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Playing Indian and Indigeneity:

Fraught Performances and Decolonial Visions in the Peruvian Postconflict

By

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The inadvertent insistence on variations of the ‘Indian problem’ as traditional sociological departure has oriented cultural analysis away from the centrality of Peruvian whiteness for understanding the effects of racialized and gendered representations, and how they relate to persisting inequality, discrimination, gender violence, and political instability decades after the Peruvian armed conflict. Through decolonial feminist lenses, this dissertation explores representations of Peruvian Indigenous women that emerged after the political armed conflict (1980-2000) in television, film, and digital storytelling—a collaborative project with Indigenous women from the National Organization of Indigenous Andean and Amazonian Women of Peru (ONAMIAP). I argue that, as technological and discursive maps showcasing the underpinnings, borderlines, and transfigurations of race and gender, hyperreal portrayals of Indigenous women reveal renewed racial anxieties given the exacerbated rural to urban migration during the conflict, devaluing their political efforts and social demands, while also laying bare Peruvian white fragility and the prominence of masculine coloniality of power.

By centering Indigenous women’s voices, this research concludes that despite the shifting perceptions of Indigeneity as cultural stock to a fully-fleshed political body, Indigenous women and peoples now face compounded threats, such as the environmental crisis of late capitalism. In addition to illuminating race and gender as indivisible analytical categories, this examination includes national and transnational extractive flows, alliances, and resistance to demonstrate the interconnectedness of race, capital, and environmental justice in an increasingly mediatized world.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| | |
| Chapter 1. Toward a Decolonial Feminist Research on Indigeneity in Contemporary Peru: A Framework | 5 |
| <i>How to Write about Indigeneity: A Framework</i> | 6 |
| <i>Indigeneity, Indianness and Playing Indian in Peru</i> | 15 |
| <i>Indigeneity, Gender, and Normative Violence</i> | 26 |
| <i>Conclusions</i> | 32 |
| | |
| Chapter 2. Fraught Performances and Dragging Indigeneity in the Peruvian Postconflict | 34 |
| <i>From Instant Indians to Drag/ging Indigeneity</i> | 37 |
| <i>Heteronormative Mestizo-Whiteness and Peruvian Regimes of Looking</i> | 45 |
| <i>Performance and the Colonial Paradigm in the Extractive Zone</i> | 49 |
| <i>Conclusions</i> | 56 |
| | |
| Chapter 3. Race, Extractivism and Mercurial Coloniality for/through Humans and Other-than Humans | 60 |
| <i>Global Crisis, Anthropocene and the “We are all in the same ship” Discourse</i> | 63 |
| <i>Máxima Acuña’s Everyday, Unespectacular Resistance and Prize-Winning Struggles</i> | 72 |
| <i>Mercurial Coloniality for/through Humans and Other-than-Humans in Máxima (2020) by Claudia Sparrow</i> | 79 |
| <i>Conclusions</i> | 93 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter 4. Unruly and Lopsided: The Geopolitics of Transnational Digital Feminist Solidarity | 95 |
| <i>Digital Storytelling and Participatory Digital Ethnography</i> | 99 |
| <i>Adapting Digital Storytelling, Meaning Making and Meeting Halfway</i> | 103 |
| <i>Olinda Silvano: “El arte es vida”</i> | 105 |
| <i>Hilda: “Empoderada y sin vergüenza”</i> | 113 |
| <i>Rosa Palomino: “Mi aymara nunca se termina”</i> | 120 |
| <i>Conclusions</i> | 125 |
| | |
| Conclusion | 128 |
| Bibliography | 131 |
| List of Organizations | 153 |

Introduction

Why do many contemporary representations of Indigenous peoples in *post-colonial* nation-states lean more toward the *colonial* than the *post*? And in the Peruvian case, what does the *postconflict* have to do with these often racialized and gendered pictures of Indigeneity and vice versa? While these questions are indeed incredibly complex, to a great extent the answer hides beneath the same material and discursive structures that created them. Coloniality has not vanished; it merely concealed strategies and grammars to continue producing—eager or not—subjects. The Peruvian political armed conflict (1980-2000) primarily rekindled existing hegemonic, centralized, urban discourses and anxieties regarding Indigeneity as difference. In other words, “the Indian Problem” over and over.

This project initially centers on the entanglement between race and gender that Anibal Quijano called the “colonial matrix of power” (2000) in Indigenous women’s representations in television (comedian Jorge Benavides’s “Paisana Jacinta”), film (Claudia Sparrow’s *Máxima*), and alternative media self-representations by Indigenous women (a digital storytelling project in collaboration with ONAMIAP, Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú). It examines the role of the colonial gaze, heteronormativity, and Peruvian white anxiety in structuring beliefs, silences, invisibility or hypervisibility of Indigenous women. The collaborative portion of this project responds to what Walter D. Mignolo calls “epistemic disobedience” (2009) for various reasons. First, to delink from Western Enlightenment ideals and promises that inform academic research in general. Second, to ask different questions about Indigeneity, gender, and race while being mindful of the “Indian Problem” lenses still present in

the Peruvian academe. Finally, to embrace the affective, unruly, and lopsided nature of co-creating with others, moving beyond the objectivity and evidence-driven commands of academic knowledge.

Chapter 1 proposes a decolonial feminist framework for researching the representation of Indigenous women in contemporary Peruvian cultural and media production. It argues for an analytical methodology that recognizes Indigenous women's gendered experience of colonialism—of being subjected to violence, made invisible and muted throughout historiography, and reduced to stagnant and degrading stereotypes in current cultural representations. It appositionally reads both the modern Peruvian nation-state and Western academic research as structures of colonial figurations that obscure the gender complexity of Indigenous identity, engaging a gender perspective that considers the contested relationship between Indigeneity and Peruvian identity, while centering Indigenous women's political and cultural mobilities shed light on the complexities of identity politics and the role of hetero—and ethno-normative neoliberal regimes.

Chapter 2 analyzes Jorge Benavides's brownface drag characterizations that emerged during the last years of Peru's political armed conflict, which continued on and off the air until 2020. Using "playing Indian" (Deloria 1998) and a reversal of the "Indian problem" question as methodologies, this chapter unpacks heteronormative mestizo-whiteness in the context of racial capitalism. Through a decolonial feminist examination, this research addresses Jorge Benavides's anti-Indigenous (and previously anti-Black) racial humor characterizations as a significant and primary site for a critical analysis of race and gender relations in Peru, exposing the intrinsic coloniality in the sequestering of cultural capital through commodification. Engaging theoretical approaches to the colonial gaze, heteronormative mestizo-whiteness, and the "extractive zone" as

proposed by Macarena Gómez-Barris (2010), I demonstrate how Benavides' social currency--urban, male, and mestizo white--allows him to appropriate and profit from the female Indigenous body, reinforcing discourses of Indigeneity as an obstacle to progress and ultimately normalizing and maintaining inequality.

Chapter 3 examines *Máxima* (2020), a documentary by Peruvian director Claudia Sparrow depicting Máxima Acuña—an Indigenous subsistence farmer and weaver from Cajamarca, Peru—and her legal and environmental struggle against Newmont, the world's largest gold mining corporation, based in Colorado (U.S). Combining postcolonial and decolonial lenses with feminist film analysis, this research traces the material and discursive transfers between the U.S. and Peru to reveal the colonial opacities of the 'Peruvian miracle' as a form of racial capitalism in the *postconflict*. I argue that *postconflict* as a periodization renders invisible the continuity of violence primarily against racialized populations, while the Peruvian miracle, a spectacular but unsustainable recovery, occurred at the expense of the same livelihoods cut short by the conflict. Reading Cajamarca/gold as foundational sites of the colonial racial project in Peru then—Atahualpa, Pizarro and the gold ransom—and now—Máxima, Newmont, gold mining and mercury, I propose *mercurial coloniality* as an analytical concept that allows me to demonstrate three main points: how symbolic and material extractivism co-constitute each other; how race, gender, and capitalism coincide in specifically racialized geographies in the Americas; and how certain grammars, i.e. English, Spanish, the Law, activate, delay or im/mobilize certain flows and transfers in specific directions.

The last chapter centers Peruvian Indigenous women's voices and knowledge as they articulate their experience of leadership and political negotiation within and outside their communities. Following Linda Tuhiwai Smith's reframe methodology, collaborative digital

storytelling allows for “greater control over the ways in which indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled” (153). I first outline general trends in digital participatory media as pedagogical tools for critical race and Indigenous studies, and then examine two Peruvian cases, the *Quipu Project* and *PeruDigital.org* as comparative frames given the limited number of such studies. I reflect on the physical and disembodied limitations of collaborative storytelling production: from how I initially envisioned it—a triumphant collection of Indigenous women’s empowerment stories—to the deviations and windy conditions of transnational feminist solidarity between very unequal actors and geopolitics in the North and South. Focusing on the digital stories of Olinda Silvano (Shipibo-Konibo), Hilda Pérez Mancori (Ashaninka), and Rosa Palomino (Aymara), I analyze their narratives of individual and collective leadership from their Indigenous communities, to becoming part of a greater national organization in a context of predominant male leadership both locally and nationally.

Chapter 1

Toward a Decolonial Feminist Research on Indigeneity in Contemporary Peru:

A Framework

The word itself, “research,” is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary... it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful.
—Linda Tuhiwai-Smith

Social sciences and humanities disciplines have grown to recognize the ethical implications of researching Indigeneity given that “to speak of Indigeneity is to speak of colonialism” (Simpson 67). In her groundbreaking work, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith formulates a series of questions on Indigenous research: Who carries out the research and how? Who will ultimately benefit from the research, and how will those benefits be measured? As a mestizo Peruvian and formerly undocumented immigrant now living in California for almost two decades—learning to live as a POC (person of color), negotiating my own Latinx identity within a white majority, and almost reinventing a new existence—I find these questions more than necessary.

Researching Peruvian Indigenous women and their representation requires an ethical approach to their lived experience of colonialism—of being subjected to violence, made invisible and muted throughout historiography, and lately, reduced to stagnant and degrading stereotypes in cultural and media productions. Taking stock of my positionality and educational privilege, this research hopes to contribute to the bridging formations between decolonial and feminist thought in the Americas, by looking at previous explorations of Peruvian Indigeneity and

bringing forth new political and social intricacies of the multi-cultural and neoliberal era, such as the growing role of Indigenous women.

How to Write about Indigeneity: A Framework

Aymara scholar and activist Silvia Rivera-Cusicanqui has also criticized the workings of “academic colonialism” in the Americas, pointing out knowledge production and its circulation between North and South, specifically between U.S. and Latin-American universities. She argues that the “decolonial turn” is another fad in the U.S. academy, as *indigenismo* once was. Like Rivera Cusicanqui, historian Pedro Chamix criticizes academic indigenismo as a practice that takes the Indians into a laboratory to study them in terms of their physical appearance, family names, dress, language, customs, and later regurgitates them in hundreds of publications and books in English, German, or French, only later translated into Spanish without any political utility. (49)

Humanist departments, and possibly all academic research carried out in the U.S., cannot escape the constitutive inequality of North and South relationships. However, despite this undeniable academic disproportion, part and parcel of U.S. imperialism, Indigenous scholarship in Latin America has not only increased but has also fostered transnational dialogues among Indigenous actors, activists, and scholars. The influence of feminist thought has also promoted new methodologies that recognize the urgency of intertwining theory and praxis, a goal the present research aims to accomplish, if not fully, at least by integrating both Indigenous scholarship and also the lived experience of leaders and activists who take a stand through and against nation-state structures and discourses.

One of the most audacious intellectuals at the forefront of Indigenous feminisms is Julieta Paredes, who has proposed “feminismo comunitario” and a closer analysis of “entronque patriarcal.” Paredes’s invitation to undo colonialism echoes other native feminists who advocate against the subordination or complete dismissal of Indigenous women’s issues within their communities (Ramírez; Smith). Although feminism is still a thorny and antagonizing subject within many Indigenous groups, the encounter between decolonial and feminist thought has proven to be productive, as more Indigenous intellectuals and scholars in Latin America embrace both disciplines. Like Paredes, most Indigenous feminists locate community at the center, in contrast to the ruthless individualism globalized capitalism promotes.

Inspired by these Indigenous and feminist scholars, who rightfully question non-Indigenous scholarly production on Indigeneity, *and* by those who believe that community can extend beyond the nation, this research is conceived as a collaborative exercise with women in multiple latitudes who resist silence and understand the reality that women’s rights are never completely secured. Well aware of my positionality as a scholar and a woman of color in the North, this research recognizes that decolonizing gender requires a constant effort at unveiling the entangled power relationships between women from “un norte rico y el sur empobrecido” (Paredes 72), as well as keen attention to geographic and cultural specificities. A decolonial possibility should also account for the multiple fronts of Indigenous women’s agendas, as the “backbone of cultural revitalization” (Jacob 108), and as historical “dynamic political actors who have partaken in international politics and shaped state practices using different forms of resistance” (Picq 3). I also argue that this recognition of agency should not only be limited to “exceptional” political or violent times, but also include myriad ongoing local processes and collective organizations and solidarities.

Above all, this research could not hope to answer its feminist and decolonial goal without including the voices of Indigenous women themselves. For this reason, I approached ONAMIAP (the National Peruvian Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women’s Organization), a national Indigenous organization formed by women that welcomed me to collaborate on a digital ethnographic project. Choosing to collaborate with the Indigenous women of ONAMIAP is an attempt to distance my work from discourses that romanticize or reify cultural differences. It recognizes their agency, knowledge, and expertise as the only national Indigenous women’s organization. ONAMIAP is also officially recognized among the five leading organizations of the Peruvian Indigenous movement that participated in a multisectorial commission led by the Ministerio de Cultura to discuss the Law on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2011.

In addition to Indigenous scholarship and methodologies, this research also follows the steps of non-Indigenous and feminist works that approach knowledge production as a dialogue of *situated knowledges*, because “all drawings of inside-outside boundaries in knowledge are theorized as power moves, not moves toward truth” (Haraway 576), instead of “reiterating the inequalities of epistemic credibility” (Alcoff 17) associated with identity. When I explained my digital storytelling project to the leaders of ONAMIAP, they suggested a plan to follow, as well as a list of women who would best represent the diversity and the interests of the organization. Their readiness to help me and to think together about how to conduct the project despite their limited agenda demonstrates their collaborative work ethic as well as their expertise, both indispensable not only in the formation of a national and transnational Indigenous women’s movement but also in their interaction with the intricate nation-state machine, as their trajectory evidence. As Devine Guzmán states in the case of Brazil, “the “ndigenous movement and its supporters reflects what dominant indigenist discourses collectively failed to do: replace the

monolithic, flat, imperialist notion of Indianness with a political recognition of Indigeneity that prioritizes self-identification, in all of its heterogeneity and potential contradiction” (36).

Similarly, ONAMIAP’s agency and success attest to the futility of Peruvian excluding mestizo discourses of nationalism, even more so for being a women’s movement in a male-dominated arena. As Stephanie Rousseau and Anahi Morales argue in the first academic analysis of Indigenous women movements, ONAMIAP has accomplished national reach, bridging the historical Selva/Sierra divide (184) unlike any other Indigenous women movement in history.

