los empleadores es inconfundiblemente una de poder... esta dinamica revela la construction de jeraquias sociales y refuerza identidad de clase”⁴³ (Van Den Bossche 64-65). When analyzing the relationship between Marcelina as a domestic servant and Carola as her employer, one must consider the treatment of Marcelina is not an isolated case. She shares a common experience and identity with other domestic workers because the structure of domestic service creates a niche relationship of closeness, familiarity, and intimacy paired with distancing, estrangement, and dehumanization at the same time (Van Den Bossche 65). Domestic workers are dehumanized and treated as the other in their workplace not only due to their position as subordinate but because of their indigenous identity as well. As Seligmann states, “during the colonial period in the highlands and later in the capital itself, cholos came to engage in service occupations as domestics, street cleaners, and nursemaids,” and this trend has continued into modern day Bolivia so that “cholos have gradually become identified with various

⁴³ *the domestic worker and employers is unmistakably one of power... This dynamic reveals the construction of social hierarchies and reinforces class identity*

occupations within the urban service” (697). Domestic servitude is one such occupation commonly associated with the identity cholita, and Marcelina as Carola’s maid and gardener is a clear instance of this association. The negative treatment as a subordinate is compounded with the discrimination she receives as an indigenous person. The use of an apron with the cholita garb, being referred to by a nickname, and the lack of reciprocity are ways in which Marcelina is distanced from her white employers in her role as a domestic servant.

At first sight of Marcelina in *Zona sur*, it is clear that she is a cholita and a domestic worker thanks to her cholita dress and apron. At the beginning of the film Andres, Marcelina, and Wilson are all standing in the kitchen, the latter two are preparing the family’s dinner meal. Marcelina has her hair plaited into two long braids down her back, she is wearing a voluminous skirt that stops above her ankle, and atop her outfit she has on a light pink apron (*Zona sur* 3:22). Her “vestimenta y el peinado la encierran en una estética chola. Pero, la superposición del mandil la sitúa en el oficio de trabajadora doméstica. El uso del delantal/mandil es considerado como el uniforme de este oficio. Su uso se convierte en un signo visual de su subordinación”⁴⁴ (Van Den Bossche 90). This visual indicator of inferiority is carried throughout the movie as Marcelina is almost always seen working in her indigenous clothing with an apron as her top layer, with one of the exceptions being in the final garden scene where an idealistic future of social equality in Bolivia is hinted at. The constant pairing of cholita clothing with the apron and the understanding of this combination as the stereotypical uniform of a domestic worker perpetuates the idea of class differences that place cholitas below white Bolivians like Marcelina’s employer family.

⁴⁴ *clothing and hairstyle enclose it in a chola aesthetic. But, the superposition of the apron places her in the trade of domestic worker. The use of the apron is considered as the uniform of this trade. Its use becomes a visual sign of their subordination*

Another requirement of domestic workers that shows the white superiority over indigenous people in Bolivian class differences is the use of the word *señora*. Marcelina and Wilson both constantly use the term *señora* “al comienzo, mitad y final de sus parlamentos recalcan las posiciones de ambas dentro de la jerarquía”⁴⁵ (Van Den Bossche 93). An example of the frequent use of “*señora*,” which translates to madam in english, is shown in Figure 10. In other occupations, it would be strange to consistently call one’s boss or employer *señor* or *señora* multiple times in a single sentence, but for domestic workers this is a common occurrence. Because of the intimacy of the home as a workspace, marking the beginning, middle, and end of each sentence with *señora* is a way in which Marcelina and Wilson are reminded of their servile position in the household and in society.



Figure 10: Marcelina’s response to Carola’s question about her marital problems

Finally, another method used by Carola to enforce the class differences between herself as the white employer and Marcelina as an indigenous domestic worker is the lack of reciprocity. Because the relationship between domestic worker and employer reflects the power dynamics of the class differences in Bolivian society, “la falta de reciprocidad también en otro recordatorio de

