

MARISOL DE LA CADENA

Indigenous Mestizos



The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919–1991

Indigenous Mestizos

A book in the series

Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations

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Peru, 1919–1991

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About the Series

Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations is a critical series. It aims to explore the emergence and consequences of concepts used to define “Latin America” while at the same time exploring the broad interplay of political, economic, and cultural practices that have shaped Latin American worlds. Latin America, at the crossroads of competing imperial designs and local responses, has been construed as a geocultural and geopolitical entity since the nineteenth century. This series provides a starting point to redefine Latin America as a configuration of political, linguistic, cultural, and economic intersections that demand a continuous reappraisal of the role of the Americas in history, and of the ongoing process of globalization and the relocation of people and cultures that have characterized Latin America’s experience. *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations* is a forum that confronts established geocultural constructions, that rethinks area studies and disciplinary boundaries, that assesses convictions of the academy and of public policy, and that, correspondingly, demands that the practices through which we produce knowledge and understanding about and from Latin America be subject to rigorous and critical scrutiny.

Racial discourses, often crucial to the development of nationalist ideologies, have shaped much of Latin American history since independence. Marisol de la Cadena explores the dynamic of racial and cultural discourses in Peru throughout most of this century and places them within the broader swirl of modernization and state-building.

With careful attention to the regional strains generated by the push toward “modernity,” de la Cadena focuses on the intellectuals of Cuzco, once the capital of the Inca Empire, and helps us see how the clash between this region and Lima, Peru’s capital since colonial times, produced a regional ideology that emphasized culture over biological notions of human difference while giving racial catego-

ries a strong moral content. In this context, definitions of “Indio” and “Mestizo” took on special weight, often becoming the focus of clashes over the assessment of human worth and political identity. One of this book’s great contributions is to make us aware of the complex ideological struggles behind hegemonic racial categories and so remind us that the powerful do not have the only, or the last, word.

Constantly moving between the Latin American Studies tradition in the United States, and the political engagement of intellectuals living and working in Latin America, Marisol de la Cadena builds a strong argument about her own country at the intersection of disciplinary norms and political concerns.

Walter D. Mignolo, *Duke University*

Irene Silverblatt, *Duke University*

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Acknowledgments

I had not returned to Cuzco since I finished my last fieldwork season in October 1992. In September of that same year, we had celebrated the capture of the Shining Path's highest leader. Like most Peruvians, I too began to see the light at the end of the very dark tunnel created by the twelve-year war waged by that group against all who opposed them. Terrorist and military violence had not hit the city of Cuzco — at least not in the magnitude that it had swept over Ayacucho, the Mantaro region, and Lima — and the most visible consequence of the conflict was the general absence of tourists. During 1991 and 1992, when I was doing the fieldwork that led to this book, only Cuzqueños and Cuzqueñas busily crossed the Plaza de Armas or cozily sat on one of its benches to get warm under the morning sun. With few foreigners, I imagined that the city looked like it probably did in the 1930s when the Cuzqueño tourist industry was only just beginning.

In June 1999 I finally went back to Cuzco. On my way from the airport to the city I was struck by the sight of an immense statue, which the taxi driver identified as Pachacutec, the most legendary of all Incas. *No matter what, Cuzqueñismo — that pride of belonging to the region that had cradled the Inca Empire — never dies*, I thought (not without some aesthetic arrogance) as the taxi driver explained that the monument had been built with foreign funds channeled through the municipal council. But monuments to Incas were not the only changes I observed. During the seven years that I had been absent, peace returned to the country and tourism had resumed in Cuzco. New hotels and restaurants had been built, many of which represented investments of transnational corporations. I learned that one of these had even mutilated an impressive Inca wall by carving an entrance through it to provide easier access to a five-star hotel. Meanwhile, the local cultural authorities had offered little resistance. This was big news indeed. Partially destroying an Incan antiq-

uity with the acquiescence of Cuzqueño politicians would have been inconceivable in the early 1990s. At that time, cultural authorities hotly contested even alterations to the spelling of regional Quechua words. That cultural authorities now accommodated the requests of foreign investment interests surprised me; yet it also made me realize that my initial reaction to Cuzqueñismo had perhaps been too simple. Although it had not receded, the power of authorities to build statues in the name of Cuzqueñismo required them to introduce changes in the regionalist ideology that would accommodate a larger global economic system and ideology. After all, isn't flexibility an attribute of ideologies that remain hegemonic? Why wouldn't Cuzqueñismo change? It had constantly done so throughout the century, yet it had remained strong. This time, however, the transformation was induced by the free market—demonstrated by the fact that the fate of Inca relics can be determined not only by tradition, but also by a high bid—which may be able to absorb Cuzqueñismo into its own global hegemony. What happens next remains to be seen. For the time being, the Plaza de Armas was once again teeming with tourists. Many of them, and many Cuzqueños too, paid a dollar an hour to communicate beyond Cuzco via the “Cabinas Internet,” privately owned small stores located all over the city and packed with computers connected to the World Wide Web.

I wondered how these changes had affected the two Cuzqueños I wanted to see the most and whom I consider crucial to my analysis: Lucrecia Carmandona and Alejandro Condori. Would I even find them? Back in 1991, when I first met Lucrecia, a mestiza woman and political leader, she was a market vendor. Alejandro, a dance choreographer of Capac Qolla, earned his living as a street vendor of cosmetics. Fortunately, I found them in the same places: Lucrecia was sitting in her market stall, where she still sells potatoes and yucca; when I saw Alejandro he was there, in the same street, busy choosing the right lipstick for a customer. Except for a few pounds less or more and a few more wrinkles, they showed no signs of the passage of time. Of course they asked me about the book. It gave me great satisfaction (and relief!) to tell them it was done and an enormous pleasure to thank both of them personally. Lucrecia and Alejandro gave me all the information I asked from them, sat endless hours answering my queries, walked with me through the steep Cuzco streets, introduced

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Since 1991 this book has traveled many places and gone through many stages; during all of them I have been surrounded by wonderful friends and colleagues. I could not have survived the combination of pregnancy and fieldwork in Cuzco without them. Kathryn Burns took loving care of me in the house we shared in Calle Suecia. Ever since she has remained one of my chosen readers, always making the subtle editorial change that enhanced my argument theoretically. Chuck Walker and Thomas Kruggeler helped me through my days as a novice historian—I will never forget their unusual combination of immense kindness and sarcastic jokes that eased many long hours in the archives. Their comments have improved my ideas from the earliest days when I had only a dissertation proposal. Zoila Mendoza generously introduced me to the analysis of dance troupes, for which I will be forever grateful. Cesar Itier opened the world of Inca Theater to me and generously shared material with me that he had gathered. Margarita Castro, Margaret Najarro, and Patricia Vivanco were excellent assistants in the archives. Fernando Pan-corbo and Teófila Huamán assisted with my fieldwork and contributed their insights. The cariño of Pilar Zevallos, Luis Nieto, Adelma Benavente, Miki Suzuki, Gabriela Martínez, and Norma Neira helped me weather the cold Cuzco days. Zully Grandillet helped me care for my daughter Manuela, who was still a nursing baby. I would not have trusted Manuela to anybody else but Zully. My sister, Aroma de la Cadena, came to Cuzco on several occasions and was able to help me in many ways.

In Madison, Frank Salomon, Florencia Mallon, and Steve Stern

inspired, nurtured, and challenged me in the manuscript's early stages. Frank's comments—long pages replete with shrewd ideas, exquisite knowledge, and extremely demanding questions—always made me return to my writing with deeper insights. Florencia shared with me her unique, strong analytical intuition, and somehow, Steve Stern always discovered the exact point where I had stopped thinking and pushed me further. As if this were not enough, the two anonymous readers chosen by Duke University Press made invaluable comments. Once I knew their names, Brooke Larson and Deborah Poole, I felt an even stronger need to respond to their suggestions for more rigor and creativity. Although I have to confess there were moments when I did not enjoy it, I also have to admit that I could not have asked for a better dissertation committee, a better team of readers, a better group of Andeanists, and a better group of friends, both within and outside U.S. academia.