ONAMIAP’s members come from many different Andean and Amazonian communities, and depending on institutional resources, many of them sporadically participate in annual workshops on diverse topics at the Lima headquarters. Regardless of age, each member has a trajectory of leadership in her community. Similarly, the leaders of ONAMIAP, Ketty Marcelo, Gladis Vila, and Melania Canales, have grassroots organizational experience, as well as international participation in official institutions such as the United Nations and ECMIA (Americas Indigenous Women’s Continental Network), and have established relations with other scholars around the world. Their practices and expertise have critically enriched and nuanced my academic formation, broadening it beyond U.S.-centered Native American studies.

While I could echo critiques of U.S. Native American studies imperialism that ignore or dismiss most of the Americas’ Indigenous groups, access to the contrasting historical frames of European colonialism, Spanish and British, and the different forms of Indigenous resistance has provided me with a much broader perspective, especially concerning how Indigeneity has articulated with nationalism. While the U.S. playing Indian almost thoroughly served the purposes of imperialist nationalism, the anxieties of Peruvian political leaders, intellectuals, artists, and social activists with the “Indian problem” was the simultaneous impossibility of de-

Indianization and the desire of a mestizo Peruvianness, as Estelle Tarica has demonstrated. This conflicting doubleness of identity discourse that Stuart Hall deemed as “the necessity of the Other to the self” (48) continues to be present throughout Peruvian cultural production.

According to this logic, the ominous phrase “Indian problem” is part and parcel of the obdurate ideology that splits Peru in two: one part mestizo, modern and civilized, in contrast to an Indigenous, archaic and violent *Other*. In 1983 this perception was once again reinstated by Peru’s most famous writer, Mario Vargas Llosa, in the controversial “Informe de Uchuraccay” he led, which concluded that the assassination of eight journalists by campesino locals was, in summary, a cultural misunderstanding, a natural result of the community’s isolation from progress and modern Peru. Although widely criticized and now debunked, the report reiterated stereotypical narratives on Indigeneity as intrinsically outside of modernity and inclined to violence, a perception that even the final Truth Commission Report over three decades later has not been able to eradicate.

The controversy around the report arose not only because it involved the most renowned Peruvian writer. In “Arqueología de una mirada criolla,” Santiago López Maguiña highlights its relevance, for it was the first official report regarding the political violence that would continue for almost two decades. For him, this report “fija los términos y los valores mediante los cuales el discurso estatal percibía las acciones violentas que venían desarrollándose” (257), a perception that placed all the blame on the communities, when further investigations revealed that the Uchuraccay community had been fighting against Shining Path activities in their area for three years, and the military had encouraged Uchuraccainos to deal with terrorists according to their consuetudinary norms.

However, as Misha Kokotovic demonstrated in *The Colonial Divide*, Vargas Llosa’s

written work reveals a consistent disregard for Indigenous groups. With his defeatist vision of Peru—summarized by one of his characters’ famous question in *Conversación en La Catedral*, “¿en qué momento se jodió el Perú?” (3)—Vargas Llosa published “Questions of Conquest” in 1990, in which he writes about the other, more prestigious Indigenous group, the Inca, and their demise at the hands of only 180 Spaniards. “At the precise moment the Inca emperor is captured, before the battle begins, his armies give up the fight as if manacled by a magic force... Those Indians who let themselves be knifed or blown up into pieces that somber afternoon in Cajamarca Square lacked the ability to make their own decisions” (4). The 2010 Nobel Prize laureate not only oversimplifies the colonial encounter to a single event, but he also echoes the selective discourse on Indigeneity: one previously magnificent, such as the Incan past, and its leftovers, the dispersed helpless Indians who still wander around in desperate need of direction and purpose.

This restrictive perspective on Indigenous peoples is not unique but rather part of the ongoing indigenista influence characteristic of Latin American countries with large Indigenous populations. To a great extent, much of indigenista endeavor has been “a colonialist desire to appropriate an ‘essence’ of Indianness without actually having to deal with Native peoples” (Guzmán 49) despite the insistence on Indigenous redemption. In a later literary instance, *El hablador*, Vargas Llosa argues that Machiguenga tradition can only be preserved by an outsider.

To different degrees throughout Latin America, literary Indigenous representations have served to strategically maintain a specific set of attitudes to ultimately blame Indigenous peoples for their state of misery and to shape identity and cultural discourses, as well as practices of racialization and belonging. Over a century before Vargas Llosa, Argentine Domingo Faustino Sarmiento wrote on the role of literary representation:

Si un destello de literatura nacional puede brillar momentáneamente en las nuevas sociedades americanas, es el que resultará de la descripción de las grandiosas escenas naturales, y sobre todo de la lucha entre la civilización europea y la barbarie indígena, entre la inteligencia y la materia; lucha imponente en América, y que da lugar a escenas tan peculiares, tan características y tan fuera del círculo de ideas en que se ha educado el espíritu europeo. (89)

Like Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, an unapologetic Vargas Llosa settles the dichotomy of civilization versus barbarism with Indigenous erasure: “If forced to choose between the preservation of Indian cultures and their complete assimilation, with great sadness I would choose modernization of the Indian population.” In other words, he “calls upon the conquered, not the conquerors, to bear the costs of remedying the injustices produced by the Conquest” (Kokotovic 448), which ultimately means cultural sacrifice for the greater Peruvian good. However, paternalistic attitudes and governing impulses underlying discourses like Vargas Llosa’s were not only intended to “modernize” the Indian; they also address a much greater concern: fear for Indigenous peoples’ political agency and their fair share of citizenship and welfare in the emerging Peruvian nation.

Considering this history of representation, how to write about Indigeneity is a difficult question that thoroughly permeates this research. At the core of these ethical imperatives embedded in doing North/South research on Indigeneity lies the constitutive relationship between colonial power and knowledge, on which Walter Mignolo has extensively theorized. Based on Aníbal Quijano’s notion of “coloniality of power,” Mignolo argues that the colonial system is also geopolitics of knowledge, strictly organized to produce and sustain a clear epistemic hierarchy, which Mignolo considers to be one of the most enduring and pervasive

traits of colonialism. Consequently, in this hierarchy Indigenous knowledge occupies the loose end; doing research is a “constant battle to authorize Indigenous knowledge[s] and methodologies as legitimate and valued components of research” (Moreton-Robinson 331). To me, writing about Indigenous women without considering their narratives is unthinkable; producing knowledge on Indigenous women should be knowledge produced with Indigenous women.

Transnational processes have also favored a more horizontal collaboration between scholars and Indigenous activists and communities, with an increased awareness of issues of “Indigenous knowledge appropriation by the academic discourse” (Rappaport 12). The internationalization of Indigenous rights and movements (Crossen; Kastrup), and the “decolonial turn” in Latin America have fostered the operationalization of race as an analytical category of power. While the decolonial turn offers great potential in unveiling and understanding the intricacies of Peruvian identity in the globalized era, this research emphasizes a gender perspective on racialization to amplify the lenses through which difference is perceived and actively assembled.

The construct of Peruvian Indigeneity is a conundrum of situated local practices through and against national discourses, together in conversation with transnational narratives of Indigeneity. Although since the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007 Indigeneity has gained transnational momentum, it still faces the most serious challenges in urban areas with more aggressive practices of disidentification. In Lima, none of the taxi drivers I asked had heard of Indigenous women’s groups in the city, because such a presence is inconceivable for most. However, as Ramón Pajuelo argues, Indigenous disidentification “does not imply an absence of identity but rather expresses the challenges of

ethnic identification in the public sphere” (285), especially in urban contexts where most markers of Indigeneity mean being at risk of discrimination and violence, and even more so for women.

ONAMIAP’s leading role in the Peruvian Indigenous movement and its interaction with nation-state mechanisms provide evidence for Pajuelo’s argument. Indigenous women are creating a space for identity and autonomy against reinforced subordination within and outside their communities. They also demonstrate that the rise and strengthening of the Peruvian Indigenous movement respond to a growing organizational competence (Oliart; Yashar) that fosters a unitary discourse based on “sameness” to promote political capital (Stephen), even though Indigeneity is, in fact, a multiverse of practices and experiences in which individuals and groups participate from different positions, whether urban or rural.

The historic practice of representation also exacerbates the constant scrutiny of Indigenous authenticity. During a workshop trip to Cusco, ONAMIAP Indigenous leaders Ketty Marcelo and Gladis Vila posed for photographs next to Andean women selling textiles at the market. The two leaders sported jeans and a T-shirt with the map of Peru, while the vendors wore traditional attire as part of their engagement with tourists consumers. While this contrast reaffirms Shane Greene’s notion of Indigeneity customization to refer to “both specific acts and to a structural process of constrained creativity” (*Customizing Indigeneity* 17) through performance and relationality with other actors (whether they are the state, national and international tourists, NGOs, or researchers), it also reveals the degree of competing Indigenous paradigms, assumptions on authenticity, and the necessary and difficult task of projecting sameness.

Indigenous agentic practices and revitalization not only imply a change for Indigenous peoples but especially puts to the test hegemonic narratives of “Peruvianness,” pressuring the

nation-state to respond (Varese). If at the individual level, as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui argues, mestizo subjectivity is simultaneously inhabited by an Indigenous and a q'ara (white) complex, in the national dimension, Peruvian unity remains unaccomplished because of Indigeneity. It continues to complicate Peruvian sovereign power over its subjects' "bare life" and demands reevaluating how race, racialization, and identity practices define belonging in a new multicultural Peru. If in the recent past playing Indian fluctuated according to ruling elites' biopolitics that imagined a mestizo (or at least de-Indianized) community, the multicultural discourse and governance has opened new possibilities as well as challenges for organized and mobilized Indigenous groups, in which women are increasingly taking the lead.

Although globalization technologies have favored some renewal in the politics and poetics of Indigeneity, many challenges remain to be resolved, including the ethical ways in which we, nonindigenous scholars, write about Indigenous subjects. The unresolved tensions "between Indigenous peoples and nation-states, on the one hand, and between Indigeneity and nationhood, on the other, serve at the very least as a perpetual reminder of the always violent nature of their present incommensurability" (Guzmán 51), tensions which to a great extent are a result of the inadequacy of representation and its violence, for which this research intends to account.

Indigeneity, Indianness and Playing Indian in Peru

To inquire into contemporary Indigeneity in Peru compels us to revisit the ill-famed "Indian Problem" that preoccupied several Latin American countries in the twentieth century. As nationalist sentiments began to crystallize among the ruling elites, Indianness was clearly not only a problem of economics, labor, and politics; it mainly constituted a threat that obscured the

promised horizon of Peruvian modernity. Despite the advocacy of past and contemporary indigenismos—from fray Bartolomé de las Casas, the first “Protector of the Indians,” to Clorinda Matto de Turner, José Carlos Mariátegui, and José María Arguedas—and the diverse ways in which Peruvian hegemony sought to represent Indigeneity, Peru continues to grapple with colonial and, more specifically, oligarchic legacies of racialized displacement and dispossession. In recent history, the wide distribution of death and violence that the Peruvian army and the Shining Path inflicted upon Indigenous bodies during the political armed conflict between 1980 and 2000 has made evident the stronghold of anti-Indianist sentiments still present.

In Peru’s national imagination, the construct of Indigeneity remains a highly contested category given its convoluted history and the current diversity of experiences across regions. While it is probably more appropriate to speak of Indigeneities, a common denominator of the Indigenous experience is its entanglement with the historical “indio” as an imposed identification, and Indianness as a narrative controlled by others—initially criollo ruling elites and later mestizo intelligentsia—everyone except Indigenous groups themselves, especially during the formation of Peruvian nationalism that desperately sought ways to create a more homogeneous community.

Given this impossibility and deeply permeated by colonial desires, most Peruvian nationalists favored the *better* version of Indigeneity—under the imperial cloak—while disregarding the majority of Indigenous groups. Historian Cecilia Méndez eloquently summarizes this paradox in her essay “Incas sí, indios no” (1996). This discursive divorce separates the empire from the Indian and is reflected in the contradictory sentiment between “Inca power” and the “Indian problem” that lies at the core of Peruvian identity. Anthropologist

Shane Greene argues that the preponderance of Incanism, or the “Inca slot,” also implies “not seeing the Peruvian Amazon and ignoring Indigenous Amazonians” (“Getting Over” 328).

This preference for spectacular Inca Indigeneity is also a result of cultural consumption and tourism. Within the many events shaping the construct of spectacular Indigeneity, the “scientific discovery” of Machu Picchu¹ has been a pivotal moment. As Zoila Mendoza argues, “Machu Picchu became a major focus of regional, national and international interest” (67), propelling a series of official efforts for the touristic promotion of Peru abroad (72), policies still embedded in current projects, such as MarcaPeru.²

However, playing up the “Inca Indian” version has also been used as a political move. Augusto B. Leguía, whose dictatorship in 1920 gave a broad platform to Indigenismo, proclaimed himself Viracocha. Like Leguía, many politicians have deployed “Incan” tropes as symbols of virile authoritative endeavor. Although throughout his political career ex-president Alejandro Toledo (also known as Choledo) insisted on his humble “cholo” origins, he frequently resorted to diverse Inca symbols and figures, especially those that projected power. In July 2000, Toledo’s neo-Incaic protest model employed to gain access to the office “consciously utilized” (Greene, “Entre lo indio” 114) the imperial trope of Tawantinsuyu in “la marcha de los cuatro suyos,” a massive protest against Alberto Fujimori’s third consecutive fraudulent election, and was popularly referred to as Peru’s “new Pachacuti.” Once elected, the following year Toledo celebrated a symbolic inauguration of his presidency in Machu Picchu—the official inauguration took place the day before in Lima—to signal a “new dawn” and propel tourism. Víctor Vich argues that Toledo’s was indeed a political performance, in which the presidential couple,

¹ For more on Machu Picchu’s role in shaping tourism and cultural imaginaries, see Mendoza (2009); Rice (2018).

² MarcaPerú is part of the Comisión de Promoción del Perú para la Exportación y el Turismo – PROMPERÚ, under MINCETUR (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo) in 2011. See www.gob.pe/institucion/promperu/

Andean (neo-Inca) Toledo and Belgian first lady Eliane Karp, represented “the entrance of Pachacútec in the global market” (78). Fujimori, the previously pardoned but again incarcerated ex-dictator, had played Indian as well, although he usually donned the typical campesino attire of the poncho and the chullo,³ following his populist style.



Alejandro Toledo and Eliane Karp, *BBC Mundo* ©



Alberto Fujimori and Chábeli Iglesias, *Diario ABC* ©

³ Andean style of hat with earflaps, made from vicuña, alpaca, llama or sheep's wool

Since the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, Indigeneity has gained global currency in “larger social fields of difference and sameness” (de la Cadena and Starn 4) and continues to expand its grounds of contestation into imagined futures, while Indianness carries the traumatic reminder of the colonial imposition and a load of ethno-racial exclusion from the modern national project. Until the 1970s, “la mancha india” (the Indian stain) was a term regularly used by social scientists⁴ and urban elites to refer to the central Andean region of Peru with the highest concentration of Indigenous people, the same region that suffered the most during the political violence. As a rhetorical figure, “Indian stain” also reveals the clear borders of Peruvian bio- and necro-politics.

The borders of such a geographical racialization ought to be reiterated in urban spaces (Méndez), reinforcing the antagonism between Indianness and modernity. While Lima is still referred to as the “City of Kings” and Arequipa the “White City,” Cusco is known as the “Imperial City” despite being part of the “mancha india.” Thus, parallel to the containment of an excess of racialized Others (a stain), urban elites ensured an everyday normative structure to police mobility, which is very well alive when “serranos” (euphemism for “indios”) enter Lima. The Indian threat was also linguistic, as José María Arguedas denounced: “En la Colonia el quechua fue un idioma estudiado, difundido y cultivado; en cambio, el quechua durante la República aparece como un idioma pretérito, despreciado y al cual no se le da ninguna importancia” (45).