⁴⁵ at the beginning, middle and end of their speech they emphasize the positions of both within the hierarchy

los límites de la relación”⁴⁶ (Van Den Bossche 66). Domestic servants often bear witness to personal matters of their employer family, like how “los empleadores frecuentemente tienen conversaciones íntimas y/o peleas frente a las trabajadoras como si ellas estuvieran ausentes. Esta indiferencia es otra estrategia que deshumaniza a las trabajadoras”⁴⁷ (Van Den Bossche 67) and implicates that the domestic workers should act as if they never witnessed these intimate relations. Despite watching the personal relations of the family, it is forbidden for domestic workers to ever discuss these matters or ask the family about them. On the flip side, employers rarely ever experience the familial or personal lives of their domestic workers but have the power to pry into their employees’ lives. Throughout *Zona sur*, the viewers see this dynamic between Carola and her domestic servants, Marcelina and Wilson. In one scene, Carola and Marcelina are in the garden discussing which flowers they should plant and how they should reorganize the garden. After deciding on a plan for the new plants, Carola asks Marcelina about her marital problems. Marcelina confesses that her husband has left her, pictured in Figure 10, and that he was physically abusive. She asks her employer about her ex-husband, but Carola quickly changes the topic. Marcelina plays along but eventually asks her employer yet again about her former husband; she is in pain and needs empathy. Carola touches on the topic of her ex-husband but does not actually respond to the cholita’s question. The “evasión de respuesta de Carola se entiende como un acto de protección y de mantenimiento de distancia. Ella no desea compartir un hecho tan íntimo con Marcelina”⁴⁸ (Van Den Bossche 94). Through this interaction between employer and domestic servant, the lack of reciprocity can be seen. Carola has the power to ask

⁴⁶ *the absence of reciprocity also is another reminder of the limits of the relationship*

⁴⁷ *employers often have intimate conversations and/or fights in front of workers as if they were absent. This indifference is another strategy that dehumanizes the workers*

⁴⁸ *Carola's evasion of responding is understood as an act of protection and keeping distance. She does not wish to share such an intimate fact with Marcelina*

Marcelina about her personal life, but Marcelina is not able to do so to Carola. The lack of reciprocity in these interactions shows the power dynamics between the white employer and cholita domestic worker and is a method of the employer to maintain the distance between socioeconomic classes.

Marcelina as a cholita in the role of domestic servant does perpetuate the stereotype that indigenous people are in roles servitude and low on the Bolivian hierarchy, but the film shows another role of cholitas that gives an insight to the changing social standing of indigenous people. Following the end of colonialism, the distinctive socioracial category of cholo began a process of “changes due to extensive intermarriage and the emergence of a market economy and class structure that crosscut ethnic affiliation” (Seligmann 697). This process of changing socioeconomic class divisions did not happen overnight, but the Bolivian hierarchy has slowly been allowing for indigenous people to climb the social, political, and economic ladder. With the 1952 Revolution and Evo Morales’ pro-indigenous agenda as president, the characters “ya viven los efectos de ese cambio, la clase dominante pierde de a poco pero inexorablemente sus privilegios, en favor de otra clase social emergente que se representa con la chola y los empleados de la familia”⁴⁹ (Van Den Bossche 89). The emerging elite in *Zona sur* are represented by “la chola que compra la casa de Carola con un maletín lleno de dinero en efectivo”⁵⁰ (Van Den Bossche 96). Historically and stereotypically, cholitas have been too impoverished to be able to afford to purchase the luxury estate that is Carola’s home for her family. The cholitas role as the buyer in this interaction with Carola, pictured in Figure 11, shows there is a change in the standard image of a wealthy Bolivian to be more inclusive of the

⁴⁹ are already experiencing the effects of this change, the ruling class gradually but inexorably loses its privileges, in favor of another emerging social class that is represented with the chola and the employees of the family

⁵⁰ the chola who buys Carola's house with a briefcase full of cash

indigenous emerging elite. Not only is there the rise in cholitas' socioeconomic standing, but the film also hints at the deterioration of the white employer family's own wealth and position in society. Carola's family has been "afectados personalmente por la coyuntura política y sus estilos de vida han sido alterados sustancialmente como consecuencia"⁵¹ (Van Den Bossche 97). An instance that shows the stress put on their socioeconomic status are when Wilson informs Carola he cannot pick up her dry cleaning because she has no money in her wallet. Other examples are that Carola's debt to the grocers is too grand to allow her to purchase more of their produce with credit and that Wilson, in order to help his employer family, finds a friend that will loan money to Carola without requiring collateral. These moments throughout the film where the viewers see strain placed on the white employer family's lavish style of living and the stress of money give insight into the changing Bolivian hierarchy and the downfall of the white elite.