In the last four years, while physically in Chapel Hill and officially a “resident alien” in the United States, I have straddled this country and Peru, and in both places friends have continued to shower me with insights, criticism, and encouragement. I have struggled with Sinclair Thomson's sharp, critical, and inspiring comments on issues of representation; with Penelope Harvey's unmatched ethnographic talent; and with Orin Starn's exigencies to generalize beyond my self-imposed limits. Carlos Aguirre encouraged me when I doubted my skill for historical analysis. Hortencia Muñoz obliged me to refine my arguments about elite Peruvian culture, and my analysis of indigenous social movements is filled with images inspired by Eloy Neira's relentless quest for human equality. Long, deep, and memorable personal and academic conversations with Eileen Findlay and passionate discussions with Marisa Remy deeply affected my writing. Mercedes Niño Murcia does not know it, but she was very inspiring and stimulating. Carlos Iván Degregori and Gonzalo Portocarrero, as politically engaged intellectuals, have been the best role models. Dorothy Holland, Donald Nonini, and Jim Peacock were among my first readers at the Department of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina; they read the manuscript when it was still a dissertation, and their comments framed my rewriting process considerably. During the last stages I was blessed by Judith Farquhar's invitation to join

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Past Dialogues about Race:

An Introduction to the Present

La violencia étnica existe en todas las sociedades que como la nuestra albergan culturas y tradiciones diferentes. (Ethnic violence exists in any society which, like ours, harbors different cultures and traditions.) — MARIO VARGAS LLOSA, 1990

Indian peasants live in such a primitive way that communication is practically impossible. It is only when they move to the cities that they have the opportunity to mingle with the other Peru. The price they must pay for integration is high — renunciation of their culture, their language, their beliefs, their traditions, and customs, and the adoption of the culture of their ancient masters. After one generation they become mestizos. They are no longer Indians.

— MARIO VARGAS LLOSA, 1990

En nuestro país la raza ya no manda, ahora manda la inteligencia, la educación, la cultura. (In our country, race does not rule anymore; instead, intelligence, education, and culture do.)

— ADRIANA B., CUZCO, 1992

In Peru everyone accepts that social discrimination is pervasive, and almost everybody would explain and even justify such practices in terms of “cultural differences.” Apparently innocuous and incidental, this social convention is at the heart of the Peruvian racial formation (Omi and Winant, 1986; Winant, 1994). Peruvian modern discourses that acquit racist practices and even legitimize them by appealing to *culture* are integral to the political process through

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Map 1. Peru

which in Peru—to borrow Robert Young’s words—race was culturally constructed and, significantly, culture was racially defined (1995:54). These exculpations of racism are embedded in a definition of *race* rhetorically silenced by the historical subordination of phenotype to *culture* as a marker of difference. In other words, Peruvians think their discriminatory practices are not racist because they do not connote innate biological differences, but cultural ones. What goes unnoticed in this way of thinking is that since the early part of the twentieth century, Peruvians (intellectuals and nonintellectuals) have tended to define race with allusions to culture, the soul, and the spirit, which were thought to be more important than skin color or

any other bodily attribute in determining the behavior of groups of people, that is, their race. All the above phrases implicitly share this culturalist definition of race while also containing some disagreements that in turn, reflect the social position of their authors, their conventions, their desires, and their social anxieties. These differences, which are as politically important as the agreements, reflect discrepancies in the ways of thinking and practicing the relationship between “race” and “culture” in Peru.

The first two epigraphs to this introduction are from Mario Vargas Llosa, who thought that the war waged by the Shining Path terrorist movement in Peru (1980–1992) was the inevitable result of cultural differences between the Indians and “the rest” of the country. Implicit in the phrasing of his first statement is a notion of culture that echoes some nineteenth-century racial thinkers who, like Gobineau (1915:30), explained that the relationship among different human groups inevitably resulted in violence because it was governed by natural laws of repulsion or of attraction. The second statement implies that the different cultures of Peru represent different stages in the development of reason; this uneven development explains — and indeed justifies — the hierarchies that structure the nation’s political and economic inequalities. Against the cultural roots of inequalities — and, indeed, to deter ethnic violence — Vargas Llosa proposes “integration,” which he envisions as the process through which Indians shed “their culture” and become mestizos, subordinate participants in the dominant culture. Vargas Llosa’s logic is very simple and ahistorical: since “the Andean tradition” and “modern Peru” are incompatible, the former has to be sacrificed, because the latter is, obviously, rationally superior.

The third epigraph comes from Adriana B., a university student whom I met in Cuzco, a region in southern Peru that tourism has made famous as the capital of the pre-Hispanic Inca Empire. Adriana self-identifies as *mestiza*, yet (contradicting Vargas Llosa’s definition of *mestizos*) she honors her indigenous origins. She demonstrates this pride by dancing in an urban folk troupe representing “the people of the highlands,” as she elliptically refers to the people Vargas Llosa calls Indians. She considers the word “Indian” contemptuous and criticizes its usage. Yet, like Vargas Llosa, she also

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appeals to culture to approve social hierarchies and believes that discrimination is legitimate if it is based on differences in formal education. She argues eloquently, however, against using race to justify social hierarchies.

Adriana's and Vargas Llosa's discriminatory views and practices concur in that they both use culture to mark and justify social differences. However, their views also conflict conceptually and, indeed, politically, and this conflict derives from the different meanings that they attach to culture. The position Vargas Llosa represents, as a privileged, educated, well-known male writer — one that he has articulated in several publications and interviews — deems cultural specificities as innate and as determining of cleavages among groups of people, who surmount their differences through the gradual process of group evolution.¹ Adriana may also perceive culture as innate. But — as a woman and a student who aspires to the privileges of education — she subordinates this notion to an alternative one, which she defines as personal achievement rather than group evolution; she uses education to mark differences within this individualized idea of culture. Adriana does not imagine that cultural differences among groups preclude cultural similarities among individuals. Instead, crucially, she considers that individuals who are different in some cultural aspects can share other cultural traits. “People can be [culturally] different and similar at the same time. I practice indigenous culture but I am not an Indian,” she explained.

In Cuzco, the site of my research and the place that this book is about, Adriana's words taught me to understand how she — and many other *cuzqueños* like her — challenge a definition of cultures as vessels of immanent inequalities of reason that legitimate — and naturalize — hierarchies among human groups. This is the belief that Vargas Llosa represents and that I consider an expression of Peruvian dominant racism, which I define as the discriminatory practices that derive from a belief in the unquestionable intellectual and moral superiority of one group of Peruvians over the rest. This way of thinking, which does not resort to racial terminology, is a version of what some authors identify as “new racism” (Barker, 1982), “racism without race” (Gilroy, 1987; Balibar, 1988), or “cultural fundamentalism” (Stolcke, 1995). Yet I also learned that when Adriana (and

others) challenge race as the mark of differences, or critique essentialist notions of culture, they can still make discriminations. Although Adriana and her peers stress that culture is achievable, and that education is a legitimate source of social differentiation, in doing so they may converge with dominant racism by appealing to hierarchies of reason to legitimate discrimination. While it would be too simplistic to consider them “racists,” it would be more of a mistake to disregard their participation in the dominant forms of discrimination while only documenting their resistance to it.