⁴ See Cotler (1967); Gootenberg (1991); García & Lucero (2008).

TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION OF LANDHOLDINGS
IN "MANCHA INDIA" AND IN THE REMAINDER OF THE COUNTRY

| <i>Hectares</i> | <i>Mancha India</i> | | <i>Rest of Country</i> | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | <i>Productive Units %</i> | <i>Hectares %</i> | <i>Productive Units %</i> | <i>Hectares %</i> |
| 0 - 4 . . . | 87.5 | 7.8 | 79.3 | 5.8 |
| 5 - 9 . . . | 6.6 | 2.7 | 11.4 | 3.3 |
| 10 - 19 . . . | 2.5 | 2.0 | 4.6 | 2.9 |
| 20 - 99 . . . | 1.9 | 4.6 | 3.5 | 6.2 |
| 100 - 499 . . . | 0.5 | 8.5 | 0.7 | 7.2 |
| 500 - + . . . | 0.4 | 60.7 | 0.2 | 65.4 |
| Within incorporated communities . . | 0.03 | 13.1 | 0.03 | 8.8 |
| | 99.43 | 99.4 | 99.73 | 99.6 |

Source: Primer Censo Nacional Agropecuario, Lima, 1961.

The screenshot shows a news article from the website 'La República'. The article title is 'Mancha india, el mayor reto'. It is dated 15 Nov 2006 | 16:00 h and was updated on 22 de Mayo 2019 | 5:47 h. The author is Humberto Vargas Salgado. The article discusses the upcoming municipal and regional elections in the Trapecio Andino region, focusing on the 'Mancha India' area. It mentions the political dynamics and the central issue of the discussion: the problem of nations or ethnicities. The article also includes social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. On the right side, there are three smaller news snippets: 'Lo más visto en Política' featuring a photo of Keiko Fujimori and a man, 'Los US\$ 3,6 millones que dio Romero Paoletti a Keiko Fujimori son de origen ilícito, dice fiscal', 'Hernán Chaparro: "Keiko Fujimori tiene una alforja muy pesada y su campaña no está caminando bien"', 'Yo soy: Michelle Soifer y Katia Palma se enfrentan por "Christina Aguilera"', and 'Perfil de los equipos técnicos de Castillo y Keiko que asistirán al debate'.

Source: *Diario La República* ©

Since Christianization, Indianness has been and continues to be subjected to diverse forms of transformation or redemption to be considered for inclusion. As scholars from different fields have demonstrated, several national modernizing projects have sought to eventually “improve” the Indian condition by ideological and structural means. As Pablo Drinot showed in *The Allure of Labor*, at the turn of the twentieth-century industrialization was not only an

economic but also a cultural project by which labor could transform backward Indigenous peoples into civilized white/mestizo workers.

However, in Peru, as in many Latin American countries, education was conceived and designed as a flawless vault from barbarism to civilization, with the specific task of forming national citizens. This modernizing project did not consider the Indigenous subject until the mid-twentieth century when rural education began to expand. Nevertheless, state education policies specifically formulated for Indigenous populations had a peculiar goal: to secure an Indigenous essence threatened by the corrupting force of mestizaje. Luis E. Valcárcel, known as the “father of Peruvian anthropology,” advocated for “recuperating the greatness of the Inca empire” (250), for which he implemented the “Núcleos Escolares Campesinos” program during his appointment as Minister of Education in 1948. As Devine Guzmán states, Valcárcel’s term lasted for only two years, but his influence on rural education left an imprint until the end of the 1960s.

In the 1950s the massive rural migration to coastal cities, especially Lima, invariably changed the material and cultural landscape, while entrenched colonial longings exacerbated urban racializing processes. The failure to contain the “Indian stain” became “el huaico serrano,” a dreadful threat spread in Lima by the press. The expression, which means “Andean landslide,” reveals once again the contempt for Indianness, but most notoriously, the growing anxiety among the urban elites of “la ciudad letrada” of losing their privileged and exclusive position of centralized power.

Juan Velasco’s agrarian reform and official institutionalization of peasant communities in 1968—a program originally established by Augusto B. Leguía about fifty years earlier—marked a turnabout in the material conditions and perceptions of Indigenous communities (García). Although Velasco’s vision was not the first to enforce protectionist decrees against the

overpowering landholders, the reform resulted in the largest decrease in land ownership inequality in Peruvian history. However, his Marxist enterprise also implied a radical cultural change, in which Indianness had no place. Following Mariátegui's vision, Velasco's state-sponsored cooperative peasantry and land ownership were the ultimate modernizing measures to erase Indianness. Despite the multiple benefits the reform accomplished, officializing "the disappearance of Indians as Indians, recognizing them instead only as peasants" (Barre 53) consolidated a normative politics of de-Indianization that only tweaked existing forms of displacement and dispossession, especially for the thousands who migrated to urban areas after the decline of agriculture and the failed promise of rural industrialization.

Positivist remnants are also evident in the intellectual production of the 1980s regarding Lima's fast social changes. Sociologists termed this process "cholificación" (Bourricaud; Mangin; Quijano; Varallanos), an emergent and transitional social segment characterized by permanent cultural conflict, yet believed to be the promised true cultural Peruvian identity (Quijano). In 1984, anthropologist Matos Mar published his iconic *Desborde popular*, meaning "popular overflow," a new, sanitized title for the Andean landslide.

Rural and Indigenous groups with some economic means or relatives in Lima fled their communities in search of refuge and better opportunities in the capital. Limeño streets became "the bountiful space for the legitimization of new social subjectivities" (Vich 152) and collective practices rooted in Andean culture. Against the Limeño exclusionary terms of belonging, loud and colorful "chicha" music celebrated migrant ingenuity, resourcefulness, and entrepreneurship, especially among the younger generations who expanded its influence mainly into the visual arts. While in the sixties "cholo" identity conveyed strong cultural referents such as Yuyachkani, Cuatrotablas and Barricada, it later became mostly a mainstream phenomenon. Terms, such as

“choledad,” “Chollywood,” and “cholo power,” have also gained popularity, as more artists and intellectuals happily embrace “cholo” or “chola” identity, particularly in mainstream media and few theatrical productions such as Yuyachkani. In literary production, Marco Avilés’s *De dónde venimos los cholos* promises complexity, and it has enjoyed considerable reception. However, unlike Indigenous agendas, “cholo” cultural production remains centralized and has yet to accompany greater political dimensions.

Until recently, scholarly debate on Indigenous movements in Peru was usually settled with unfavorable conclusions, labeling these movements as weak, “anomalous” (Yashar 224), and “without return” (Albó 364). These affirmations especially stemmed from unfortunate comparisons to Ecuador and Bolivia’s Indigenous movements, which scored two major accomplishments in recent decades, such as the official recognition of a plurinational state and the rights of Nature. However, as further research shows, it is now acknowledged that part of the issue was the comparison itself: searching for a pan-national Indigenous movement obscured other forms of Indigenous activism and local politics that had existed long before official national or international declarations.

The growth of the once “remarkably elusive” (García 217) Peruvian Indigeneity reveals its vitality but also the contested nature of Indigeneity, which is now adapting to neoliberal ideologies. Indigenous agency has been present and vital throughout Peruvian nation-making through many local and regional organizations and collectives. As Ramón Pajuelo demonstrated, Peruvian Indigeneity has been present throughout different organizational expressions. Indigeneity as a process is now heavily fueled by a transnational network of agencies, among them official institutions, nonprofits, and developmental organizations, activists, and academics, all of which have been long immersed in, and are now further facilitated by, communication

technologies, fostering broader, deeper, and also more contested dialogues with multiple Indigenous actors.

In this context, the challenge of constructing Indigeneity against “Indianness” implies not only creating political spaces for autonomy, such as the expanding Indigenous movement but also resignifying Indigeneity from new “positions of enunciation” (Hall 1989, 68) that challenge old ideologies of racialized belonging. Andrew Canessa points to a similar situation in Bolivia. After working with the Wila Kjarka—an Andean highland community—for almost twenty years, he states that “one can be comfortably Indigenous; one can never be comfortably Indian.”

Despite the Peruvian multicultural turn, the increased legibility and participation of Indigenous voices, and a more prolific and nuanced cultural representation in the post-conflict era, Indigenous actors—and even more so Indigenous women at risk of mockery and humiliation—have rarely had the epistemic privilege of contestation and have instead been relegated to cultural stock. The influence of indigenismo is still present, and the symbolic capital of Indigeneity continues to be predominantly male, urban, and a centralized playing Indian production that circulates in the national and international metropolis. Similarly, despite the increased female literary and cultural production in the postconflict boom, gendered Indigeneity continues to heavily rely on stereotypical representation, framed between victimization and abjection, or by the interplay between them, dismissing the critical agency Indigenous women had during and after the Peruvian political armed conflict (1980-2000). Although women were the first to organize to denounce human rights violations and search for their disappeared loved ones, gendered representations of Indigeneity have not changed to reflect this reality, which, on the contrary, is stubbornly depicted in essentialist terms, demonstrating that women are still ‘more Indian’ (de la Cadena 1995).

Although the Peruvian Commission on Truth and Reconciliation (CVR) has recognized the racial and gendered dimensions of violence during ‘*manchay tiempo*’ (time of horror), the reinforced inequality (Tilly) that both categories produce has not been sufficiently addressed. The Peruvian economic miracle of the last decade has further reinforced the prevailing view that those years were an exceptional period, an aberration, but as Jelke Boesten’s analysis demonstrates, gender violence is systemic and occurs in a war-and-peace continuum. The extent of derogatory language associated with Indigeneity, even within intellectual circles, reveals how the naturalization of violence was not simply a war occurrence or a phenomenon of terror. Violence preceded these terrors because of existing normative structures that continue to dictate the distribution of difference and violence.

Almost every year during the extreme cold temperatures of June and July known as *friaje*, hundreds of Indigenous people in high Andean communities die, and thousands of children suffer from respiratory diseases. Consistently, every year, the Peruvian government declares these “remote” areas in a “state of emergency,” until the number of deaths declines or temperatures rises. This systemic “state of emergency” demonstrates how the language of exceptionality and containment articulates to simultaneously downplay state responsibilities and highlight the state’s eagerness to provide “protection” to remote Peruvians, especially during extraordinary times.

During the CVR Final Report presentation, the Commission’s president, Salomón Lerner, declared that not only direct and brutal violence but also indifference kills. In the poorest barrios of Lima, such as San Juan de Lurigancho, mostly composed of migrant and displaced communities, the number of women who suffer domestic violence or die at the hands of male partners has almost doubled in the last two unexceptional years. If the blame is not placed on the

victims themselves, as usually happens, then poverty, ignorance, or alcoholism will suffice to explain the statistics. How articulations of racialized masculinity and femininity are connected to violence are not questioned because most Peruvians assume classism is more of an issue than racism. Recognizing that anti-Indianist ideologies were not the exclusive purview of the military personnel or the Shining Path but are very much alive can help us understand the new regimes and structures of racialized and gendered violence.

Indigeneity, Gender, and Normative Violence

Indigeneity, one of colonialism's foundational fictions, stemmed from the imposition of colonial normative violence, understood as the power of norms to control, enable, or restrict how one can live. For Indigenous peoples, "all politics since the Conquest have been biopolitics" (Guzmán 168); thus, Indigeneity as a "foundational fiction" was possible through multiple coercive institutions and structures that simultaneously guaranteed its subordinate character and legitimated racialized and gendered violence. As Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith states, colonialism brought "complete disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world" (28). In Peru, these normative forms of violence sought to deal with the excess of an 'inappropriate/d other' as someone "whom you cannot appropriate, and . . . who is inappropriate (Minh-Ha 125). This ideology is represented by terms such as "la mancha india" or the "Indian problem," which simultaneously highlight Indigenous illegibility within the national body and explicitly eject an entire population from an imagined homogenous community.

In *El laberinto de la choledad*, Eduardo Nugent questions why the Peruvian state did not implement a legal anti-Indigenous apartheid-like apparatus given the deep contempt for the Indigenous population. Although such an institution could not have been possible given the extreme dependence on Indigenous labor, the dynamics of subordination—through external physical means and internalized colonialism—were sufficiently powerful to sustain the hierarchies that continue into the present. As Ashis Nandy states, “after all, we are concerned with a colonialism which survives the demise of empires.” (xi). Although the stratified caste system designed to limit social mobility in Peru was abolished centuries ago, race and gender still articulate in specific ways to legitimate inequality and power hierarchies, which, to use Judith Butler’s concepts, endow some with more livable lives at the expense of less livable ones. Indigenous lives were and continue to be disposable regardless of the many laws designed to protect or not discriminate against them. The encumbrance of normative violence against Indigeneity, as the political armed conflict revealed, does away with the need for any explicit legal structure.

It is not surprising that the violence Indigenous and peasant communities suffered during the political armed conflict did little to sensitize or produce a significant change in public perception in favor of the populations affected. On the contrary, this period reinforced existing anti-Indigenous sentiments and associations. The easiest way to delegitimize individuals or groups defending land or water rights is by calling them *terroristas*. Another pervasive discourse, especially for Indigenous women, is their naturalization as perpetual victims.

To a certain extent, it is simplistic to assert that the distribution of difference is a distribution of violence. However, the Peruvian political armed conflict unambiguously affected Indigenous bodies and became manifest in specifically gendered forms that reveal the

articulation of racialized and gendered violence. Jelke Boesten has demonstrated that rape of women during these years was based on a racialized sexuality: soldiers of the Peruvian military and Shining Path perpetrators repeatedly used the derogatory term *chola*—an Indigenous woman outside her community—which in turn determined sexual “availability” (57). The statistics revealed by the Truth Commission are also clear-cut: 80 percent of the dead were men; 98 percent of the victims of sexual violence were women, of which 75 percent were Quechua speakers; and in the Peruvian total, 85 percent of the victims belonged to “la mancha india.”

In the context of the armed internal conflict, privileged hegemonic masculinity—despite being Indigenous—overrode the feminine, legitimating violent masculinities. According to Eduardo Gonzales Cueva, “soldiers who are abused because of their race or class, and who are taught to associate masculinity and violence, Indianness and brutality, poverty and victimization, learn . . . to exert sexist violence over women, racist violence against Indigenous groups, and class violence against the poor” (100). Although these conclusions are obvious, they are not restricted to violent times, as Boesten demonstrates. The increasing attacks against women in the past three years have taken place in the poorest barrios of Lima mostly populated by rural and Indigenous migrants.

These grim statistics reveal the extent of anti-Indigenous ideologies and affects as specific forms of racism in Peru, in which skin color is just one of its features, a point that illustrates dated Peruvian denial on the issue. While researching racial discrimination, Peruvian scholars Nelson Manrique and Suzanne Oboler noted that interviewees frequently claimed racial discrimination had happened to someone else they knew (Manrique), or thought of racism as a problem in other countries like the U.S. (Oboler), prompting terminology for the differentiated Peruvian racist practices as ‘latent’ or ‘silent.’

Another tangential reaction to the issue is that most Peruvians would rather consider classism. For example, during the last World Cup, Peruvian soccer player Edison Flores, whose nickname is “Orejas,” joined an official campaign by the Peruvian Ministerio de Cultura against racism and declared for *The New York Times*: “En el Perú se da más la discriminación por la clase, se le ponen muchos apelativos a la gente, muchas veces, por el clasismo que se da contra los indígenas.” (Vilchis) While newspapers and social media celebrated Flores’s decision to raise awareness of discrimination, he, too, conflates racism with classism, revealing the depth of its internalization. Not surprisingly, some Peruvian scholars view academic critical race studies as a fad, and believe racism is reserved for emblematic cases, such as the United States or South Africa.