The film *Zona sur* overall showed the current class divisions between indigenous and white persons that place indigenous groups like the cholitas at the bottom of the Bolivian hierarchy. Marcelina, the cholita character in the movie, was a domestic servant to a wealthy, white employer family, thus showing a micropolitical environment of the class differences in



Figure 11: the wealthy cholitas offering to buy Carola's house

⁵¹ personally affected by the political situation and their lifestyles have been substantially altered as a consequence

Bolivia. Through the separation of space, Marcelina as an indigenous person was restricted to the garden and the kitchen as the areas of the home she was allowed access to, though she did not have authority over her workplace. The white family uses terms like cholo and nicknames to disrespect the indigenous domestic servants and to perpetuate the stereotype of poverty associated with indigenusness. The class differences are enforced because of Marcelina's role as a domestic worker. The image of cholita garb with an apron as the stereotype of a domestic servant, the constant reference to her employer as señora, and the lack of reciprocity are methods the white family uses to distance themselves from their domestic worker. Although the class divide is obvious, the movie also suggests the socioeconomic tides are changing in Bolivia and indigenous people are climbing the hierarchical ladder. The final garden scene shows an idealistic future where all Bolivians are equal, and the wealthy cholitas trying to buy Carola's house references the indigenous emerging elite. Therefore, although *Zona sur* does show the general trend of the inferiority of indigenous people in Bolivia, the movie also suggests the change and hope for convergence of class divisions that will raise up indigenous groups, like the cholitas, status in society.

Synthesis

Los Andes no creen en Dios was set in the 1920s, prior to the 1952 revolution that granted indigenous persons the right to vote, land reform to give land back to the indigenous people from which it was stolen, and other changes that benefitted indigenous people, and prior to Evo Morales's pro-indigenous agenda as the first indigenous Bolivian president in 2006. *Zona sur* occurred in 2010, thus following the monumental changes of the revolution and during the time of Morales's presidency. The two films have a 90-year difference in which they are set, and within those 90 years there were the aforementioned pro-indigenous movements. Because of this, the portrayal of the cholitas in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* and *Zona sur* can be compared and contrasted to show the progression of indigenous socioeconomic status in Bolivia.

Common Trends between *Los Andes no creen en Dios* and *Zona sur*

Both films used the division of space, language, and roles of servitude to portray cholitas in an inferior manner. The spaces in which cholitas are pictured and permitted to inhabit are separate from the spaces designated for white Bolivians. In *Los Andes no creen en Dios*, indigenous and white people were separated by ethnicity on the train, with one carriage holding the white travelers and the other carriage containing the indigenous persons. The same circumstances of segregation remained true for the different hotels and neighborhoods of the town Uyuni. *Zona sur* also showed a clear division of space for the white employer family and their cholita domestic servant. Marcelina was allowed to do her work and spend time in the garden and kitchen but her authority over these spaces was not respected. She was restricted from other areas of the house unless necessary to go to those spaces under her employer's command. The divided delineation of space both within the village of Uyuni and within Carola's

home creates distance between the white characters and the cholitas, harboring this sense of otherness and view of lesser than towards indigenous groups.

There was consistency in the negative use of the word chola/cholo in the movies as well. Chola itself is an offensive word that has historically been used discriminately by the white elite. The term chola was frequently spoken in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* in a negative manner. Claudina, the main cholita character, is referred to as chola with an insult attached or esa chola, both being ways in which the entire indigenous group of cholita is associated with these belittling connotations. *Zona sur* is similar in this usage of the degrading term cholo. The word cholo is connected to poverty and stereotyped to be socioeconomically worse off compared to white Bolivians. Additionally, her younger employers calling Marcelina by nicknames is a daily reminder of disrespect and the restriction on speaking Aymaran all show a disadvantaged position for indigenous people in Bolivian society.

The third and final commonality between both films is the subservient roles the cholitas play in the movies. Nearly anytime a cholita is seen within her occupation in both *Los Andes no creen en Dios* and *Zona sur*, she is working in the informal sector in jobs like waitressing, mining, and finally domestic service. The former portrayed cholitas in all three unprofessional jobs while the latter focused on the relationship between indigenous people and domestic servitude. Cholitas always being the ones in occupations of servitude in the films shows their generalized position at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Contrastingly, white characters are almost always the ones in professional, high paying jobs. The white Bolivians in the first film are the engineers, like Alfonso, the businessmen, and the government officials. And in the second movie, though never explicitly stated, Carola is a wealthy businesswoman. The white persons

play the role of the elite, and they control society while indigenous groups are subservient to said elite and are positioned at the bottom of Bolivian society.