Neither institutionalized hypocrisy, nor self-deception, nor inferiority complexes undergirds these subaltern forms of discrimination; rather, I think that the explanation lies in the complexities of contradictory consciousness: “the co-existence in individual minds of two conceptions of the world” (Gramsci, 1987:326). In Peru, contradictory consciousness leads individuals like Adriana to deny the existence of insurmountable hierarchies and immanent cultural differences—those that would place “them” in absolute inferior positions—and at the same time acquiesce to the legitimacy of social differences created by educational achievements. This contradiction, by converging with dominant forms of racism, contributes to its hegemony. Intriguingly, culture—either the innate attributes of a group that correlate with stages in the development of reason (as Vargas Llosa understands it) or “formal education” and individual achievement (as Adriana defines it)—is the arena where racism and the challenge to it meet in the compromise arrangement that enables dominant forms of discrimination to prevail. Yet in the contradictory consciousness of subordinate groups, culture as achievement constitutes an effective challenge to racism. The notion that culture/education is achievable, together with the perception that cultural differences among groups do not preclude similarities among individuals, has enabled cuzqueños like Adriana to transform the dominant meanings of the “mestizo” and “Indian” racial labels.

The second of Vargas Llosa’s statements illustrates the current dominant usage of the term “mestizo”: a Spanish and Indian racialized cultural mixture, evolving from “primitive” Indianness into a more “civilized” stage, and eventually incompatible with indigenous ways. Working-class indigenous cuzqueños give the word an

alternative meaning: they use “mestizo” to identify literate and economically successful people who share indigenous cultural practices yet do not perceive themselves as miserable, a condition that they consider “Indian.” Far from equating “indigenous culture” with “being Indian”—a label that carries a historical stigma of colonized inferiority—they perceive Indianness as a social condition that reflects an individual’s failure to achieve educational improvement. As a result of this redefinition, “indigenous culture”—or Andean culture, to be more specific—exceeds the scope of Indianness; it broadly includes cuzqueño commoners who are proud of their rural origins and claim indigenous cultural heritage, yet refuse to be labeled Indians. They proudly call themselves “mestizo.”

This process, which I call de-Indianization, lies at the heart of my book. The process is a complex one, which goes well beyond the simple view that when Indians become mestizos they adopt “the culture of their ancient masters” (Vargas Llosa, 1990b). De-Indianization is the process through which working-class cuzqueños have both reproduced and contested racism. Conceived as such, de-Indianization is not the shedding of indigenous culture and subsequent “integrating” that Vargas Llosa envisioned as the solution to violence in Peru. Neither does it mean “assimilating,” and thus disappearing culturally, as some anthropologists have presented it (Bonfil Batalla, 1996; Friedlander, 1975). Rather, it is through active de-Indianization that subaltern cuzqueños have redefined essentialist notions of culture. They accomplish this by replacing regional beliefs in fixed identities with infinite degrees of fluid Indianness or mestizeness. They measure these degrees relationally, by considering, for example, the levels of literacy of the persons involved in an interaction, or their relative success in urban jobs; the individual who shows greater achievement in the aforementioned activities is perceived as less Indian, and therefore the mestizo in the interaction. In this alternative and relational view, Indians and mestizos emerge from interactions and not from evolution. Although de-Indianization legitimates subaltern cuzqueños’ own discriminatory behavior, by moving away from the dominant perspective it includes an antievolutionary impetus as it opens up the possibility to ascend socially without shedding indigenous ways. Rooted in a political

concept of culture and of self—one that takes power into account—de-Indianization emphasizes the difference between indigenous culture as a postcolonial phenomenon and “Indianness” as a colonized, inferior social condition. The discourse of de-Indianization allows grassroots intellectuals to reinvent indigenous culture stripped of the stigmatized Indianness that the elites assigned it since colonial times. However, since this liberating process itself continues to define Indianness as the utmost inferior condition in the region, it leaves room for racism to persist.

Recently some scholars have argued that “race” is a political category, whose meanings are shaped through struggle (Omi and Winant, 1986; Gilroy, 1987; Goldberg, 1993). Building on these ideas, and considering the almost inseparable bond between race and culture in Peru, I include de-Indianization among the dialogic struggles through which subordinate cuzqueños have inserted liveable meanings into the racial-cultural identity labels that elites have produced. Because “race” is present on both intellectual and daily life discourses, the dialogic struggles have occurred in and across academic and everyday spheres. In this book, the protagonists in the conflict-ridden process to define race (and later ethnicity) are the cuzqueño elite as well as grassroots intellectuals. The latter are usually working-class people, and (following Gramsci) I define them as nonacademic thinkers who, by organizing and engaging in persuasive activities, contribute to bringing into being new modes of thought shaped after their own particular conception of the world and conscious line of moral conduct (Gramsci, 1987:8–10). Grassroots intellectuals, unlike intellectuals as they have been traditionally defined, are also peasants (as in Feierman, 1990) or, as in the cases I will describe, dancers, market women, and street vendors. In turn-of-the-century Cuzco, their counterparts were the *indigenistas*, members of an elite intellectual movement that strove for country-wide recognition, using arguments about their authentic nationalism and profound knowledge of Peru.

Although this book is about Cuzco, the interregional dialogical racial struggle has always been part of broader Peruvian politics, and most importantly, nation building and state policy making. At the turn of the century, cuzqueño struggles were linked to the processes that defined race in terms of culture. This connection between race

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and culture in Peru has a much longer history, one that can be traced back to colonial beliefs about “purity of blood” (referring to Christian descent) (Gose, 1996; Schwartz and Salomon, forthcoming; Burns, 1999). Yet my particular story begins with a turn-of-the-century dialogue between Peruvian elite intellectuals and European thinkers about the racial character of Peru, a sensitive point during a period in which Latin American leaders were formulating their national projects. In this process Peruvian intellectuals and politicians (for reasons that will become clear) juggled with an imprecise notion of race in which the “spirit” prevailed over (but did not cancel out) the physical aspects of race. Many Peruvian male intellectuals (and a few very vocal women) offered a culturalist definition of race, which could include—though not necessarily—some biological features, randomly subordinated to the superior powers of morality. Morality was deemed to be innate; however, education could instill more virtues in an individual.² Cuzqueño elite intellectuals were highly influential in these dialogues with Europeans over the national racial character. Several of them were particularly decisive in the historical and academic formulation of what I see as a “culturalist” definition of race. Their ideas (which they propagated in newspapers, books, and speeches in their capacity as university professors, members of regional judiciary courts and municipalities, or as congress representatives or state ministers) included both an adamant rejection of biological determinism and the naturalization of hierarchies that, nominally at least, derived from essential moral/cultural differences. Élite intellectuals from Cuzco were not alone in this project, nor did their work go uncontested. Throughout this century, in various arenas ranging from direct political confrontations to daily life, even including ritualistic manifestations, grassroots cuzqueño intellectuals both contested and complied with the classificatory systems and the identity labels that the dominant intelligentsia, progressive and conservative, proposed. But subordinate groups embraced educational differences as legitimating social hierarchies, as did the elites, thus allowing dominant racism to leak into their alternative practices. Thus, shielded by the concessions made to Indian-looking individuals *if* they were “educated,” dominant sectors acquitted themselves from racism while they overtly continued to discriminate

against noneducated groups and, indeed, claimed a difference of skin color, regardless of whether any real difference existed or not. Elites and commoners eventually came to share beliefs in the power of education and “culture” to legitimate discrimination and thus silence denunciations of racism, rendering racism hegemonic and eloquently illustrating that “hegemony at its most effective is mute” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991:24).