Luis Escobedo amplifies the scope of the issue and questions if Peru is a racist state. He argues that Peru “is still a country where the state, media, and civil society may be ‘licensing’ racism in many ways” (173). The present research is not concerned with racism per se as a national behavior—given that race is unequivocally one of the most pervasive constructs and articulates in different ways in most societies. As Nelson Manrique affirms, “no existe pues un racismo; como toda construcción histórica, éste asume diversas formas de acuerdo al contexto social en que se genera. Su historia no puede desvincularse de la historia social” (12). My interest is to explore race in relation to the construct of Indigeneity and what its resignification implies in terms of racializing practices in Peruvian society, especially when intersected with gender.

A gender perspective can explain how anti-Indianist ideologies as a form of normative violence articulate with male privilege not only during violent times but also in peacetime. As Jelke Boesten demonstrates, “chola” sexual availability has always been present in rural

haciendas and urban unregulated domestic service, as the term “cama adentro” perversely suggests. In contemporary Peruvian peacetime, male privilege and misogyny are manifest in visual and symbolic forms.

Comedian Jorge Benavides’s drag impersonation called “la paisana Jacinta” is perhaps the worst case of playing Indian, and the embodiment of intersected racism and sexism. Not coincidentally, Benavides’s exploit began in 1996, a period in which migration to Lima grew by over half a million (INEI). By reenacting historical gendered and racialized violence in which the female body exists for use and abuse, “la paisana Jacinta” can be read as the Limeño hegemony’s reaction to the continuous “Andeanization” of the capital. To make issues worse, in its latest filmic iteration, *La paisana Jacinta: en búsqueda de Wasaberto*, there is a trivializing of the displacement and painful experience of many who never found their disappeared ones during the political violence. As a form of gendered Indigeneity, Benavides’s act confirms that women are still ‘more Indian’ (de la Cadena).

Benavides also distorts the political power of drag, turning it into a recolonizing tactic. Belonging in Lima can only be attained by de-Indianization. While activists and organizations have publicly denounced the inherent racism of “la paisana Jacinta,” they have not addressed the equally or more relevant component of sexism, which evidences Indigenous women’s reinforced vulnerability in urban settings. The grammar of contestation in the report by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for the UN against Benavides’s characterization has been in regards to the character’s racism—which is undeniable—but has not made Benavides responsible for the gendered violence of his creation, nor addressed the “reinforced inequality” racism and sexism can produce when intersected.

Intersectionality, a feminist analytical methodology, was originally proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw to address the compound discrimination of Black women in legal courts in the U.S. It elucidates how in addition to gender, other identity categories, such as race and class, articulate in a way that subordinate minority women. Intersectionality has also been useful in regards to Native American women (Goeman 2012). However, an intersectional analysis seems insufficient for the Peruvian context, where Indigenous women are not a minority, and neither are the “intersections” as clear-cut and stable as they appear to be in the U.S. Furthermore, to assess Indigeneity and gender in Peru, I argue that it is necessary to think of intersectionality along with the ever-present colonial matrix (Quijano) and the dynamics of mass migration and social mobility in the context of neoliberal capitalism.

An examination that considers degrees of mobility between different spaces, whether geographical, cultural, educational, and/or occupational, expands the intersectional perspective to consider how the Indigenous body is a site of contestation, especially when it enters and travels through hyper-racialized urban environments like Lima. In spaces that still “reflect historical efforts to eradicate Indigenous culture, including nation-state pressures to assimilate” (Delugan 84), mobility complicates and exceeds the constructed intersections for Indigenous women, usually confined within subordinate spaces that limited their agency and autonomy.

Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman impeccably explains these extremes in terms of mobility. “For Indigenous people traveling through constructed colonial and imperial spaces, the body can be hyper-visible as the abnormal body, and at times hyper-invisible as it becomes spatially disjointed from the map of the nation in both physical and mental imaginings” (12). In the Peruvian space, Indigenous women’s mobility is similarly policed. They can be the urbanized ‘cholas’ that work in domestic service, cultural decoration at historic/touristic sites, or artistic

performers. On the other hand, Benavides's drag portrays Indigenous women not only as the abject residue of an uncivilized past but also as a stubborn female subjectivity that resists civilization. In other words, all the reasons why Indigenous women should not leave their environment.

Perhaps Benavides's representation mostly reveals the elite's reaction to Indigenous women's claims for rights and political power at the highest levels, such as Paulina Arpasi and Hilaria Supa did when they obtained congressional seats in 2001 and 2006 respectively. It is ironic that despite their feats, representations of female Indigeneity remain highly essentialist. They oscillate between two seemingly opposite images: the uncivilized, inept, and undesirable Andean woman, and on the other end, the fiery protector of Indigenous traditions (Barrig). This antagonism is also evident in the symbolic struggle between Benavides and Chirapaq's (Centre for Indigenous Cultures of Peru) campaign led by Indigenous activist and transnational leader Tarcila Rivera Zea.

Conclusions

A decolonial feminist examination of Indigeneity demonstrates that its construction remains embedded in and encoded through violence in the Peruvian imaginary, still haunted by the shadows of *terrorismo*. Despite the increasing political agency of Indigenous groups seeking new signification and their active participation in neoliberal multiculturalism, the history of Indian play and misrepresentation raises limitations and contradictions. Although the material and symbolic displacement and dispossession ensued by the years of terror might seem like distant memories, Indigenous groups now face more sophisticated forms of violence as the nation-state privileges its economic interests over the rights of many of its citizens.

By carefully treading both the modern Peruvian nation-state *and* Western academic research as exclusionary discursive structures immersed in colonial figurations brings about a broad perspective on Indigenous women's gendered experience of colonialism across constructed spaces and registers. Additionally, a gender perspective that considers the contested relationship between Peruvian identity politics and Indigeneity reveals the previous strategic neglect of race in the Peruvian imaginary, especially when gender disrupts the usual centralized, urban, and male-dominated circuits of power. While Indigeneity continues to be reclaimed through and against the dictates of multicultural nation-states and markets, emerging Indigenous cultural and political mobilities have also renewed certain Peruvian unresolved anxieties in the face of a racialized landscape no longer recognizable.

Chapter 2

Fraught Performances and Dragging Indigeneity in the Peruvian Postconflict

Although Indigeneity has been reclaimed through and against the dictates of nation-states and discourses, it remains materially and symbolically contested, as it continues to operate in a system that, as Aníbal Quijano warns, “will not, and cannot, shed its colonial imprint” (56). The performance of Indigeneity in mainstream media mirrors this fraught relationship, revealing the anxieties of a social landscape changed by migration and its seismic disruption of racialized geographies. As with most Latin American countries with significant Indigenous populations, the performance of Indigeneity in Peruvian film and media has mostly been a top-to-bottom practice in which non-Indigenous urban actors attempt questionable representations of the Indigenous “Other.” This type of ventriloquism is not new in the broad Peruvian cultural tradition or any other Latin American intelligentsia. If the 20th-century indigenista cultural production was preoccupied with denouncing the conditions of peasant communities, the years of internal armed conflict (1980-2000) profoundly resonated in the cultural arena, prompting writers, artists, and activists to create their own interpretations of those times.

The “memory turn” in Peruvian cultural, literary, and media production has been prolific, as well as scholarly work on the subject. *Manchay tiempo* or “the time of terror” abounds in literary and film archives, whether as the central point or as the backdrop to other Peruvian scenarios. While some mainstream media representations have served as *lenses of memory* to understand what happened to the communities affected—mostly rural and Indigenous—as well as the country in general, another light entertainment has engaged in playing Indian (Deloria

1998) tropes in the form of brownface and drag, reproducing entrenched colonial and racial hierarchies, especially when dealing with gendered representations.

Although the performance of Indigeneity by non-Indigenous actors is certainly objectionable, the representation of female Indigeneity in Peruvian corporate media--whether as chola, paisana or campesina--followed a specific pattern during the transition from war to peace. Using the genre of racial humor, urban white-mestizo male comedians in drag, i.e. Jorge Benavides and Ernesto Pimentel, created highly profitable characters portraying Indigenous women. Benavides' history of racist characterizations includes *Negro Mama*, a blackface mock of Afro-Peruvian populations, which through activism has been successfully removed from the air, although it occasionally reappeared in his public performances. In contrast, Benavides' *Paisana Jacinta* has remained on the air on and off since 1996. Despite national activists' response and international criticism, including a series of recommendations by the United Nations, Benavides has intermittently carried on with his performance on and off of television. Furthermore, the reception of his performances by Peruvian communities in countries such as the United States and Japan demonstrates the scope of national identity discourses in transnational displaced spectatorships.

Benavides' drag performance has indeed received a great deal of criticism from official institutions such as the Ministerio de Cultura and activist organizations, as well as scholarly attention, principally addressing its discriminatory linguistic repertoire (De los Heros 2016, Herbias 2016). However, some of the reactions and critiques have indirectly reproduced the grammar of violence by referring to "paisana Jacinta" as a subject of inquiry. In a campaign promoting awareness of Benavides' characterizations led by CHIRAPAQ (El Centro de Culturas Andinas e Indígenas del Perú), several Indigenous women leaders appeared next to *Jacinta's*

picture with the hashtag “I Am not Jacinta.” Despite the irruptive intentions behind the series of portraits, the visual message contrasted such characterization and personhood in equal terms, when in fact the picture shows an Indigenous Peruvian woman with a rich history and a man in drag profiting by making a fool of himself.

Consistent with a feminist examination, I consider it important to avoid reproducing such gendered and racist violence by exposing the full agency behind this representation. For this reason, instead of addressing *Jacinta*, I will be referring to Jorge Benavides’ characterization of Indigenous women. Another consideration to directly target Benavides’ work relates to the decolonial imperative of this research, as I consider it a significant and primary site for a critical analysis of race and gender relations in Peru. Moving my analysis closer to the commodification of popular culture will also allow me to reveal the sequestering of labor and resources, both intrinsic to coloniality and economies of accumulation in the current system of racial capitalism.

After offering a brief genealogy of *playing Indian*, a concept proposed by Phillip Deloria (1998), and dragging Indigeneity in Peruvian melodramatic and comedic mainstream media productions, this chapter engages theoretical approaches to the gaze and the privileged site of heteronormative mestizo-whiteness. I will demonstrate how Benavides’ social currency--urban, male, and white-mestizo--allows him to appropriate the female Indigenous body and ultimately partake in the “extractive zone,” a concept proposed by Macarena Gómez-Barris (2010). The questions of this project highlight the multiple historical, technological, economic, political, and cultural connections undergirding such representations: How has the mass migration to Lima during the armed conflict and its aftermath transfigured into mainstream media projects? Why and how has Peruvian spectatorship engaged with these types of racial/ethnic humor? To what degree is national identity enmeshed in such depictions? Under the guise of laughter and

entertainment, what anxieties, tensions, and denials stem from watching a male white-mestizo playing Indian in drag, and how do these relate to heteronormative mestizo-whiteness desires? Overall, these questions address how these racialized and gendered practices reveal formations of national consciousness in relation to ideals of citizenship, governmentality and belonging after the traumatic years of political armed conflict.

From Instant Indians to Drag/ging Indigeneity

Since its beginnings in the early 1900s, portraying Indigeneity as a spectacle has been a common formula used in film and other media. In the U.S, the Western genre abounds with the “Hollywood Indian” and “Masculindian” (McKegney 2014), stock characters that quickly became popular in other countries. While native male depictions offered a certain degree of agency and diversity, often accompanied by the “white savior” cinematic trope, native women portrayals were more restrictive, falling somewhere between the Indian princess or the dangerous witch (Singer 2001, Aleiss 2005, *Reel Injun* 2009). Representations in Peruvian films did not deviate much from these stereotypes and frequently included romanticized forms of physical and sexual violence against Indigenous women (Bedoya 1995, Arteaga 2018).

However, perhaps more than film, telenovelas, or soap operas have been and continue to be the par excellence audiovisual archive of contested meanings of nationhood in Latin America. For Ana M. López, soap operas constitute the "privileged site for the translation of cultural, geographical, economic, and even political differences into the discourse of nationness" (262). Or, as Catherine Benamou succinctly adverts, “telenovelas have carried most of the cultural burden of ‘narrating the nation’ (139). As soap operas adhere to more realistic and quotidian

narratives, they ought to resort to foundational historical, geographic, political, and racial difference referents emulating national points of inflection.

In regard to narrating the Indigenous nation, Peruvian telenovelas deployed a particular form of playing Indian that Iliana Pagán-Teitelbaum calls ‘instant Indians.’ This formula consists of “adding braids and a traditional skirt to Euro-American actresses... turning them into ‘instant’ provincial figures by virtue of a pair of braids, a naïve attitude, and a mocking imitation of the ways of speaking in rural, non-metropolitan regions of Peru” (72). Most notably, three soap operas, *Simplemente María* (1969), *Natacha* (1991), and *Luz María* (1998) reiterated the story of the unfortunate provinciana who eventually accomplishes social mobility by marrying a wealthy white limeño man with a renowned surname.

In line with the dominant Latin American melodramatic tendencies of the time, these three soap operas had a protagonist of European lineage and phenotype. Saby Kamalich, starring as *Simplemente María*, was a Euro-Peruvian actress daughter of a Croatian mother and Italian father; Maricarmen Regueiro, starring as *Natacha*, is a Euro-Venezuelan actress; and Angie Cepeda, starring as *Luz María*, is a Euro-Colombian actress. While these whitened and sanitized representations exalted Eurocentric beauty standards, they made markers of Indigeneity superficially intelligible, just enough to suggest a hint of Peruvianness.

Sterilizing Indigeneity of its cultural signs combined with the hyper-sexualization of the female body serves to can Indigeneity as a quick fix for Peruvian entertainment and consumption. Natalie J.K. Baloy argues that “non-Indigenous ideas of Indigenous alterity shape and are shaped by processes that render Indigeneity spectacular and/or spectral,” both operating as primary regimes of (in)visibility (2015). *Natacha* (1991), a soap opera that reached record ratings, depicts the formulaic love story of a poor girl saved by a rich man. A young Natacha

Cervantes leaves her hometown of Yurimaguas to work as a domestic servant in the Pereyra Mansion in the capital. In the beginning, the protagonist dons braids and plain peasant clothes, exhibiting also a stereotypical indigenous language accent. Throughout the show, the few markers of Indigeneity progressively disappear until they are completely erased in the last scene. The season finale presents an even blonder and whiter leading actress (Maricarmen Regueiro) as a fantasy bride sharing a kiss with French-Peruvian actor, Paul Martin. Hand in hand, the happily-ever-after white couple looks down saluting their expectant guests downstairs. As they descend through a wide staircase, a multitude of brown Peruvians of average height look up to them. The specter of Indigeneity is transferred to the multitude of anonymous bodies in sharp contrast to the couple's whiteness.