Advancement of Indigenous Status

Although there is consistent representation of the cholitas as an impoverished and inferior group in both films, *Zona sur* presents an image of socioeconomic progress and changing Bolivian hierarchy for indigenous people that *Los Andes no creen en Dios* never touches on. The latter movie shows that indigenous people were marginalized and completely excluded from any component of wealth and acceptance in Bolivian society. On the other hand, the former shows that cholitas are now becoming increasingly included in society and are challenging the socioeconomic norms that restrict indigenous persons in Bolivia, but because of their history of marginalization indigenous people are generally still at the bottom of the class ladder. The indicators the division of space and the roles of servitudes that portrayed cholitas as marginalized and below white people in their social status in both movies also give insight to the differences of the Bolivian hierarchy of the 1920s movie compared to the 2010 film.

The two movies both create separate spaces for indigenous people, but Uyuni was clearly more divided than La Paz. Uyuni was segregated with specified establishments and accommodations, like the train carriages and the hotels, for indigenous people and others for white people. When Claudina enters a fabric shop dedicated to white customers, the white women present in the store give the cholita a look of disgust because Claudina, as an indigenous person, has entered their space. The two ethnic groups are kept separate in Uyuni and in the rare occasion that one enters the space of the other, like with Claudina in the fabric store or Collins in the cholita neighborhood, they are shunned and rejected. Though the house is divided, it can be

assumed that the capital city of Bolivia, La Paz, where *Zona sur* takes place, is not segregated like Uyuni. Within the confines of Carola's home as a workplace for Marcelina, there are restrictions and limitations on the areas she is permitted to inhabit as an indigenous domestic servant, but the end garden scene presents a change in the division of space. The final scene of Carola's family and workers Marcelina and Wilson in the garden is unique to *Zona sur* and shows a hope for the future where indigenous and white people are the same and equals in society. Picturing the white employers and the indigenous domestic servants in the space previously designated for work for the cholita and for relaxation for the white family represents on convergence of classes. Finally, the indigenous characters are able to relax and enjoy the same space previously only available to white Bolivians. This symbolizes the pro-indigenous change in Bolivian society headed by Evo Morales' presidency so that favorable position of white people in society is slowly disappearing and indigenous groups are emerging as equal.

The other movie, *Los Andes no creen en Dios*, ended with the perpetuation of the marginalization of different ethnicities not the idyllic acceptance of indigenous people like *Zona sur*. The end scene where the hatred of the Chilean woman (Clota) and the cholita (Claudina) by the white residents of Uyuni culminates shows that the 1920s was still a time in persecution and rejection of indigenous groups. The white mob berated Claudina and then killed Clota, both being women of different ethnicities than the persecutors. The white Bolivians harassed Clota in part because of her identity as Chilean, and then insulted Claudina when she tried to defend her, but the mob eventually killed Clota. This violent ending certainly does not show hope for a future like *Zona sur*'s ending where all people are equal in Bolivia.

The interactions and role of the domestic servants in the films also show a difference in the way indigenous people were treated in the early 20th century versus the early 21st century.

The domestic servants' relationship with their white employers is much closer in *Zona sur*. In *Los Andes no creen en Dios*, the white employers almost exclusively ignore the existence of the workers. At the mayor's dinner party, in Freud's home, at the legion meeting at Tina's house, and in Clota's kitchen the viewers see cholitas in conjunction with their employers but not once is there a friendly interaction between them. The only time the employers even address their cholita domestic servants is when they give commands, like when Clota ordered her domestic worker to make herself and Joaquin tea. In the 2010s movie, the domestic servants have a close relationship with their employers. There are frequent instances of familial type interactions between Marcelina and Wilson and the family they work for. Carola and Marcelina discuss their marital problems, Patricio gives Marcelina a kiss on the cheek and expresses his love for her, and Wilson and Carola share an embrace after the death of Wilson's son. These intimate, caring interactions show a close bond the indigenous servants have with their white employers, breaking this idea of the other and closing the distance between the classes. Friendly interactions are never expressed in the 1920s movie because white Bolivians did not view their servants as equals to themselves in the slightest degree.

Even though the main cholita character in *Zona sur* works as a domestic servant, there are cholitas that are not in roles of servitude which is not the case in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*. Every cholita in the latter film is impoverished and has an occupation in the informal sector, i.e., waitresses, gold miners, and domestic service. These roles do not bring about great wealth, and instead are occupied by impoverished individuals who earn little wages from their job keeping them in poverty. *Zona sur* suggests a change in this cycle with the portrayal of two wealthy cholitas offering to buy Carola's home. They showed up to Carola's residence with a briefcase containing \$250,000, and they even offered an extra \$20,000 when Carola was unwilling to sell.