There are myriad definitions of hegemony, but I envision it as denoting an ambiguously defined dialogic field shared by elites and subordinates, where a dynamic of power struggle characterized by constant agreements and disputes, and by domination and insubordination, produces a conflict-laden consensus, usually narrow, yet politically crucial.³ In the case of Peruvian racism, the consensus that makes its hegemony possible is the idea that “education” — meaning schooling in its different degrees — creates legitimate hierarchies. Although beyond it the disputes start, the agreement (based on ideas that education is potentially achievable and cancels original inferiorities) induces self-identification, a condition that Raymond Williams sees as decisive of hegemony (Williams, 1977:118). In Peru, and most specifically in Cuzco, this identification was made possible by a modern definition of race that included the possibility of subordinating one’s phenotype and emphasizing instead one’s intelligence and morality, *if* these had been exposed to the corrective power of “education.” This definition was certainly replete with legacies of discriminatory colonial discourses. However, at the turn of the century they were made legitimate by liberal ideals about equality. Moreover, the taxonomy deriving from a definition of race that subordinated phenotype was peculiarly ductile, as it included both the perception of rigid hierarchies and an unequivocal fluidity to position individuals within it. Thus, although the ranking of racial groups was consensually accepted and class-related, the definition of what label adhered to which person left room for negotiation. Such negotiation was expected to be positive, in the sense that the individual could be placed in the highest ranking position possible, but if that could not be done, the resolution would “rest on a resigned recognition of the inevitable and the necessary” (Williams, 1977:118). Currently in Cuzco, what sustains the negotiation, and eventually makes

racism hegemonic, is the implicit agreement that “whiteness” — in its local, not necessarily phenotypical, version — is ultimately superior and Indianness represents absolute inferiority. Ambiguously situated between both terms, upper- and middle-class brown-skinned cuzqueños struggle to approach an elusive yet possible social whiteness; when class and gender (and the cultural perceptions of both) intervene to prevent this achievement, or even thoughts about it, individuals avoid Indianness by settling on being mestizos, albeit of different sorts.

Crucial to my notion of hegemony — and my analysis of hegemonic racism — is a Bakhtinian notion of dialogue: not as face-to-face exchanges but as historically grounded encounters among competing discourses about “culture” (glossed as race, ethnicity, or class) that circulate in cuzqueño social and academic spheres.⁴ I assume that these dialogic encounters are articulated by relationships that occur across multilayered links of power, and thus, the dominant side in one instance may be the subordinate side in another. Identifying multilayered links of power allows me to view a panorama of subordinate practices that defy a higher level of domination while acting as the dominant side of another chain of power and subordinating “others” defined as inferior.⁵ I can thus treat “top” and “bottom” — as Herzfeld has suggested (1997:3) — as two of a host of refractions in a broadly shared and disputed cultural engagement, which in this case involves discourses that intertwine race and culture. This perspective also opens up the possibility of scrutinizing the common ground between “elites” and “ordinary people” — the ground that makes hegemonic forms possible — while avoiding simplistic references to those categories as merely oppositional. I analyze this multilayered view of the ways in which cuzqueños act out their daily lives in light of the recognition that identities are always and constantly crossed by issues of race, ethnicity, geography, class, gender, and generation (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Hall, 1992).

Dialogically constructed, the racial/cultural labels that cuzqueños currently use are intimately entangled with formal education, as Adriana B. argued. Located on the edge of racist hegemony, Adriana self-identifies as *mestiza* and uses indigenous cultural discourses, thus avoiding and defying rigid Indian/mestizo evolutionary dichot-

omies, but her views of the “less educated” (who also form the vast majority of the underprivileged working classes) are similar to those of the elites. Therefore, although beliefs like hers represent a rupture with evolutionist and racialized notions of culture, the idea that education legitimates social hierarchies condones discrimination, intersecting with turn-of-the-century dominant racial thought in Peru, and the images of class difference it bequeathed.

This perception of race as linked to education (and therefore to class and gender) leads me to address—if briefly—how my own identity has shaped my research. I am a brown-skinned, middle-class, intellectual from Lima. As a result of my background—and, crucially, of my academic training—I belong to Peruvian elite intellectual circles where “whites” predominate, and where, as a result of implicit racialized feelings, people either politely ignore my skin color or consider me white. I think that most less-privileged Peruvians would not make a crucial distinction between me and individuals considered white by North American standards. Some provincial university students (like Adriana), who are aware of racial and cultural identities as concepts, would accept in a conversation that I am *mestiza* (because of my brown skin), but they would at the same time consider me *limeña* and, given the geographical construction of race in Peru, socially white. All this contrasts sharply with the perception that my U.S. friends have of me, particularly those who first met me in this country and not in Peru. For them, I am a Latina, therefore inevitably and overtly marked as a woman of color, as a friend of mine recently said (to my surprise, so much had I internalized my Peruvian colorlessness, and therefore, my whiteness!). These experiences have molded my reflections about the Peruvian “whitening” processes and their linkages with class, gender, geography, and with what being an intellectual meant. Memories of my elderly grandmother constantly reminding me that I was *una señorita muy decente* (a very decent young lady) called my attention to the fact that, although I look like Adriana, neither my *limeño* intellectual peers nor my grandmother were willing to consider me a *mestiza*. Telling me that I was “a very decent young lady,” my grandmother was deflecting attention from my skin color and instructing me on the social construction of whiteness, and like any other aver-

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age middle-class limeña, she was also expressing her culturally ingrained dislike of mestizos. This racial category is not as related to skin color as it is to a combination of class distinction and education, which is what the social category of decency indicates. Obviously, it was not my grandmother's dislike of mestizos that prevented my identification as one; rather, as I explain in the following pages, it was the historical intellectual and political itinerary of *mestizaje* as a nation-building model for Peru that had this effect. Initially embraced in the nineteenth century, mestizaje has not been a central nationalist ideal of state policies and intellectuals since the mid-twentieth century, though it was mildly revived by Vargas Llosa in the 1990s as part of his ephemeral and disastrous political career. Relegated to official oblivion and subdued by everyday elite rejection, mestizaje has nevertheless been claimed and redefined by the working classes as an empowering alternative that does not imply a rejection of indigenous culture yet distances them from Indianness.

Turn-of-the-Century Racial Dialogues about Hybridity

Constructive Mestizaje versus Degeneration

The influence of race in the destiny of peoples appears plainly in the history of the perpetual revolutions of the Spanish republics in South America. Composed of individuals whose diverse heredities have dissociated their ancestral characteristics, these populations have no national soul and therefore no stability. A people of half-castes is often ungovernable. — GUSTAVE LE BON, 1912

Since when do revolutions announce decrepitude and death? None of the Latin American nations currently presents the political and social misery that reigned in feudal Europe; but the feudal era is considered an evolutionary stage, while the Hispanoamerican revolutions are deemed as a terminal definitive state. We could say that Le Bon mistakes a child's skin rash for the geriatric gangrene of a ninety-year-old, or the sudden outbursts of a teenager for the homicidal insanity of a senile person. — MANUEL GONZALEZ PRADA, 1904

In a recent article, the historian George Stocking stated that at the turn of the century, widespread confusion about the definition of race was the most immediately evident characteristic of racial thought (1994:7).⁶ We can picture race as a historically specific concept that attaches to theoretical and social discourses to establish the meanings it assumes at any historical moment (Goldberg, 1993:74). Furthermore, because race is a powerful yet empty concept, debates that have sought to define it have been (and still are) shaped by the specific “structure of feelings” (Williams, 1977) that underpins the relations between the groups or individuals who participate in racial discussions or are touched by racial discourses at any given historical period. As a “discourse of vacillations” (cf. Foucault),⁷ the treatment of race (and by the same token of ethnicity) has manifested “characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating community” (Williams, 1977:132). Because race manifested social experiences still in process, its popularity among turn-of-the-century Peruvian elites, I want to argue, derived from its ability to express feelings of superiority while scientifically legitimating these emotions. This allowed them to distribute power based on the structure of their feelings, thus imperceptibly connecting intimate spheres with official realms. Race was simultaneously a scientific and political notion and an officially legitimate, emotion-laden term. Of course, the elites were not a homogeneous pack, yet the conceptual emptiness of race licensed celebrities of all stripes to shape the notion in accord with their divergent feelings.⁸