A later instance of Indigenous Otherness as spectacle is *Luz María* (1998), an adaptation from the acclaimed Argentinian romance writer Dellia Fiallo's novel. The first episode takes place in an Andean pastoral setting during the aristocratic era. An innocent and playful young woman of the same name (Angie Cepeda) frolics with her dog, *Chuspi*. While she bathes in the river, the son of the nearby hacienda's owner, Peruvian-German actor Christian Meyer, is shown chasing a deer. The colonial desire manifested in animal domination and sexual conquest could not be more explicit. However, the young hunter eventually shows mercy and lets the animal go: "You are free to go, *taruka* (deer); if there is someone who does not belong in your woods it is me." The soap opera abounds in Quechua words as well as Andean and Afro-Peruvian cultural references. A healer performs a ritual for Luz María's ill mother using a black guinea pig; peasants roam around, vowing and reverencing their patrones and patronas; and black servants exaggerate speech traits and behaviors, while constantly commending their patrons' righteousness and kindness.

The preeminent presence of white and white-mestizo characters in contrast to ethno-racial stereotypes in subordinated positions reaches beyond soap operas to news outlets, entertainment shows, and advertising. Wilfredo Ardito's (2014) comprehensive report on discrimination in television programs concludes that these dynamics have not changed much, insisting on the insidious association between whiteness and higher social and moral status, intelligence, objectivity, and emotional control. White-mestizo characters constitute a majority across genres, while Andean or Amazonian representation remains invisible. Paradoxically, Indigenous invisibility turns hyper-visible in other media practices such as comedy, creating what Alcida Ramos calls "the hyperreal Indian" (1994), through racial and gender tropes.

However, Peruvians were engaging in humorous playing Indian practices long before film and media technologies existed. Race-based or ethnic humor infiltrates both intimate and public spaces as a normalized practice that consistently reiterates different versions of Sarmiento's dichotomy of *civilización y barbarie*: Indigenous versus mestizo, urban versus rural, costa versus sierra, orality versus writing, Quechua versus Spanish. Ethnic humor as a public endeavor reveals a collective understanding of racial anxieties. As an expression of culture, ethnic humor brushes off persisting and changing perceptions of Indigeneity. In other words, the under and hyper-performance, contestation, appropriation, and customization of Indigeneity continue to reverberate over an imagined *peruanidad* that still aspires to be white-mestizo, or Peruvian white. If one can argue the productive power of humor, it serves to alleviate existing tensions that might never be resolved.

Examples of everyday microaggressions in the form of race-based or ethnic humor abound. A common expression regarding newborns is "hay que mejorar la raza," meaning one must improve the future phenotype by adding whiteness, or "te salió blanquito" for light-skinned

babies. Other seemingly innocent expressions are “estar Huamán” (“to be stupid”) and its variations (no seas Huamán, eres Huamán), “qué tal raza,” as Anibal Quijano pointed three decades ago, and later incidents gone viral on social media, such as the insult now known as “color puerta” (brown door) pointing to darker skin color. In sociological terms, racial humor refers to the humor directed from a majority or central metropolitan ethnic group toward a minority or peripheral group. The irony of this logic is to think of Quechua and/or Andean Peruvians as a minority when that is not the case.

Ever since the technological revolution and given the racial tensions of Peruvian society, playing Indian as ethnic humor has always been the easiest and quickest formula in comedic entertainment. Decades before Jorge Benavides, comedians such as Terecita Arce, also known as “la chola Purificación” and Héctor Jiménez “Eleuterio” achieved considerable fame resorting to ethnic humor in the 60s and 70s. However, Tulio Loza, a mestizo migrant, and Spanish and Quechua speaker from Apurímac, became the first comedian to attain national success, first through radio and then television. Through his most popular character, “Nemesio Chupaca,” Loza’s ethnic humor highlighted the struggle of the growing Andean identity, the self-made man who ventured to participate in life in the city, which he called “cholo vivo.” For Ericka Herbias-Ruiz, Loza’s main character “Nemesio Chupaca” became “the voice through which proletarian Lima spoke” (56). However, while Loza relied on overplayed racial tropes, his “Nemesio Chupaca” characterization was inspired by his own experience, in contrast to Benavides’ drag performance.

Additionally, Tulio Loza’s performances reflected a certain vein of empowerment that Indigenous and Andean migrant communities experienced in the 60s and 70s during Velasco’s regime. In contrast, when Jorge Benavides launched his character in the nineties, most Peruvians

were still unaware of the devastating impact the armed conflict had on their Indigenous, peasant, and rural counterparts. The CVR report published in 2003 found that three out of every four victims were poor Peruvians whose maternal language was Quechua. The violence exerted by Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian military mainly targeted communities in the central Andes and later “barrios jóvenes” in the outskirts of Lima. However, media coverage, like most centralized institutions, centered on Lima and other major cities.

The same year, a Limeño rock band called *Los nosequién y los nose cuántos* launched their cultural hit “Las torres” (The towers). The song compared the nation’s collapse to the terrorist bombings of electric towers, further toppled by rampant corruption: “un terrorista/dos terroristas/un guerrillero emerretista/se balanceaban/sobre una torre derrumbada...” (one terrorist/two terrorists/a MRTA guerrilla member/they were all bouncing/on top of a fallen tower). As the song progresses, politicians, celebrities, authorities, and Abimael Guzmán, the leader of the Sendero Luminoso, join to climb up the fallen tower. At concerts, making human towers emerged as a ritual in which attendees, mostly inebriated men, jumped on top of each other only to then slowly collapse. While some critics claimed the song as an anthem of Peruvian despair, its success also reveals how media made the spectacle of terrorism mostly a Limeño and urban affair.

Another blatant distinction between previous playing Indian characterizations and those by Jorge Benavides is the heavy use of blackface and brownface to mimic Indigenous and Afro-Peruvian populations. Through prosthetics, wigs, and “Indian” attire, Benavides’ characterizations, *Paisana Jacinta* and *Negro Mama*, equally mock their lack of social and intellectual skills, as well as their inherent inability to assimilate to modern life in urban Lima. Although Benavides and his supporters argue that such representations are “only a joke,”

defending their freedom of expression, *Paisana Jacinta* and *Negro Mama* clearly embody anti-Indigenous and anti-Black ideologies of Peruvian mestizo society.

In “The Frames of Comic Freedom,” Umberto Eco masterfully delineates the logic of comedy. For Eco, “comic effect is realized when: (i) there is the violation of a rule (preferably, but not necessarily, a minor one, like an etiquette rule); (ii) the violation is committed by someone with whom we do not sympathize because he is an ignoble, inferior, and repulsive (animal-like) character; (iii) therefore we feel superior to his misbehavior and to his sorrow for having broken the rule” (5). Thirty-five years later, Eco’s analysis could not be truer. All of Benavides’ personifications and skits follow this comedic formula. In each of his *Jacinta* characterizations, he commits multiple violations of social conduct: lack of hygiene and self-regard, lack of physical and linguistic composure, inclination to physical and verbal violence, including sexual aggression, and below-average intelligence and morality.

All other characters in the plot belong to a higher social status, speak Limeño Spanish fluently, and demonstrate social capital in multiple ways. Only Jacinta breaks the rules. Eco continues:

(iv) however in recognizing that the rule has been broken, we do not feel concerned; on the contrary, we in some way welcome the violation; we are, so to speak, revenged by the comic character who has challenged the repressive power of the rule (which involves no risk to us, since we commit the violation only vicariously); (v) our pleasure is a mixed one because we enjoy not only the breaking of the rule but also the disgrace of an animal-like individual; (vi) at the same time we are neither concerned with the defense of the rule nor compelled

toward compassion for such an inferior being. *Comic is always racist: only the others, the Barbarians, are supposed to pay* (emphasis mine)

Since Benavides sets as a backdrop a society specifically designed to reject those like *Jacinta*, and the rest of the characters already occupy an assumed higher ground, they have the moral obligation to *civilize* her.

In addition to all the social rules Benavides' character breaks, there is Benavides' own unspoken violation: being racist and misogynist under the guise of humor. On the public and oral character of jokes, Agnes Heller affirms that jokes "create a silent conspiracy among the listeners... as laughter itself creates a bond of quasi-comradeship" (85). In this collective subjectivity, the audience finds pleasure from both the liberating sense of breaking away from social norms and the expiatory relief in recognizing that these jokes mirror their own implicit beliefs. Benavides expresses the unspoken and repressed anxieties of many who seek to distance themselves from Indigenous markers, although it can only be admitted as a joke.

In a comparative analysis of racial humor in Mexico and Peru, Christina A. Sue and Tanya Golash-Boza demonstrate that in both countries racial humor is regarded as mostly benign, thus escaping charges of racism. "Under the discursive banner of humor, individuals further protect color-blind ideologies and thus participate in the maintenance of a racially unequal system" (1595). Benavides' racial humor ultimately softens and silences racism, normalizing it for mass consumption. His drag performance invisibilizes the power asymmetry between his social privilege as an urban male and Spanish-speaking comedian and the normalized discourse regarding Indigenous women's unsuitability in the city.

The long-lasting existence of Benavides' characters--over two decades with few interruptions--reveals how naturalized Peruvian racism has become as well as the depth of its

internalization. Emilie Cameron argues that Indigenous spectrality reveals the pervasiveness of “colonial pasts in this ongoing colonial present” (383). As a form of visual violence, the objectification of Indigenous women also serves as a reminder of citizenship hierarchies, in which some national subjects hold power while others are devoid of it. In the neoliberal post-conflict period, Benavides “playing Indian” constitutes a way of policing Indigenous women's mobility, while it also reveals the pervasiveness of whitening desires and internalized colonialism that informs Peruvian viewers' gaze.

Whether through romance or humor, playing Indian spectacles continue reinforcing discourses of Indigeneity as obstacles to progress. In the dialectics of seeing, they also confirm the stronghold of the colonial heteronormative gaze in reinforcing notions of masculinity and femininity in relation to whiteness. While some colonial foundations have disappeared, or eroded, these racialized productions of the visible and invisible persist and have simply adapted through new technologies. The body, readily visual, remains subject to the invisible corpus of ideologies and attitudes that tacitly yet powerfully informs the spectator's interpretations.

Heteronormative Mestizo-Whiteness and Peruvian Regimes of Looking

Until recently, scholarship in Peru has traditionally resisted engaging in critical race analysis, dismissing it as a U.S.-centered approach, or not as productive as class categories. This resistance is in part explained by the stronghold national ideology summarized by the famous phrase “el que no tiene de inga tiene de mandinga” (One either has from Inka or African descent). A staple of twentieth-century nationalism, this tale of mestizaje has not only fueled color-blind ideologies, but as Claudia Arteaga argues, it “operates through a romanticized colonial violence that idealizes and obscures the history of rape of Indigenous women” (24).

As assimilationist politics, mestizaje has obscured the violence constitutive of Peruvian nationalist normativity formulated by criollo elites, which was frequently accompanied by modernizing governmentality impulses. In *The Allure of Labor* (2011), Paulo Drinot demonstrates how during the first half of the twentieth-century government designed labor policies--workers' agencies, housing, food courts, and insurance--sought to transform Indigenous people into working-class members, which in turn would fulfill visions of an industrialized modern nation.

However, this modernizing drive also nurtured a racial yearning. In general, mestizaje's unifying, conciliatory, democratizing, or de-Indianizing capacity renders invisible the deliberately neutral and unregistered marker of whiteness, which in this case I will refer to as mestizo-whiteness. To understand how and why the Peruvian dominant gaze reads Indigenous markers--and other non-white markers, i.e. Afro-Peruvian--as less privileged sites of racial meaning, one conversely needs to evaluate the more privileged site of meaning production, which is mestizo-whiteness. By naming the identity that is most attached to privilege and so vehemently protected allows us to name as well the shortcomings of a modern system presumably based on democratic and just values.

Interest in the study of whiteness has steadily grown in the last fifteen years. Australian and South African scholars have turned to this emerging field to "draw attention to, and critique, assumptions that 'white' occupies a position of normalcy and neutrality" (Mayes 289). Similarly, in the context of the U.S. "the Whiteness Question" has received sporadic attention. Panamanian-American philosopher Linda Alcoff states: "Given its simultaneous invisibility and universality, whiteness has until recently enjoyed the unchallenged hegemony that any invisible contender in a ring full of visible bodies would experience" (216).

In the last century in Peru, as in many other Latin American countries, intellectuals in the social sciences, politics, economics, and other disciplines have almost always begun their inquiries around the same question, the “Indian problem.” As an analytical tool, the “Indian problem” has systematically avoided touching the core issue of a nation, mestizo-whiteness, as it intertwines with the overarching goal of mestizaje. The presumed invisibility of mestizo-whiteness implies its unspoken value.

While macro-social structures and institutions such as the Church, the *encomienda*, and the *casta* system facilitated the exploitation of Indigenous land and labor, sustaining the colonial project required reliance on an equivalent reorganization of power and hierarchies in the intimate spaces of the everyday. As a deconstructing people project, colonialism ought to be inscribed on the spatial geographies and gendered bodies as well as the collective subjectivity. Through different forms of violence, some physically visible and direct such as rape and others less tangible but pervasive, the colonial gaze dictated Indigeneity as an antagonist to whiteness. It should not come as a surprise that in 1908, a census bureaucrat found that over half of Lima's population registered themselves as white (Stokes 184).

As an ideology, mestizaje has resolved the Peruvian conundrum of whiteness. We are not white but we are not Indian. This ideology is still so embedded in Peru that only until 2017 the national census included questions of self-identification. Over sixty percent of Peruvians self-identified as mestizo/a while twenty-four percent reported themselves from other ethnic groups, with Quechua and Aymara accounting for almost twenty percent. Virginia Zavala adds that “definirse como mestizo es como decir que no tenemos cuerpo y que nuestros rasgos físicos son intrascendentes” (Portocarrero 23). The hidden truth of mestizaje is a yearning for whiteness,

which, like all race related signifiers, is ontologically empty and encompasses more than just skin color.

In her Lacanian analysis of race, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks argues that “race is fundamentally a regime of looking, although race cannot be reduced to the look” (2). In this sense, whiteness is not limited to skin color but inhabits practices that help mitigate non-white markers by other means, such as education, economic power, literacy, and language. Luis Escobedo further argues that whiteness “resides within signifiers like ‘progress’, ‘development’, ‘advancement’, ‘success’, ‘good, and so on,” (268), each one of them in direct opposition to Benavides’ drag Indigenous characterizations. In other words, the message centers on the lack of whiteness, which “represents complete mastery, self-sufficiency, and the jouissance of Oneness” (Seshadri-Crooks 7). This statement could not be further from the truth when millions of Peruvians entertain themselves by looking at a male white-mestizo comedian in drag portraying a clueless and socially unfit Indigenous woman. Far from harmless, the joke conveys that she embodies everything that Benavides is not. Over and over, first through television and live performance, and now through social media and his almost three million followers, Benavides reenacts the dictums of the colonial gaze, or how to stray from mestizo-whiteness.

This gaze cannot be understood without the signifier of heteronormative whiteness. A male, patriarchal, and Christian way of organizing the world, the colonial gaze is also the colonizer’s right to survey his possessions. Kalpana Ram asserts that the colonial gaze means “an unequally constituted right to scrutinize, to represent what is gazed at, and, if judged necessary, to intervene and alter the object of the gaze” (1). The colonial gaze can be thought of as the first step in the continuing process of dispossession leading to the current neoliberal capitalism.