This kind of wealth would have been unthinkable and impossible in the 1920s when *Los Andes no creen en Dios* was set. In 2010, the status of the white Bolivian is getting challenged, as the viewers can see not only by the emerging cholita elite but also by the financial strain Carola experiences. The matriarch sustains her lavish lifestyle by accruing debt, like purchasing her groceries with credit to the farmers or how Wilson was unable to pick up her dry-cleaning because Carola had no cash in her wallet. She is no longer able to financially support her luxurious spending, whereas in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* the white Bolivians were not under financial strain. Alfonso and the other executives in Uyuni stayed in the finest hotel and spent abundant money on drinks and prostitutes; the viewers never see any indicator that they were suffering financially. The only instance in which a white professional was in financial trouble was Joaquin, but his monetary problems stemmed from his involvement with Claudina, a cholita. This puts the blame for Joaquin's eventual degradation of his reputation and standing in society on a cholita, painting her indigenousness as negative and leading to ruin. Therefore, the Bolivian society of the 1920s did not allow for socioeconomic movement up the ladder for indigenous people, as can be seen by the representation of cholitas in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*, but in 2010 the Bolivian hierarchy was more accepting to the emerging indigenous elite.

Both films expressed indigenous inferiority in Bolivia through the portrayal of cholitas and clearly showed the discriminatory treatment indigenous persons experience at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Although there were threads of inequality between white people and indigenous people seen through the separation of space, use of chola, and subservient roles in the two movies, *Zona sur* gave a hope for change in Bolivia and showed the rise in status of cholitas in 2010 compared to the 1920s when *Los Andes no creen en Dios* was set. The idyllic,

final garden scene paired with the cholitas offering to purchase Carola's house creates a sense of transformation in Bolivia towards the acceptance and rise of indigenous groups.

Conclusion

The women of the pollera are a unique indigenous group in Bolivia most notably known for their traditional style of dress. Their hair plaited in two braids, the bowler hat, the shawl, and the voluminous skirt give the cholitas an iconic look that can easily be spotted in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* and *Zona sur*. The former was set in the 1920s, a time when Bolivia was an oligarchic state that significantly favored the white, wealthy elite. The plot of the film occurred prior to the 1952 revolution, meaning before indigenous people gained the right to vote, were recipients to an agrarian reform and became included into the educational system. Indigenous groups, like the cholitas, were excluded from the political functions of society and were socially and economically degraded in Bolivia. The marginalization of the cholitas was pictured through the indicators of the division of space, the degrading use of the word chola, and the manual labor and roles of servitude in *Los Andes no creen en Dios*. The latter film, *Zona sur*, showed a different time period and status norm for indigenous persons in 2010. Although socioeconomic classes perpetuated the inferiority of indigenous groups, Evo Morales, the first indigenous president of Bolivia, adopted an agenda of pro-Indianization of the state when he came to office in 2006, thus placing Bolivia in a time of transition and change of the hierarchy when *Zona sur* was set. The same indicators, the separation of space, disrespectful language, and subservient roles were used to analyze the status of cholitas in the film, and though it was apparent that indigenous people were still low on the class ladder, the movie gave insights of the change in socioeconomic norms and showed an emerging indigenous elite in Bolivia. In the 90-year gap between the two films, there was progress for indigenous rights and status in Bolivian society shown by the comparison of the treatment of cholitas in *Los Andes no creen en Dios* and *Zona sur*.

The rising societal acceptance of cholitas and indigenous groups in Bolivia can be seen in other cinematographic works like *Mi nombre es BRIGIDA*. This short film was directed by Vinicius de Souza Taborga and published in 2022. Brigida Felipa Ajata Hinojosa, the subject of the video, is a transsexual Aymaran woman who shares her experience in the Bella Vista Marka community, of the Oruro Department, Bolivia. She informs the viewers of her successes and difficulties in her culture and community accepting her trans identity. Through her experiences, Brigida illustrates the beauty and elegance of the traditional cholita dress and explains why she chooses to dress in the pollera every day (*Mi nombre es BRIGIDA*). Because las cholitas are becoming more widely accepted, it opens the doors for even further marginalized people, such as trans women like Brigida, to participate in their Aymaran identity. The acceptance of indigenous identities is growing in Bolivia.

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