“Mestizaje,” the regional, nineteenth-century word used in debates about the perils or benefits of hybridity, was the epicenter of the racialized structure of feelings of this region of Latin America. As Brooke Larson put it, mestizaje was “a vexed and multivalent metaphor upon which elites hung their hopes, hatreds, and fears upon the future of the race and the nation” (1998:377). Their fears had been provoked by European arguments that saw in Latin America hybridity’s degenerative effects. Robert Knox specifically used Mexico, Peru, and Central America to prove that “the hybrid was a

degradation of humanity and was rejected by nature.”⁹ Paul Broca, a polygynist who believed in the benefits of eugenic racial-crossing, claimed that the mixture between races as distant as the Iberian colonizers and the Indians was the origin of the disgraces of Latin America (1864:33). Herbert Spencer held a similar view regarding Mexico (quoted in Brading, 1984). As illustrated by Le Bon, these beliefs had not ebbed by the turn of the century and continued to cast doubt on Latin America’s ability to construct nations, and to block any stable superior identity for regional elites. A frequent reaction to the problem of potential hybrid degeneration was what Nancy Leys Stepan (1991) has called “constructive miscegenation,” which reversed arguments against mestizaje by praising the benefits of racial crossing. The pioneering nationalist mestizaje project was launched by Mexican indigenistas after the Revolution. Championed by Andrés Molina Enríquez and Justo Sierra earlier in the nineteenth century, it was promoted again by José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio in the 1920s. Its goal was to produce a bronze-colored people, one that could boast the refinement of both European and Aztec civilizations (Knight, 1990). Nineteenth-century Colombian intellectuals and Brazilians in the 1920s expressed a similar pride concerning racial mixture, although their goal was to produce a white national race (Wade, 1993; Skidmore, 1993; Larson, forthcoming).

Many important Peruvian nation-builders proposed constructive miscegenation as an alternative to the country’s racial problem. In the late 1860s, Manuel Atanasio Fuentes, a leading historian, alluding to the pervasive racial mixture Peru appeared to include, described Lima—the capital city—as a “multicolored garden” and linked this characteristic to the progressive nature of the city (Poole, 1997). He also thought that the country’s nonwhite races were the cause for the backwardness of certain regions, because they were “pure.” He wrote: “In Lima, even those men who are immediately descended from the European race have a *trigueño* color [literally ‘like wheat,’ light brown] which is pale and yellowed” (Fuentes, 1867:104; quoted in Poole, 1997:159). Trained in physiognomic methods—which read facial features as reflecting signs of personal moral character—Fuentes also surveyed Limeños’ morality and intellectual capacity, which he found diverse. While extolling the intel-

lectual and aesthetic refinement of the upper classes, he derided the chronic vagrancy of the underclass of blacks, *zambos*, *cholos*, and the rest of the lower-class population (Gootenberg, 1993:67; Oliart, 1994). Fuentes was writing at the same time as Europeans who feared the degenerative effects of hybridity.¹⁰ However, for Fuentes the immorality of the lower classes did not result from miscegenation but from enduring negative aspects of their original “pure” races. From his perspective, the mixed racial inheritance that characterized the limeño upper classes was a far cry from the degeneration that Broca, Knox, or Spencer imputed to all Latin Americans. Fuentes wrote during a mid-century economic export boom, which, according to economic historian Paul Gootenberg, made Peru the richest regime of Latin America (1993:58). The wealth benefited mostly Lima, and most specifically its upper classes, while failing to reach the rest of the country, and seriously aggravated the hardships of limeño working classes. The gains also boosted the intellectual lifestyles of Lima’s elites, which even before the mid-century economic expansion were fairly sophisticated (Gootenberg, 1993; Poole, 1997). In an era when racial thought was pervasive, it comes as no surprise that Fuentes attributed the success of limeños to their racial make-up. Also, the notably successful lives of the upper classes belied the judgments of Europeans who doomed hybrid Latin Americans—including the affluent oligarchies—to failure. Not surprisingly, Fuentes constructs an opposing image: miscegenation led to progress, and Lima’s multicolored leading classes proved it; moreover, they were as informed and sophisticated as any European.

This economic bonanza and political stability came to a sudden end when Peru lost territorial possessions to neighboring Chile in what came to be known as the War of the Pacific (1879–1884). Political instability prevailed from then until 1895. That year saw the advent of the political leadership of the *civilistas*—members of the Peruvian oligarchy, which included bankers, *hacendados*, and traders with modern approaches to economy. This elite, called *civilistas* after their antimilitary politics, inaugurated a long rule (1895–1919) that came to be known as the República Aristocrática (Basadre, 1964). During the period, the rulers were blessed by another economic surge, this one resulting from the new international mar-

ket that followed World War I. As in the preceding boom, export products—wool, sugar, cotton, rubber, oil, and minerals—funded the economic expansion (Klaren, 1986). If, during the 1860s, the elites rejected the idea of degeneration by boasting of their sophisticated erudition and intellectual capacity, at the turn of the century when politicians championed the twin ideologies of liberalism and progress, education occupied central stage as a nation-building and race-homogenizing tool. In the face of European racial theories, education became the quintessential instrument of the limeños' project for constructive miscegenation. In this respect, their ideas clashed once again with those of European intellectuals like Gustave Le Bon. "One of the greatest illusions of democracy is to imagine that instruction equalizes men. It often serves only to emphasize their differentiation," he had written (1979:289). Obviously this thinker did not lack followers among limeños, but they represented an extreme conservatism that modernizing liberals and iconoclastic radicals derided as "racial pessimism."¹¹

Instead, optimistic ideas asserting the power of education to uplift individuals racially were far-reaching among limeño elites of assorted tendencies. "Thanks to education man can today transform the physical milieu and even the race. It is his most glorious triumph," asserted the aristocrat Javier Prado (1909:52), the leader of Peruvian philosophic positivism and Comtean sociology and rector of San Marcos, the most important university in the country. Prado, like Le Bon, also favored interbreeding between "compatible races," and supported state policies promoting the immigration of Europeans aimed at solving the Peruvian racial predicament. However, he rejected Le Bon's racial pessimism, and he was not alone in so doing. Like Prado, the modernizing oligarchic government that ruled the country from 1893 to 1919 also endorsed beliefs in the redemptive power of education. Through the minister of justice and education, Jorge Polar, the ruling group declared in 1905: "Luckily it has been proved that no race exists that cannot be molded by education: clearly, ours can be so molded, even in the remotest regions of our territory. The myth that the Indian does not want to abandon its miserable condition is rapidly falling into discredit" (1905:xxxviii, quoted in Contreras, 1996:6).

A conspicuous rebuttal of Le Bon came from Manuel Gonzales Prada, as the second epigraph to this section suggests.¹² Granted, there were inferior races in Latin America, but they did not express continental racial degeneration. And as the minister of justice and education had stated, Gonzales Prada also believed that education could improve even the most inferior of all, the Indian race. Gonzales Prada wrote “whenever the Indian receives instruction in schools or becomes educated simply through contact with civilized individuals, he acquires the same moral and cultural level as the descendants of Spaniards” (1904:179–180). Racial pessimism did not have a broad appeal among the country’s intellectuals and politicians, at least publicly. Policies regarding the immigration of superior races for eugenic schemes were issued along with propositions that envisioned educational programs as the solution to improve the racial configuration of the country. A conservative intellectual, Francisco Graña (1908) even coined the term *autogenia*, which can be interpreted as an alternative to *eugenesis*, eugenics.¹³ Rather than improving races through cross-breeding, autogenia represented the attempt to improve the Peruvian race internally, by raising health and nutritional standards and by improving the educational level of groups deemed inferior.