As an exercise of “othering,” the heteronormative colonial gaze implies a distance necessary to negate subjectivity and agency. With few exceptions, such as the role of Micaela Bastidas, Bartolina Sisa, and Tomasa Tito Condemayta, Peruvian historiography demonstrates that Indigenous women have rarely been thought of as part of the imagined Peruvian community. As Mary Weismantel has demonstrated, the colonial encounter represented a progressive and violent disenfranchisement for the vast majority of women. While intermarriage allowed noblewomen (i.e. Isabel Chimpuoclo, mother of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega) to retain some power, most women suffered sexual assault and exploitation both by colonizers and their fellow counterparts. Half a millennium later, female Indigeneity remains entangled in ideologies of bodily availability and disposability, whether for cheap or unpaid labor, affective or sexual dispossession. Maruja Barrig (2003) states that the Indigenous woman signifier has mainly been associated with either heroic feats or symbolic cultural power. This limiting dichotomy highlights either an agency characterized by masculine prowess or a more sublime one in which these women are seen as bearers and guardians of old traditions.

Performance and the Colonial Paradigm in the Extractive Zone

Several Indigenous and women of color feminist theorists argue that patriarchy’s disregard for nature is directly connected with the dismissal of women and Indigenous peoples (Lugones 2010, Rivera-Cusicanqui 2010, Goeman 2017). Similarly, international agencies maintain that the degradation of nature is linked to higher incidents of gender-based violence including sexual assault, domestic violence, and forced prostitution as competition over increasingly scarce and degraded resources exacerbates these forms of violence. In Latin American countries, such as Ecuador, Colombia, and Chile, where extractivism has intensified,

genocide, ecocide, and feminicide are interlinked and reinforced through discourses of criminalization (Gómez-Barris 2016).

In Peru, the number of water and natural areas contaminated by transnational mining companies, most located within rural and Indigenous territories, has dramatically increased. When news outlets cover social protests, their lenses tend to highlight unrest and economic loss from paralyzed extractive activities while coverage of illness and contamination appear only as incidental. The illness and death of poor peasants and Indigenous Peruvians stands parallel to the corporate greed profiting from racist and misogynist spectacles like Benavides' on Frecuencia Latina. Both scenarios operate under the same structures of the "extractive zone," a theoretical approach that I suggest includes the appropriation of racialized bodies to rationalize and maintain inequality.



Alan García, Jorge Benavides and Magaly Medina, *Diario Correo* ©

A growing vein of Latin American feminist scholarship has focused on the compound concept “cuerpo-territorio” as an analytical unit connecting patriarchal violence and the geopolitics of dispossession. In her analysis of modern/colonial extractivism in Cajamarca, Natalia Guzmán-Solano demonstrates how gendered state violence at the extractive frontier has both intensified the reterritorialization of women’s bodies and simultaneously feminized the land and inhabitants for extractive purposes: “the corporeal (human) body and geospatial territory are acted upon and subjugated by the same heteropatriarchal capitalist regimes of power” (2020).

Engaging in this materialist analysis allows me to expose extractivism's thick opacity and the workings of race and capital behind such representations in Peru. While Indigenous groups struggle to overcome state hurdles to be considered and included as equal citizens, Benavides’ appropriation of the female Indigenous body and profiting from a historically shaped subjectivity fixed on mestizo-whiteness shows how capital is made to be mobile in contrast to the policing of Indigenous women’s mobility. As Victoria Hattam notes, “[c]apital, not labor, needs to be brought ‘out of the shadows’” (180). Additionally, as argued earlier, such representations result from an ethnonormative disciplining imperative policing Indigenous mobility.

A media example showcasing the interaction between state normativity, playing Indian, and capital flow in the form of ratings took place in 2010 during Magaly Medina’s show, which aired on Frecuencia Latina. Medina, who has been subjected to racist media attacks and criticism for aesthetic surgeries on multiple occasions, interviewed then-president Alan García alongside Jorge Benavides in drag as *Jacinta*. Upon serving them a glass of beer, Benavides teased García about his run for reelection, to which García responded: “You tell me, *paisanita*, should I run for reelection?” Benavides, who had straightened up his posture as if being hypnotized by García, signaled total agreement and added: “This one, just with his gaze, will have you under his

command.” Benavides then proceeded to reminisce on the looks of young García, especially when he used to ride a motorcycle sporting his notorious black leather jacket and added that García was the Nicola Porcella--a Peruvian-Italian model and actor--of his time. Amidst laughter, Medina replied: “You would have completely fallen for García, don’t you?” Benavides responded: “Gladly, this mister chooses smarts over looks,” while making exaggerated facial expressions to emphasize his rendering of brownface. With visible satisfaction, García returned courtesies and commended the comedian for his *fine* humor.

Benavides’ comments regarding the ex-president were not unusual. García’s six-foot-four and white phenotype, combined with his extraordinary public speaking skills and bombastic persona, had him accustomed to overshadowing and silencing everyone. Even after his two presidential terms, the first (1985-1990) marred by hyperinflation and economic failures, and the second (2006-2011) marked by record growth and accusations of multimillion-dollar bribes, García is still regarded as one of the most talented politicians of Peru’s contemporary history.

García's seemingly sympathetic stance here to buying into--and thus reinforcing--the stereotype falls in line with his previous views on Indigenous issues. His “dog in the manger” discourse and a series of exchanges with Indigenous groups opposing the entrance of extractive foreign corporations in the Amazon, did eventually lead to the deadly confrontation in Bagua in 2009. Analyzing García’s speeches, Paulo Drinot notes that “the dog in the manger rhetoric interpellates a communist threat that evokes still very real fears in the Peruvian population in order to legitimize itself. But its real target is Peru’s indigenous population... to be more precise, explanations or indeed justifications for national backwardness” (188). Like García’s anti-Indigenous discourses, his participation in mainstream playing Indian spectacle to millions of

viewers demonstrates the normalization of racism and misogyny across spheres, from the highest office to corporate media.

In 2014, Cecilia Paniura, Rosa Supho, Irene Quispe y Rosalinda Torres, four Indigenous leaders from Cusco, initiated a legal demand against Jorge Benavides and Frecuencia Latina for their television production, a case that obtained a partial victory. They argued it violated “Indigenous women’s rights to human dignity, equality, non-discrimination, honor, good reputation, and ethnic and cultural identity,” while the opposite defended freedom of expression and creativity as fundamental human rights. Benavides has maintained his candor and acknowledged that both of his characters, *Jacinta* and *Negro Mama*, are controversial but that they are also the most beloved among his audience. In a 2017 interview for *El Comercio* newspaper, Benavides candidly asserts:

I do not believe that paisana Jacinta represents Peruvian women. Perhaps, Dina Paucar, for example, would represent Peruvian women. She is a migrant to Lima who experienced the same as paisana Jacinta: she suffered discrimination and was mistreated... She worked as a candy street vendor and was abused as a domestic servant, but got ahead in life. For me she *does* represent Peruvian women. My paisana does not. My paisana is a reality that exists in our country, which many women in the provinces do not want to see, they do not want to look back... I personally believe that my show does not inform public opinion, it just entertains.

(Nuñez 1)

Benavides’ contradictory beliefs reveal several points: He fails to register that in each episode his character is consistently depicted in terms of the stereotypical precarious scenarios Indigenous Andean migrants must deal with when moving to the capital. The comedian implies a civilizing

effect of urban migration on rural women, and finally, fails to recognize that images and stereotypes of Indigenous women do more than just define women themselves and instead define unequal power relationships.

His last assertion also conveys the necessary disavowal of his social status as a natural and unintended happenstance. “Race must therefore disavow or deny knowledge of its own historicity, or risk surrendering to the discourse of exceptionality, the possibility of wholeness and supremacy. Thus, race secures itself through visibility” (8). Acknowledging his privileged position--urban, male, and white-mestizo--would mean not only recognizing some social responsibility but also accounting for his extractive practices.



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Extractivism in its most material sense lies at the core of all colonial enterprises across the globe, particularly a behavior by which the global North feeds off the global South. In our hemisphere, extractivism remains as the default economic position of most Latin American countries. In her book, *Extractive Zones*, Macarena Gómez-Barris describes it as “the colonial

paradigm, worldview, and technologies that mark out regions of ‘high biodiversity’ in order to reduce life to capitalist resource conversion...an economic system that engages in thefts, borrowings, and forced removals, violently reorganizing social life as well as the land” (xvii). Centering on the fact that extractivism implies a reorganization of social life brings to light the economic rationale and the co-constitutive developmentalist strategies and discourses behind the making and perpetuating of inequality.

Reading Benavides’ performance as extractivism also amplifies the scope to include cultural practices in connection to policies governing biodiversity, multiculturalism, and racial capitalism. As several scholars (Hales, Povinnelli, Postero & Zamosc, García) have pointed out, the multicultural turn as state technology is another economic rehearsal of complicity between nation-states and the market to resolve the conundrum of difference and clear the legal gossamer for the implementation of extractivism.

Héctor Hoyos asserts that extractivism “traverses economics, nature, and culture” (3), three dimensions of social life that have been successfully compounded under the Peruvian national branding scheme MarcaPerú (Peru™).⁵ Under MarcaPerú, with its distinctive Nazca Lines inspired logo, tourism, food, mining and culture blend, projecting Peruvian pride. While national pride coalesces Peruvians around a positive estimation of their country, its selective nature helps to suspend historical contradictions and failures. It also writes off the messiness of multiculturalism and any negative connotation of Indigeneity. Florence Babb asserts that for migrants wearing a T-shirt with the MarcaPerú logo can “offer a sense of belonging and citizenship that would be impossible to attain wearing a pollera (multilayered skirt) and cardigan

⁵ MarcaPerú was launched by the Comisión de Promoción del Perú para la Exportación y el Turismo – PROMPERÚ, under MINCETUR (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo) in 2011. See www.gob.pe/institucion/promperu/campa%C3%B1as/3723-marca-peru-10-anos-despues

in Lima” (14), manifesting a drive-thru sense of belonging ultimately more dependent on the flow of capital than on any other measure.

In *Barefoot Economics*, Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef adverts that “behind every figure of growth, there is a human story and a natural story” (Acosta 78). Benavides extracts what constitutes for him the essence of Indigenous difference, collapses subject/object, and turns it into a decal caricature. Behind decades of paid appearances, billable ratings, and a variety of horrendous merchandise, hides a history of violence, inequality, and discrimination, especially against Indigenous and peasant women, as the recent years of political conflict have made evident.

Conclusions

Exploring the workings of race as a top-down (MarcaPerú, multicultural governmentality, executive power) and bottom-up (brownface representation, activism, legal demand) dialectic helps visualize the fractal, intricate, and contested relationship between Indigeneity and national identity. Looking for the latest news related to Benavides, I came across *Mercado Latino*, an online monthly Spanish language subscription distributed in Japan. Its June 2019 issue includes a short note entitled “Jorge Benavides llega a Japón,” featuring an interview with the comedian and images of several of his characters, most prominently *Jacinta*. Benavides expresses his excitement for bringing *Gloria* and *Jacinta* to the Peruvian diaspora. To the question, if Peruvians are hard to entertain, Benavides responds: “They are but I have devoted my whole life to humor. I know what Peruvians like, and the fact that they are in Japan does not mean they have forgotten their roots, practices, sayings and everyday slang” (34). These assertions highlight the transnational character of his cultural influence. Benavides implicitly acknowledges that his

characterizations exceed their comedic purpose and cannot escape the social conditions in which they are created.

After Benavides' long history of characterizations, some of his latest stunts have signaled a change of attitude and, surprisingly, even an embrace of feminist views. In a recent video, Benavides and fellow comedian Carlos Vilchez address the issue of catcalling and verbal harassment of women. After Vilchez appears blowing kisses and dishing "piropos" to a woman passing by, Benavides calls out his behavior and explains why it is not acceptable. He makes the usual appeal to familial relationships, "think, this could happen to your sister or daughter" (Youtube). The obvious question is why Indigenous women do not deserve the same defense. In another example of possible progressive views, Benavides hired Danny Rosales, a transgender comedian who now frequently appears in his sitcom, *El wasap de JB*.

In April this year, a brownface characterization by surfing champion Vania Torres received a considerable wave of criticism. A video in her Instagram account, which the athlete described as a performance practice and makeup removing wipes promotional video, shows Torres first removing her hat, then wiping her forehead from black wrinkles, and eventually showing her light skin color, while Maroon 5 song "Girls like you" plays in the background. The medalist apologized, explaining her brownface was part of an acting project and had no racist design. Indigenous activist and leader Tarcila Rivera remarked that the video expresses "a desire many Peruvians hold: to erase what is Indigenous and come closer to what is hegemonically considered pretty and better" (EFE News). Regardless of intentions, Torres's video placed the case of whitening front and center.

On October 14th, a third judge finally confirmed the sentence against Benavides and Frecuencia Latina in the legal case initiated by the four Indigenous activists from Cusco in 2014. Benavides has dismissed his legal defeat affirming he had already finished with that character and moved on to new projects, clarifying his decision had nothing to do with social or legal pressure. The victory represents a step forward on the issue of racial awareness but also a breaking point as more Peruvians ditch certain visual shortcuts. For Indigenous women, as Tarcila Rivera states, the victory has renewed their faith in the legal system and more importantly, cleared the path to work on restoring the tarnished self-esteem of many girls (Purizaca), who no longer want to wear braids or speak Quechua for fear of being bullied at school.



Jorge Benavides, Vania Torres, El Comercio ©

Unintendedly, Benavides' characterizations brought about public debates about television programming and its ideological influence on the Peruvian theatre of national identity, in which ideals of racialized citizenship and perceptions of belonging are in constant rehearsal. While the world faces unprecedented global health and economic crisis, several countries have come to experience a sort of suspension of disbelief about race. The rich diversity and complexity of Indigeneity in regards to Peruvian identity is far from being resolved but perhaps living a pandemic--facing wealth and health gaps--has put humor and inequality in perspective.

Chapter 3

Race, Extractivism and Mercurial Coloniality for/through Humans and Other-than Humans

Yo defiendo la tierra, defiendo el agua porque eso es vida. Yo no tengo miedo al poder de las empresas. Seguiré luchando, [por] los compañeros que murieron en Celendín y en Bambamarca y por todos los que estamos en lucha en Cajamarca
—Máxima Acuña, Goldman Environmental Prize ceremony.

Since 2011, Máxima Acuña de Chaupe, an Indigenous subsistence farmer and weaver from Cajamarca, Peru, has been confronting and enduring abuse by the most powerful gold extracting entity in the world, the Newmont Corporation. In *Máxima* (2020), Peruvian director Claudia Sparrow offers a visual and narrative account of Máxima’s struggle to defend her land of Tragadero Grande against Newmont. Considering the long history of ventriloquism in Peruvian cultural and visual depictions of Indigenous/peasant struggles, Sparrow’s work avoids old paradigm pitfalls, such as the paternalistic gaze and urban white Limeño woman savior, and instead offers a fresh, still dramatic, and yet complex transnational perspective on resource extractivism and Indigenous struggles. Dropping representational formulas, in which the grammar of alienation and violence competes with the salutary nudge to the multicultural milieu, Sparrow breaks free from the ‘Lima’s film bubble’ to offer a “non-centralist, non-masculinist, and non-hierarchical” (Seguí 325) political and cultural narration. Although her directorial gaze is mostly concerned with the legal landscape of the territorial dispute, she does not lose sight of

Acuña's subjectivity, presenting discrete glimpses of her kinship to the land and water bodies, as well as her relationality to other humans and other-than-humans. To achieve the latter, the camera frequently parses over plants, animals, and earth and water bodies, highlighting the interconnectedness between humans and "earth-beings"⁶ (Cadena 2015) in Andean worlds.

This chapter first examines the broader context of renewed extractive activities in Peru after the political armed conflict between 1980-2000, given that the industry of resource extraction is the one most responsible for catapulting the economy to record highs. Between 2000-2008, Peru's GDP grew from 52 to 120 billion (World Bank Data). The post-Fujimori period, "has been characterized by sustained economic growth fostered in part by strong mineral prices and production. Yet it has also been characterized by high levels of social conflict" (Sanborn et al 36). Following María Elena García's concern for the optimism of the term *postconflict*, this research is interested in making visible the colonial racial and gendered undertones of the "Peruvian miracle." Writing about the gastronomic complex, which has run parallel to the extractive boom, García argues that such a term "imposes a periodization that renders almost invisible the many other catastrophes of colonial, structural and symbolic violence that remain too present" (2021 6). Indeed, the "Peruvian miracle" has been just that, a spectacular but unsustainable recovery at the expense of the same livelihoods cut short by the conflict, while others, elite white Peruvians., have reached unparalleled wealth amidst an environmental, health, and political crisis, and equivalent shocking displays of racial inequality in the criminalization of Black and Indigenous bodies. In a simple question, this chapter asks to

⁶ Earth-beings or "tirakuna" (composite from the Spanish *tierra* and the Quechua plural *kuna*) is the term used by Nasario Turpo, an Indigenous activist and Andean healer, whose life and reflections are extensively examined by anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena. Earth-beings are "other-than-human beings who participate in the lives of those who call themselves *runakuna*, people" (2015, xxiv).

what extent this film reveals coloniality threading through gender, Indigeneity, whiteness, dispossession in a mediatized transnational and global culture.

Recognizing coloniality is fundamentally intransparent and a “form of structured dispossession” (Coulthard 7; Simpson 74), I follow some of the analyses concerned with the global phenomenon of white supremacy (Mills 1999), the invisibility of race in the Anthropocene in the last two decades (Malm & Hornborg 2014), and the geographies of racial vulnerability as proposed by Laura Pulido (2018, 2019). With these expanding frames illuminating sites of colonial opacity, I turn to Peru to argue an even more ancillary treatment of race as an analytical category, as it has been similarly understated, invisibilized, or silenced. I then follow with an examination of Peru-U.S. relationality embedded in extractive corporate ties, media’s language of representation, and spectacular environmental activism, such as the international Goldman Environmental Prize.

Combining these postcolonial and decolonial lenses with feminist film analysis, I approach the *Máxima* documentary as a mapping in motion of the multiple entanglements of modern coloniality and tease out how the film crafts an inventory of loss and gains, mobilities and immobilities, and the social technologies that facilitate such circulations. I further examine how the *mise-en-scène* maps geographic, legal, and linguistic landscapes upon and through which extractivism constitutes, hides, and transfigures as an unfathomable and inexorable entity. Reading Cajamarca as a foundational site of the colonial racial project of dispossession in Peru then—Atahualpa, Pizarro and the gold ransom in 1533—and now—Máxima, Newmont, gold mining and mercury—I deploy the term *mercurial coloniality* as an organizing concept that, alluding to both material and symbolic extractivism, visibilizes the colonial constant in the unequal power represented by the binaries Atahualpa/Pizarro and Máxima/Newmont. In the

context of Global North and South relations, *mercurial coloniality* allows me to examine how the hemispheric Americas function as a transnational system with specific racialized and il/legalized mobilities--natural resources, wealth, health, and illness, and how the film maps and represents different scales of these transfers and colonial transfigurations running to and through certain human and non-human bodies.

Global Crisis, Anthropocene and the “We are all in the same ship” Discourse

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea
—W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of White Folk*

Globalization studies at the end of the last century have opened many avenues of exploration, most of them enthralled by the rapid technological change and its dislocating effects. As Arjun Appadurai notes,

The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries). Nor is it susceptible to simple models of push and pull (in terms of migration theory), or of surpluses and deficits (as in traditional models of balance of trade), or of consumers and producers. (32)

In contrast to Appadurai’s five distinct scapes of global flows (ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape, mediascape, and ideoscape), Zygmunt Bauman theorizes modernity through an organicist approach. He describes heavy modernity as the era of territorial conquest in which “wealth and power were firmly rooted or deposited deep inside the land - bulky, ponderous and

immovable like the beds of iron ore and deposits of coal” (114). He could be speaking of any given major gold mine in Latin America in the last four centuries. As Thea Riofrancos asserts, Latin American resource extraction “traces a long arc: colonial plunder, independence-- era ‘enclave economies,’ mid-century nationalist projects of oil-- fueled modernization, subsequent privatization and deregulation of hydrocarbon and mineral sectors” (4). Could globalization discourse be the new distraction when, in fact, power continues to tilt toward the same direction?

In the last thirty years, Latin American decolonial thought has provided ample and potent lenses to x-ray the colonial matrix of power, a concept initially proposed by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2000, 20014). Decolonial thinking has become a staple in breaking down coloniality’s obdurate manifestation in cultural, social, and economic entanglements in the Global South. Indigenous movements, political accomplishments, and constitutional victories in Ecuador and Bolivia exemplify how decolonial visions could play out. Despite the limitations, setbacks, and contradictions of the Latin American Pink Tide⁷ and the following conservative wave, the left turn has further exposed the failure of the neoliberal dependency model toward progress and modernization.

A similar scenario took place in Bolivia. “Sumaq kawsay” and “Sumaq qamaña,” or the Indigenous principles of *good living*, are popular references among decolonial scholars (Mignolo 2009, 2014; Gudynas 2011; Mignolo & Walsh 2018; Silva-Santisteban 2020). *Good living* as a subverting principle resonates with Walter Mignolo’s epistemic disobedience proposition in “de-linking from the magic of the Western idea of modernity, ideals of humanity and promises of economic growth and financial prosperity” (2009 3). In the forthcoming Peruvian presidential

⁷ In the case of Ecuador, Thea Riofrancos examines the leftist government inability to break from the dependency dilemma, and how the reliance on primary commodity exports renders sovereignty elusive (168). See also Gómez-Barris (2018). For critiques of Bolivia’s Indigenous state, conflict and extractivism see an interview of Rivera-Cusicanqui (Weinberg 2014); Hope (2016); Lalander (2017).

elections, could the polarized political vote between Peru's twenty three departments and the capital, Lima, be a precedent of epistemic disobedience? The Peruvian right has Keiko Fujimori--accused of money-laundering, daughter of ex-dictator Alberto Fujimori sentenced for human rights violations--supported by Alberto Fujimori's former advisor Hernando de Soto (who claims holds sixteen PhDs), Opus Dei candidate, confessed celibate and metal cilice wearer, Rafael López Aliaga, and recently joined by Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa, while on the left, Pedro Castillo, a Cajamarca primary teacher, syndicate leader and former rondero, leads the left under constant *terruqueo*⁸ and centralized media harassment. Meanwhile, in another potential de-linking move, the Comisión de Pueblos Andinos, Amazónicos, Afroperuano, Ambiente y Ecología has proposed Ley 6957,⁹ which seeks the recognition of the rights of Nature.

Defending Tomorrow, the annual report by Global Witness (GW), a leading organization tracking environmental conflicts since 1993, lists 2019 as the deadliest year, with 212 activists and defenders murdered. Fifty of them were connected to mining in Latin America, which is consistently ranked as the worst-affected region (6). To offer perspective, the report states: "on average, four defenders have been killed every week since December 2015" (10). Environmental activists' and defenders' lives are perpetually endangered. Their deaths follow years of struggle against extractive corporations and a history of systemic harassment and criminalization from their own countries' governments and private sector, which more often than not work in tandem through legal and extralegal means.

⁸ Terruqueo refers to the practice of calling someone terruco/terruca, implying ties to subversive terrorist groups or ideologies.

⁹ For details on Bill 6957 visit www.comunicaciones.congreso.gob.pe/noticias/comision-de-pueblos-andinos-analiza-derechos-de-la-naturaleza/

In this extractive context, it is urgent to effectively collaborate on a language that cuts through the web of transnational and global circuits to reveal some of these hemispheric exchanges at work. New materialisms, feminisms from the Global South and critical race humanisms have provided methodological tools to demystify inequality, injustice, racism, and their intersecting manifestations. Yet, the entanglements of human-made entities, such as global corporations, megaprojects, trade agreements and international law, make comprehensive analyses extremely challenging, at times confirming their larger-than-life existence. If coloniality was a precondition of capitalism, and still haunts small and large events and structures of modernity, what can we learn from bringing it to the front, making it fully visible?

Against developmentalist assumptions that extractive megaprojects create jobs and activate local economies, increasing scholarship and data analysis reveals this to be a fallacy. In Peru, between 2011-2012, mining employed only 2 percent of the economically active population, in contrast to 23 percent in agriculture and 27 percent in retail and manufacturing combined (Maquet 2013). As Maristella Svampa argues, most megaprojects in Latin America not only affect the preexisting social and economic forms, they also reconfigure “the very scope of democracy, since they are imposed without the population’s consent, generating strong divisions in society and a spiral of criminalization and repression of resistance” (68).

Eduardo Gudynas argues that the continued death and revival of Western notions of development in the last forty years have made it “a zombie concept, dead and alive at the same time” (442). Whether intentional or not, Gudynas’s zombie reference lingers in the present from the colonial past. Originated in the seventeenth century in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), zombies were African slaves in sugar plantations who committed suicide and suffered exclusion from a free afterlife, and thus were not able to die. “They don’t die because

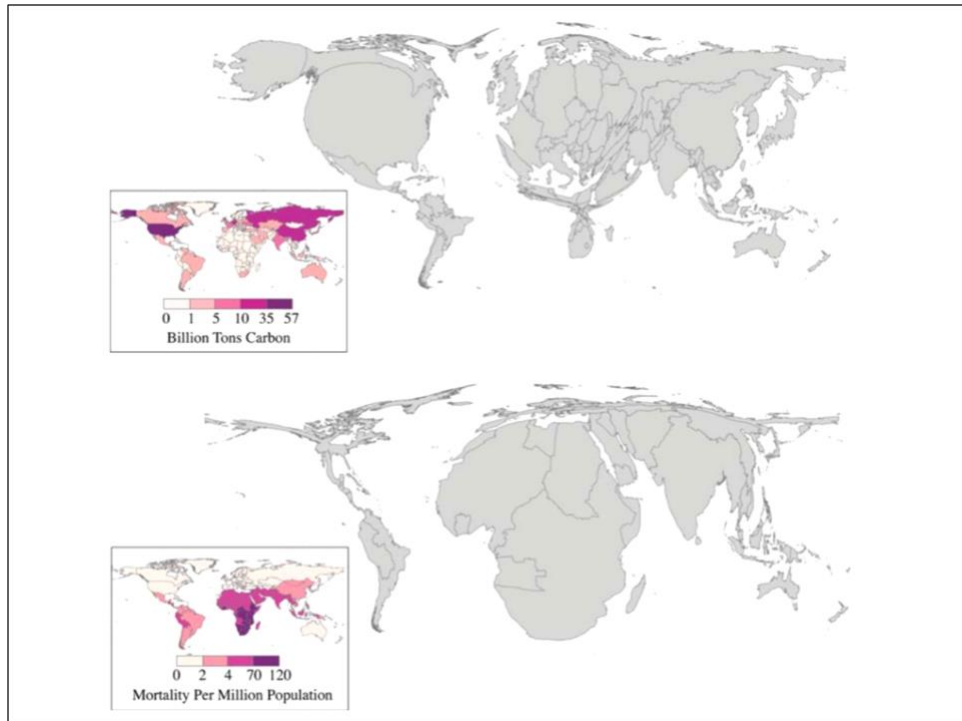
the past doesn't die. Violence that is never reckoned with can never be forgotten" (Sze 91).
Zombies are also larger-than-life.

Another radical proposition is Mackenzie Wark's, who suggests that capitalism is dead and a worse ruling class has taken the place of the capitalist elite, an unrecognized shift that leaves us without adequate terminology to describe it. She calls this class vectoralist because, rather than appropriating surplus value, "their class power derives from ownership and control of the vector of information" (16). A variation of Žižek and Jameson's famous postulation could be that it is easier to imagine the death of capitalism than the end of extractivism. This seems impossible for Latin America considering its extractive long arc, in the case of Peru, rooted at the foundation of the colonial encounter: a hostage Inca promised freedom through a gold ransom.

In Ecuador, examining the environmental conflict between the Wimbí tribe and the Energy & Palma agroindustrial corporation, María Moreno-Parra demonstrates the intimate relationship between processes of accumulation by dispossession and the violence racialized Afro, Indigenous and peasant populations endure, what she calls a *slow death* (2017). Using similar imagery, Rob Nixon proposes the idea of *slow violence*: "a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (140). Despite so much talk about death, zombies and the spectrum of apocalyptic imaginations, it seems our idea of mortality is very skewed. What if we depart from the assumption that the end is inevitable, and like Máxima Acuña, the Wimbí, and other marginalized, racialized, and disenfranchised human and more-than-human bodies, we have no other option than the Anthropocene's slow death?

Although global environmental awareness seems to gain momentum as it recovers from four years of aggressive deregulation agendas such as Trump's, discussions on the Anthropocene

still offer resistance to racial examinations. As Malm and Hornborg (2014) have noted in their critique of the Anthropocene, initially proposed by Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen in 2002, the term obscures the salient fact that a small percentage of the global population accounts for and has profited from the conditions that produced it. Laura Pulido argues that the Anthropocene must be seen as a racial process, calling attention to the increasing evidence demonstrating how “many environmental hazards follow along racial lines, but also many of the meta-processes that have contributed to the Anthropocene, such as industrialization, urbanization, and capitalism, are racialized (117).



From Patz et al 2007 (400). Comparison of cumulative carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions (by country) for 1950 to 2000* versus regional distribution of four climate-sensitive health effects (malaria, malnutrition, diarrhea, and inland flood-related fatalities).

Returning to Global Witness, the environmental NGO based in the U.K. and U.S., its website states: “Over 25 years we have brought many unheard stories to global attention. From the minerals being mined to fund conflicts to some of the biggest corporate corruption scandals, our campaigns change the world” (GW homepage). As imagined, its pages include a variety of media highlighting defenders from considered ‘underdeveloped’ countries (Congo, Myanmar, Honduras), most of them from the “darker nations.” The NGO also prides itself for its innovative investigations, including secret filming, satellite imagery and drone footage, data analysis and anonymous reports. All of this reveals the organization’s impressive breadth and depth of resources, yet it somehow fails to address how race is deeply embedded as well in legal national and transnational state-corporate arrangements.

Two Peruvians, Carlos Tomás Rodríguez-Pastor Persivale and Ana Maria Brescia Cafferata have made it into the 2020 Forbes list of twenty-one hundred billionaires in the world. As wealth goes, Carlos Rodríguez-Pastor inherited his fortune from his father, Carlos Rodríguez-Pastor Mendoza, who worked top-level positions at Peru's Central Reserve Bank and Wells Fargo in San Francisco, California. He later became Economy and Finance Minister (1982-1984) during Belaúnde Terry’s government, and a close advisor to Alberto Fujimori during his first term (1990-1995). Rodríguez-Pastor Mendoza’s father in turn was Carlos Antonio Rodríguez Pastor, former Education Minister during Manuel Odrías’s dictatorship in 1948. As for the Brescia Cafferata or Grupo Breca, a “discrete empire” (Cordero) with beginnings in the food and mining industry, it currently owns Minsur, the largest tin producer, major banks and insurance holdings, and over seventy companies across hospitality, health and fishing sectors.