Undoubtedly, prevalent liberalism swayed the country’s elites to envision education as the “racial homogenizer” and therefore a key nation-building element. However, their self-perception both as capable intellectuals and as *trigueños* (from Sp. *trigo* [wheat]; it refers to a type of white, but, crucially, not a European one), and therefore as “mixed” and potentially inferior, was a powerful component of their agenda. Reflecting this feeling, a conservative intellectual announced: “Do not allow copper skin to be a source of social shame and shrinking. Let us destroy once and for all that inferiority complex” (García Calderón, 1986:576). Not surprisingly, intellectuals denied the existence of pure races in Peru and even ridiculed those who presented themselves as purely white.¹⁴ “En el Perú, quien no tiene de inga, tiene de mandinga” was a popular saying in which “Inga” stood for Inca, and “mandinga” for black Africans. A translation of it would be: “The individual who does not have inga [Indian heritage] has mandinga [black heritage],” alluding to crossings

among Spanish, indigenous, and African races. This self-awareness of skin color might have inclined them to minimize the relevance of phenotype and privilege instead intellectual merit as they pondered racial hierarchies. On a more conceptual level, this attitude was wrapped in a racial discourse that rejected totalitarian determinisms—the ill-fated racial pessimism—in favor of optimistic ideas favoring racial improvement through education. Francisco García Calderón, a lawyer and major ideologue of the aristocratic Civilista Party, spoke of the need in Peru for a strong leadership from a cultivated, unified progressive oligarchy that would move to capitalize the economy, centralize and modernize the state, and gradually incorporate the Indian masses into the nation by way of a system of universal education (Klaren, 1986). Beliefs in the power of education to racially redeem the country were compatible with *mestizaje*, which was foundational to their projects, as expressed in the following thought: “The viable Peru is and will be the one which harmoniously integrates the ancient musical stridencies which reverberate sometimes in our blood and which naturally resound like a surprising cacophony combining the Spanish guitar, the indigenous flute, and the funerary drum” (García Calderón, 1986:577).

A feature of this type of optimistic limeño racial thinking was that—as the above quote illustrates—blood was a “synecdoche of culture” (Williams, 1989:431).¹⁵ Explaining an analogous turn-of-the-century expression by a North American, Stocking argued that at the time, “‘blood’—and by extension ‘race’—included numerous elements that we would today call cultural.” Linking this to the generalized confusion that colored racial thinking, the same author remarked that “there was no clear line between cultural and physical elements or between social and biological heredity.” American academics, he continued, used race as a “catchall that might be applied to various human groups whose sensible similarities of appearance, of manner and of speech persisted over time, and therefore were to them, evidently hereditary” (1994:6–7). The same could be said about limeños’ racial ideas, which did not only contest but were also influenced by European thinkers. Local references to the “racial soul” or to the “spirit of the race” might have been borrowed from Romantic historiography, which spoke of race when referring

to a people developing over time and distinct from others by language, religion, or geography (Brading, 1984). Likewise, inspired by Hippolyte Taine's historical sense of race and by French physiognomists, limeños tended to look beneath the surface of observable traits for the "elemental moral state" of a people (C. A. Hale, 1986:397; Poole 1997). Drawing on some aspects of Spencerianism, limeño racial thinkers commonly believed that hereditary transmissions applied to psychical peculiarities as well as to physical ones (Stocking, 1968:240; Luna, 1913:14). These ideas were connected by Lamarckism, the theory that acquired characteristics can be inherited, which was current in nineteenth-century popular wisdom (Stocking, 1968:242; S. Gould, 1996:401).¹⁶ Beliefs in the inheritance of acquired traits suited the intellectuals' hopes in the redemptive power of education, and indeed promoted a definition of race ambiguously connected to biology, overtly interested in a historical "spirit," and predisposed to subordinate external phenotypic markers to internal racial characteristics such as intelligence and morality.

Race could be biology, but it could also be the soul of the people; it was also their culture, their spirit, their language. Debates about the "Peruvian race" and its future were colored by the tension between its spiritual and biological aspects. For example, Javier Prado combined in his racial thinking a concern for "the spirit" and the "moral world" with organicist references to intelligence and physiology. Positivist philosophy, he argued, "studies the genesis of intellectual faculties, the influence of the nervous system in psychological life; in a word the development and the complexities of the spiritual phenomena in living beings, conditioned directly by the organism and the physical milieu" (1891:159). Generally, however, there was a tendency to reject the biological aspects of race without rejecting the notion itself. The influential Francisco García Calderón, for example, noted that the idea of race "persisted as a synthesis of the diverse elements of a defined civilization," but he also felt that biology as the basis of race was losing prestige (quoted in Hale, 1986:419). This tendency would eventually favor a culturalist definition of race in which biology was either subordinated to the cultural aspects of race or, as in the socialist thought of José Carlos Mariátegui, dismissed as a fiction (1968:34) and instead circumscribed race within culture. Key figures in formu-

lating these views were the group of cuzqueño intellectuals known as indigenistas, whom I discuss in the next section.

Indigenista Contribution to Cultural Race

Mestizaje as Degeneration and as a Racial-Class Fact

Cuzco and Lima are, in the nature of things, two opposing hubs of our nationality. Cuzco represents the millenary maternal cultural heritage that the Incas bequeathed to us. Lima is the yearning for adaptation to European culture. And this is because Cuzco already existed when the Conqueror arrived, and Lima was created by him *ex nihilo*. There is nothing strange in Lima's being foreign-inclined, Hispanophile, imitator of exoticisms, Europeanized, and Cuzco being vernacular, nationalistic, and pure, portraying the hoary pride of legitimate American aristocratic ancestry.

— LUIS EDUARDO VALCÁRCEL, 1978

The economic bonanza that benefited Peru during the first decade of the century did not result in evenly distributed national progress. While oil production and plantation agriculture technologically modernized the coastal areas and transformed its working classes from indentured workers into wage laborers, the increase of wool exports—a commodity produced in highland haciendas—did not modernize the sierra. Lacking basic urban infrastructure, highland cities were actually large rural towns, inhabited by absentee landlords of large haciendas who lived in large mansions teeming with indigenous male and female servants. Completing the image of backwardness, servitude was the main labor relationship in the large and medium-sized countryside properties, although there were also free peasant members of indigenous communities, or *ayllus*. Aggravating these circumstances, but in accordance with the above image, the limeño elite looked abroad for its cultural references and was scornful of much that was *serrano* (Klaren 1986:610).¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Lima was the stage for the political decisions of the liberal oligarchic state; from the dominant viewpoint, this state of affairs had racial causes.

Probably influenced by popular nineteenth-century Lamarckism and environmentalism, the definition of “Peruvian races” matched geographic images of transects that ranged from the Pacific coast to the Amazonian tropics.¹⁸ To the image of the coast as the historical site of colonial culture corresponded the idea that it was the natural environment of Spaniards or their *criollo* descendants. Since the nineteenth century, they have been labeled “whites,” regardless of their color (Barragán, 1998). In the same picture, Indians were the natural inhabitants of the sierra, the highland region where the Inca Empire had flourished. Lastly, the Amazonian tropical forest, known as “the jungle,” was associated with “primitive,” “savage” tribes, imagined as a different indigenous breed who, unlike the Inca descendants, had never produced any contribution to Peruvian history. Mestizos, those ambiguous individuals of all kinds, could live anywhere in the highlands or on the coast. Blacks were considered a foreign race, and therefore lacked a specific place of origin in the national geography; yet as a “tropical people” they were deemed to adapt to the hot coastal areas.

Significantly, modern Peruvian race-making paralleled a political process of place-making as it assigned races to spaces and evaluated these within evolutionary temporal schemes (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Fabian, 1983). Reflecting tropes of progress, integration, and obstacle (Orlove, 1993b), the modernized spaces of the coast ranked higher than the highlands. Illustrating this enduring and pervasive belief, José de la Riva Agüero, one of Peru’s best known thinkers and one of the few limeño intellectuals who ventured to the highlands as early as the 1910s, recorded in his travel log: “The coast has represented innovation, swiftness, joy, and pleasure; the highlands, have symbolized an almost backward conservatism, a seriousness that approaches sadness, a discipline that approximates servility and an endurance leading virtually to torpidness” (1995:225). Following this racialization of geography, people were ranked according to their surroundings: the higher the geographical elevation, the lower the social status of its inhabitants. This implied that, regardless of their social origins, highland dwellers (contemptuously called *serranos*) were considered inferior to coastal inhabitants, and among the coastal peoples, the most elevated were the limeños.

Of all *serrano* cities at the turn of the century, Cuzco, the pre-

colonial capital of the Inca Empire, might be expected to have occupied the lowest rank as the symbolic center of Indianness. Although elite cuzqueños acknowledged the unprogressive nature of the countryside, they also countered limeños' perception of Cuzco as backward and inferior to Lima. Moreover, competing with coastal "gentlemen" for national leadership, as the epigraph opening this section illustrates, cuzqueño elites used national racialized geography to emphasize Lima's inherent hispanophilia. By contrast, they boasted about the authenticity of their nationalism, seeing it as geographically and historically legitimated by the rank of their city as the capital of the Inca Empire. This practice eventually produced *cuzqueñismo*, or the pride to be cuzqueños, heirs of a quintessentially national historical legacy.¹⁹ Initially shaped as *regionalismo* (a political doctrine promoted by provincial politicians in general), *cuzqueñismo*, as Benedict Anderson has said of nationalism, "belonged with religion or kinship, rather than with liberalism or fascism" (1993:5). Thus, like nationalism it accommodated the variegated political and academic tendencies of its champions, whose consensually shared feelings of regional pride limited the significance of their political disagreements. Launched at the turn of the century, this sort of regional nationalism began as an elite political-intellectual project to counter the view of cuzqueños as racially inferior serranos and to compete politically with limeños. From the beginning, *cuzqueñismo* asserted its place in the nation by drawing from the pre-Hispanic tradition: enactments of Inca history, regional dances, and research into the indigenous past and present through archaeological and ethnological studies have aimed to show the past eminence of Cuzco and therefore its entitlement to equal (or even superior) standing related to Lima. Initially the brainchild of elite intellectuals, all these activities converged in the 1920s in the modern political-intellectual formation known as *indigenismo*, the academic face of *cuzqueñismo*.²⁰

A salient feature of modern *indigenismo*, and one that would influence the Peruvian nation-building process for years to come, was the way it sharpened the culturalist definition of race already latent among other non-cuzqueño thinkers and, more specifically, in dominant limeño racial thought. One of its most prolific and influential representatives, Luis Eduardo Valcárcel, was particularly explicit in

this respect: “This universal relationship between human beings and the natural world is resolved through culture. We are the offspring, that is, the heirs, of a being that has been shaped by the interaction of Nature and Culture. Thus, our minds reject spontaneous generation, mutation, or any life without history [La generación espontánea, la mutación, la vida, sin historia, repugnan pues a nuestra mente]” (1927:109). Intertwining history and human life, Valcárcel aimed at discrediting extreme Social Darwinists and at rejecting the idea that the progress of human races could be reduced to biological struggles, which he phrased as “mutation” and “spontaneous generation.” These were only biology, which was different from “Nature” because unlike the latter, biology was void of “Culture.” Intensely historicist (although still from an evolutionary perspective), Valcárcel denied the significance of biology in shaping races, while attributing to culture the power to do so. He thus claimed “Conocemos, pensamos, sentimos según el conocer, el pensar y el sentir de la propia cultura” (We know, think, and feel in the manner of knowing and feeling proper to our own culture) (1927:109), thus implying — like W. E. B. DuBois in the “Souls of Black Folk” and “The Conservation of Races” (1996) — that culture and history, and not biology, constitute the core of human races and determine their differences.²¹ Perhaps an early version of today’s “cultural fundamentalism,” this position represented in the 1920s an articulate challenge to European racial pessimisms inasmuch as it questioned the power of biological inheritance to rule human destiny. However, none of this eliminated race or hierarchical racial feelings.

A distinctive feature of cuzqueño indigenismo was its repudiation of mestizos, and the view that promestizo opinions were anti-Indian. Moreover, cuzqueños judged that limeños’ mestizaje project expressed Hispanophilia and rejected the Inca legacy, which to them was the pillar of Peruvian nationalism. Reacting against promestizo arguments, leading indigenistas borrowed from Europeans and North American racial thinkers the idea that races degenerated if they were removed from their proper places. For example, Luis E. Valcárcel, whose abhorrence of biological determinism was paired with his strong scorn of mestizaje, wrote in his *Tempestad en los Andes*: “Every personality, every group is born within a culture and

can only live within it,” implying that individuals or groups degenerate when they abandon their original places or cultures (1927:109; emphasis added). In this, Valcárcel coincided with those European racial thinkers he otherwise despised, specifically those who thought that the fate of races when they transgressed their boundaries was degeneration, and even racial extinction (Stepan, 1985:99).²² According to him, “El mestizaje de las culturas no produce sino deformidades” (Cultural miscegenation only yields deformities) (1927:111).²³ Mestizaje was a degenerative process, initially the result of colonial displacements, and as Valcárcel perceived it, during his time the product of indigenous migration to cities. But as we shall see, embedded in a culturalist definition of race and supported by an elite class perspective, this mestizaje rather than being biological, came to be defined in moral terms.

Valcárcel’s position on this point was influential, swaying ardent pro-Indian champions beyond Cuzco. Those who argued influentially against the unremediable inferiority of “the Indian race” employed his indigenista ideas about the proper places of the races and the degenerative effects of transgressing them via mestizaje. In this vein, the leftist José Carlos Mariátegui, wrote: “In his native environment, as long as migration does not deform him, [the Indian] has nothing to envy in the mestizo.” The mestizo, radiated “imprecision and hybridism . . . resulting from the obscure prevalence of negative sediments in a state of morbid and sordid stagnation” (1981:34). In neither Mariátegui’s or Valcárcel’s view were mestizos necessarily defined as *biological* hybrids as in European depictions of U.S. or African mulattoes (Stepan, 1985). Rather, mestizos were Indians (monolingual Quechua-speaking agriculturalists) who had “abandoned” their proper natural/cultural environment and migrated to the cities, where they degenerated morally, as reflected by their deviant sexuality. “The impure Indian woman finds refuge in the city. Flesh of the whorehouse, one day she will die in the hospital” (Valcárcel, 1927:78). According to cultural/racial purists, the salient characteristic of female Indians’ sexuality was their rejection of “foreignness,” an aversion that had however guaranteed the “purity of the Indian race.” This racial xenophobia supposedly inherent in indigenous female sexuality was central in culturalist definitions of

race and allowed some elite thinkers to define hybrids as immoral, and primarily *sexually* so. Indian female impurity resulted from transgressing the xenophobic quality of their sexuality. From this perspective mestizaje was a moral problem, the result of rape or deviant female sexual behavior. Hybridity thus represented not biological but moral degeneration.

Articulated through morality (with sexual behavior as its index), the antibiological and culturalist theories of race of the indigenistas were compatible with discriminatory beliefs against mestizaje. Ultimately, mestizaje emerged in a class discourse that marked non-privileged social sectors as immoral because they lacked “proper” education. Intellectuals were by extension excluded from such a stain: they were members of the proper class, had the right education, lived in their proper places, and maintained appropriate sexual behavior. In the 1920s the sophistication and social refinement of cuzqueño intellectuals was able to dissolve, or at least limit, the fact of their skin color. In this they were different from other racially subordinate intellectuals, such as Franz Fanon, whose intellectual sophistication, he declared, did not remove the derogatory fact of his black skin: “No exception was made for my refined manners, or my knowledge of literature, or my understanding of the quantum theory” (1968:117). Instead, the cuzqueño intellectual community, and even the limeño one, did not self-identify as mestizos nor were they seen as such by their class peers. They were *gente decente*, people of worth. Unlike the fact of blackness described by Fanon, being mestizo in Peru was not of necessity related to skin color; rather (and redundantly), it was a hybrid fact of race and class together. It did not necessarily coincide with the European perception of mestizaje as biological hybridity, thus allowing Peruvian elites to amend the European perception of them as hybrids.

Analysts of the new European version of racism (“racism without race”) (Barker, 1982; Gilroy, 1987; Balibar, 1988; Taguieff, 1987 and 1990) explain that it is a culturalist rhetoric of exclusion resulting from the reformulation of former biologically based discriminatory procedures, and that they arise from a postwar discrediting of biological notions of race. From the viewpoint of these scholars, European and neoracist discriminatory rhetoric presuppose that the

peoples of the world are separated by unsurmountable, essential cultural differences. From a slightly different position Verena Stolcke (1995:4) proposes the concept of “cultural fundamentalism.” The new rhetoric of exclusion is different from racism, she argues, in that rather than asserting different endowments of human races, it assumes the propensity of human nature to reject strangers, which explains the inevitability of hostile relations among different “cultures.” Thus, for example, from Stolcke’s viewpoint, Mario Vargas Llosa’s statement about cultural diversity producing violence in Peru expresses cultural fundamentalism and should not be analyzed as being racist as it does not proceed from a biological notion of race. Rather than postulating the existence of biological hierarchies, cultural fundamentalism presupposes that the impenetrability of cultural boundaries naturally produces xenophobic reactions among groups, which engage in violent actions, thus canceling the possibility of harmonic cohabitation of different cultural groups.

The historical study of racial discourse in twentieth-century Peru shows that the concepts of race and culture were thoroughly intertwined. The version of racism expressed by Vargas Llosa had an antecedent in a fundamentalist notion of culture that was not aimed at moving away from race. Rather, Valcárcel, Mariátegui, and others — including conservative Peruvian thinkers like Victor Andrés Belaúnde — retained the idea of race while opposing European racial pessimisms and biological determinisms.²⁴ The early culturalist definition did not intend to replace race as a notion but to advance an optimistic idea: that races could surmount inferiority. Their historical contribution consisted in emphasizing the “spiritual” aspects of races, and to privilege “culture” over “biology.” This emphasis was not unique to Peruvians. Nancy Leys Stepan (1991:148) describes how some Mexican thinkers, specifically José Vasconcelos’s project for constructive miscegenation, highlighted the “spiritual” qualities of Aztec and Spanish civilizations. In a similar vein, Rigoberto Paredes, a contemporary of Valcárcel writing in neighboring La Paz (Bolivia), proposed that changing the Indians’ clothing would contribute to improving their race (Thomson, 1988). In the United States, W. E. B. DuBois (1897, 1903) also emphasized the cultural aspects of race and developed optimistic ideas about racial redemption via education.

Certainly not every influential North or South American racial optimist subscribed to cultural definitions of race. At the risk of being interpreted as reductionist, I want to suggest that this tendency might have been stronger among subordinate intellectuals, like Du-Bois and Valcárcel, whose social status derived from their “inferior” racial identities vis-à-vis the dominant “white” world of all kinds. Whatever the reason, there were other thinkers whose projects for “constructive miscegenation” implied biological eugenics. The Guatemalan man of letters and indigenista, Miguel Angel Asturias, is a brutal example. In 1923 he proclaimed: “Do with the Indian what you do with other animal species when they show symptoms of degeneration: new blood, that’s the answer!” (Asturias, 1923, quoted in Cojtí Cuxil, 1997:49).

The historical contrast between Asturias and the culturalist alternative makes evident the contestatory dimension of the latter. Racial culturalism, however, was still confined within the explanatory domain of race and sheltered unequivocally discriminatory beliefs shaped by class, gender, or even geographic feelings. Consistent with their emphasis on the power of education to transform race, the tendency among Peruvian racial thinkers was to condemn those individuals who, from their viewpoint, lacked education, thus implicitly denouncing their lack of class distinction. Gonzales Prada, reputed as a nineteenth-century iconoclast, contemptuously called them *encastados* (lower class individuals) and Mariátegui, the paramount Peruvian socialist, following Valcárcel, despised them as mestizos. At the turn of the century, racial optimists believed that education could become a racial/cultural acquired attribute that could be passed down, in Lamarckian fashion, to improve the Peruvian race. Adriana’s remarks shocked me into the realization that education in Cuzco — and I would venture to generalize, in all Peru — has retained both its contestatory edge and its discriminatory potential. Formal education may not preclude or replace indigenous culture (a view that counters racialized conceptions that indigenous culture is unsurmountably archaic and incompatible), but it does play a legitimated discriminatory role.

Unveiling the discriminatory potential of culture and its historical embeddedness in Peruvian racial thought is important; it can shed light on Peruvian cultural fundamentalism as a form of racism that is

neither exclusive to rightist politicians like Vargas Llosa nor limited to academia. On the contrary, cultural fundamentalism in Peru is a widespread, racialized way of explaining social differences, the peculiarity of which does not derive, as analysts of new European racisms contend, from its having replaced biological definitions of race. Rather, Peruvian cultural forms of discrimination—including “cultural fundamentalism”—emerge from a historical matrix of racial ideology. Working within it, early twentieth-century intellectuals elaborated a culturalist definition of race that rejected the power of biology to determine the essence of the peoples. The international reaction against race—which started in the 1930s and which repudiated *race as biology* (Stepan, 1991; Barkan, 1992; Stolcke, 1993; Harrison, 1995)—did not question the discriminatory potential of culture. Significantly for my purposes, in the case of Peru—and probably elsewhere—it did not unveil the ways in which culture had been racially constructed. Thus, the original culturalist tendency to explain and legitimate hierarchies lost its original contestatory thrust while preserving its authority as a rhetoric of exclusion, discrimination, and dominance embedded in the apparent egalitarianism of culture talk. As in Europe, it became cultural fundamentalism, but of a very specific version, in which race has been only rhetorically silenced.

The academic repudiation of biological notions of race was significant for anthropology, as it meant the emergence of the concept of “ethnic groups” to explain human differences. As Stolcke (1993) has suggested, it implied the reification of culture, which thus potentially prolonged the naturalization of sociohistorical differences earlier contained in the European notion of biological race. In Peru a similar shift from race to culture began in the early 1930s, and as in Europe it was grounded in the desire to denounce Nazi racial crimes. Unlike Europe however, in Peru the shift unfolded from prevalent images of essential culture undergirding antibiological definitions of race. Thus, while former dominant ways of imagining differences continued, overt references to race were silenced by culture now bearing its own conceptual right to mark differences. Along with this shift, and simultaneous with its rejection by intellectuals and politicians, the Peruvian definition of race acquired overt biological and phe-