These compounded and expanded *abolengos* illustrate the wealth and opportunity gap resulting from different forms of primitive accumulation and colonial power, extensively studied

through Marxist thought, dependency theory, among other frameworks. However, the centrality of land ownership or dispossession (Mariátegui), the predominance of mestizaje agendas and indigenismo ideologies held by ruling elites with linguistic and epistemic privilege, and possibly the assurance of a “safely distant Indigenous past” (Seed 97), have contributed to *racelighting* (Harris & Woods 2021), a form of color-blindness and censorship in the use of race as an analytical category, recovered since Aníbal Quijano’s proposition on the colonial matrix of power and other decolonial thinkers.

Moreover, the circulation of these families between high State offices and the private and finance sector point to their symbiotic power relationship. Referring to this interpenetration phenomenon in Peru, Francisco Durand states: “existe una «puerta giratoria» que conecta a los dos grandes sectores de poder, a través de personajes que van y vienen de las corporaciones al Estado y viceversa” (2016 77). Durand, a political scientist who has studied Peruvian elites’ economic and political power (1994; 2017) argues that under extractive corporations the conditions of State captivity have further exacerbated.

COVID-19 has demonstrated how we all *could* get sick and die but clearly not at the same rate or with the same violence. While the virus mutates into different biological strains, the pandemic seems to have a specific social strain along racial lines. In the U.S., Indigenous, Black, and Pacific Islanders have experienced the highest mortality rates,¹⁰ while, according to the CDC (Center for Disease Control), Latinx disproportionately account for 28.9% of total COVID-19 cases although they make up 18% of the total population.¹¹ In Peru, as the number of cases and fatalities peaked in the Amazonian territory during the first wave in July 2020, the state

¹⁰ Source: APM Lab and Arizona State University. See www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race

¹¹ See <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographics>

floundered to reach Indigenous populations (Fraser). On July first, upon a failed quest for oxygen, Awajún tribe leader and human rights activist Santiago Manuin died of Coronavirus (Fowks). On June 5th, 2009, Manuin survived eight gunshot wounds when policemen opened fire on Bagua demonstrators who had blocked roads in protest against president Alan García's handling of Peru-U.S. Free Trade Agreements (Apffel-Marglin; Benassi). Like many other Indigenous defenders and leaders, Santiago Manuin's "life and death represent both their tribal strength and their global vulnerability" (Pearce).

In Iquitos, when a *Guardian* reporter asked regional health executive director, Graciela Meza, about the situation, she exclaimed "there's no oxygen in the lungs of the world. That should be the headline for your story" (Collins). Meza's exclamation might seem like a sinister coincidence to the Black Lives Matter and anti-police brutality movement chant "I can't breathe." However, this expression of despair as life slowly or forcefully escapes the body connects to global struggles that go beyond police violence. As Julie Sze points out in the U.S. context, air pollution and asthma "remain stubbornly high, concentrated among the poor, the politically disenfranchised, and people of color" (15). "I can't breathe" were also journalist Jamal Khashoggi last words before his assassination by the authoritarian oil-based Saudi regime (Ibid).

When the second peak of the pandemic in July 2020 hit the U.S., a trending social media slogan read, "we are in the same storm, but not in the same boat."¹² The current global environmental-health crisis is only global for the poor, unemployed, illegalized, and marginalized, most of them racialized within and beyond sovereign borders. Borrowing a term from Vijay Prashad, Pulido adds: "who will pay the greatest cost, in terms of their lives,

¹² Originally a Twitter by writer Damian Barr then quoted on *The Wall Street Journal*. See www.wsj.com/articles/what-comes-after-the-coronavirus-storm-11587684752

livelihoods, and well-being. . . it is overwhelmingly the ‘darker nations’” (117). In Peru, “la mancha india” was not only a dismissive epithet; it also represents a geography of racial vulnerability that has not changed much. Conflict, illness, and violence resulting from mining activities continue to primarily affect Indigenous and peasant bodies and territories located along “la columna vertebral del Perú” (Slack 4), the Andes. According to a study tracking the evolution of mining concessions by Cooperación¹³ in 2017, a Peruvian non-profit organization advocating for social, environmental and political rights, 38.26 % of Indigenous and Native communities have been given to mining concessions (Martínez-Castillo 14), which only includes officially titled and recognized communities (Ibid).

Máxima Acuña’s Everyday, Unspectacular Resistance, and Prize-Winning Struggles

In April 2016, Máxima Acuña became one of the six recipients of the Goldman Environmental Prize (GEP), also known as the Green Nobel. Past iterations of the highly mediatized gala have featured big names, such as actors Robert Redford and Sigourney Weaver, singers Michael Franti and Lenny Kravitz and politician turned environmentalist, Al Gore. When Máxima Acuña approaches the stage to accept the bronze (not gold) statue, instead of the traditional rehearsed speech, she sings a huayno narrating critical moments of her struggle against Yanacocha Mining Company (*black lake* in Quechua). “I am a Jalqueñita, following my cattle. They destroyed my hut and burned my land. I had no food, nor water.” The documentary *Máxima* includes this climax early, interspersed with crucial moments of Acuña’s national and international legal battle against Newmont, purposefully registering the double code switching,

¹³ Cooperación is a Peruvian non-profit organization advocating for social, environmental and political rights. See www.cooperacion.org.pe/

Quechua to Spanish to English, accompanying the movement from Cajamarca to Lima, and then to Washington D.C.

Journalists and mainstream media often refer to environmental leaders and activists in magnanimous language, as champions, heroes or guardians of rivers, forests, lakes, or other vulnerable earthly bodies and ecologies, as Máxima Acuña's oppositional stance against Newmont has been depicted. Examples include news outlets, magazines, and a university publication, all describing her in David-versus-Goliath terms. A *Daily Beast* report entitled "Badass Grandma Standing Up to Big Mining" reads,

Maxima Acuña is not your typical activist. She stands around 4½ feet tall and has never set foot inside of a school. She can neither read nor write and has never been affiliated with any outside organization. However, the 47-year-old subsistence farmer and grandmother has been *successfully* resisting the largest multinational mining project in Peru for the past five years, standing up for indigenous communities across the region. (emphasis mine)

In connection with this article, a note on environmental ethics at the Santa Clara University Markkula Center for Applied Ethics describes Máxima as "an impenetrable barrier protecting the natural lands that she calls home" (Carne). Playing with Spanish semantics, a *Sierra Club* blog calls her "una roca llamada Máxima Acuña" (A Rock Called Máxima Acuña). A month after the assassination of Lenca leader Berta Cáceres, a BBC article anointed Máxima Acuña as "la campesina peruana 'heredera' de la activista asesinada Berta Cáceres" (BBC Mundo).

Such celebratory descriptions of extraordinary environmental feats rather forebode a curse as most of these activists and leaders—including their families and communities—continue to endure daily harassment, escalating threats, and eventually physical and deadly violence. The

language used also slips into an affective economy that oscillates between suffering and marginalization, often conflating marginality as a pre-condition with marginality as a process. Máxima Acuña is not a suffering or marginal being but is rather marginalized by a series of entities and systems: the local authorities and the police, the centralized and corrupted justice branch, and the international and transnational grammars that facilitate racial capitalism in favor of non-racialized others.

Addressing the geopolitics of knowledge and solidarity that U.S. based organizations extend to activists, such as Berta Cáceres and Máxima Acuña, scholars Pascha Bueno-Hansen and Sylvanna Falcón enjoin: “In situations where global north actors initiate solidarity, we emphasize accountability to historical and asymmetrical geopolitical power dynamics” (62). While the Goldman Environmental Prize (GEP) endows environmentalists with greater recognition, legal and support networks, and the generous cash amount (\$175k), their mediatized visibility accentuates safety issues and raises contradictions. Although Máxima Acuña’s legal suit has been an individual endeavor since she decided not to sell her land to Yanacocha, as Bueno-Hansen and Falcón argue, “human rights awards run the risks of secularizing and individualizing the plurality and collectivity of Indigenous/campesina collective struggles” (50). Between Berta Cáceres’s killing and Bueno-Hansen and Falcón’s publication, a second Goldman Environmental Prize winner, the Tarahumara Isidro Baldenegro López from México, was assassinated. Despite GEP’s increased efforts in providing safety to their award recipients across the globe, philanthropy provides temporal remediation rather than the disarticulation of inequality. The three top gold mining companies, Newmont, Barrick, and AngloGold, allocate large sums toward sustainable programming in the communities affected by their extractive activities.

Yanacocha began mining operations in 1992, during Alberto Fujimori's regime. Initial legal confrontations arose in 1999, when several Indigenous peasants complained of having been manipulated to sell their lands below market price, while others reported the company fired them after only a few months of work, breaking its promise of job stability and fired them (Isla 2013; 2017). In 2000, a mercury leak of 330lbs contaminated the small neighboring towns of San Juan, Magdalena, and Choropampa, affecting over a thousand people, the majority of them children who attempted collecting the liquid metal (Defensoría del Pueblo 2001; Arana-Zegarra 2009), events that Ernesto Cabellos and Stephanie Boyd depicted in their internationally awarded documentary *Choropampa: The Price of Gold* (2003). As a social movement, ¡Conga no va! prompted greater organized resistance to Yanacocha/Newmont, including local and regional authorities, environmental committees and conferences, peasant patrols, STEM professionals, such as medics, biologists, and engineers, and Sunday meetings at the cathedral (Hincapié 2018), stalling gold mining expansion in Cajamarca. It has also inspired other movements against mining and ignited a wave of cultural resistance through music, storytelling, and performance (Santiago 2017), including Sparrow's documentary.

Foremost, Máxima Acuña's struggle highlights Indigenous and peasant women's daily ordeals in a society that denies them equal participation; silences them and treats them as second-class citizens or less. During a confrontation in Puno in 2001, a police officer shot Petronila Coa Huanca before shouting to another policeman "kill that woman with waraqa, kill that shit chola" (Silva-Santisteban 118). Since 2011, Acuña's refusal to sell her land only became more dangerous. Through a combination of physical, psychological, and legal attacks, Yanacocha corporation has subjected Máxima Acuña's to other preemptive-like tactics, including crop and property destruction, cattle and pet disappearance, surveillance, and forced containment by

blocking the only access to her property (Isla 2017; US District Court, District of DE), and poisoning over thousand farmed trout in 2019 (Caparachin).



From *Máxima* (2020) Claudia Sparrow ©

Her refusal to give up her land has also caused Acuña constant harassment by fellow farmers: “Algunos comuneros dicen que por mi culpa no tienen trabajo. Que la mina no funciona porque estoy acá. ¿Qué hago? ¿Dejo que me quiten mi terreno y mi agua?” (Zárte). The term preemptive ushers war and military imagery, but how are the aforementioned practices different? In 2015, fear for Máxima’s life was palpable: several comuneros organized to patrol at night, prompting the regional governor to declare that if anything happened to Máxima, “the whole town will fight whatever battles necessary against the mining company abuse” (Ibid).

Journalist Milagros Olivera-Noriega spent nine days with Máxima Acuña as part of HAWAPI¹⁴ 2019, a non-profit cultural association that organized an art camping residency in Máxima's land. In her chronicle, Noriega retells how Micky, Máxima's dog, along with several other dogs, sheep, guinea pigs, and trout were run over by mining trucks, slaughtered or poisoned (62). As the group prepares to be transported from Cajamarca to Tragadero Grande, a four-hour drive, Noriega reflects on the words of their driver, Salomón, a forest engineer from Cajamarca: "Ready to go to war?" (67). These by-design conditions of slow death, rehearsed and systematized by corporations over multiple latitudes and periods, make life possible at the bare minimum, stretching it thin until it snaps. The larger-than-life entity just moves on to the next mine, river, mountain, bodies. The camera follows as well.

Examining Zapatista's struggle for autonomy against the Mexican nation-state, Mariana Mora points out how low-intensity warfare treated Indigenous autonomous organizations as "a potential threat to the political cohesion of the sovereign" (90). Likewise, in the name of sovereignty and development, in the post-Fujimori era, and especially during Alan García's presidency (2006-2011), the official discourse sharpened its anti-Indigenous protest rhetoric (Millones 2016; Drinot 2014) to upend legitimate demands and criminalize Indigenous individuals and groups. Such discursive delegitimization informs today's accusations of being a terrorist (the previously mentioned "terruqueo") or communist for believing in social and economic equity. Not coincidentally, similar delegitimizing tactics work in the U.S.

While national and transnational economic powers orchestrate dispossessions and global philanthropic organizations practice (re)mediations, women's resistance like Máxima's "forms part of a mostly unspectacular but constant struggle" (Scott 6). Acuña can only rely on her

¹⁴ HAWAPI is an independent cultural association that takes interdisciplinary artists to specific locations to conduct research and produce interventions in public space. www.hawapi.org/homepage-eng

immediate circle, far from the buzz of celebration. Writing about Andean women’s resistance in Peru and Ecuador, Katy Jenkins notes that anti-mining narratives are “rarely concerned with large-scale protests, transnational activism, and the spectacular, but rather depend on daily resistance and resilience in, often fractured, local communities” (1442), and emphasizes the need to look beyond the spectacular. Environmental celebratory global discourses have pressed Indigeneity to the frontlines against climate change into a sort of planetary defense mechanism when in reality Indigenous groups remain the most vulnerable to natural and human-driven disasters. Máxima’s mediatized defiance has become a symbol of resistance in Peru and elsewhere—in WhatsApp, an emoji of Máxima’s high fist salute reads “lo Máxima”—but in doing so she also joins a long list of public figures whose livelihoods often suffer irremediable consequences.



Images from *Máxima* (2020) Claudia Sparrow ©



Images from *Máxima* (2020) Claudia Sparrow ©

*Mercurial Coloniality for/through Humans and Other-than-Humans in Máxima (2020) by
Claudia Sparrow*

Teocuitlatl (*gold*): From *teōtl* (*god*), *cuitlatl* (*excrement*) the gods excrement

Ten years from now, twenty years from now, you will see, oil will bring us ruin... It is the devil's excrement.
—Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonzo, Venezuela's oil minister in the early 1960

Gold and oil dyad as god's and devil's excrement appears to be self-fulfilling prophecies of an Earth transmogrified from paradise into the apocalypse. However, unlike oil, gold obsession reeks of unfettered colonial imagination fed by tales of treasures, such as “El Dorado.” In 1799, with special permission from the flailing Spanish crown, given the colonies were limited to Spanish officials and Catholic missionaries, the German geographer and naturalist

Alexander von Humboldt left Coruña for the Americas on the ship Pizarro. His permit explicitly mentioned his role in the exploration of mines and he is believed to have said that “Peru is a beggar sitting on a bench of gold.” This metaphor also resonates with what came to be known as “the resource curse” or the “poverty paradox.” A theory extensively debated by development and economy specialists in the 1950s, it argued that countries with significant natural resources, such as oil or gold, eventually succumb to corruption, violence, autocracy, and further impoverishment. Writing about “La Rinconada,” Marie Arana reports that “for every gold ring that goes out into the world, 250 tons of rock must move, a toxic pound of mercury will spill into the environment, and countless lives—biological and botanical—will struggle with the consequences” (Dreaming of El Dorado).

History abounds with references to gold as a symbol of power, whether divine, imperial or both. Although human fascination for gold had an early beginning, it fueled the colonial enterprise like no other riches. Some *fun facts* about gold include being the most malleable metal; an ounce of gold can be beaten into a thin sheet measuring roughly 100 square feet. Gold is used on NASA astronaut's helmet visors to fend off solar radiation. Its refractive power made possible the iconic image of the Man on the Moon. An ounce stretched into a thin wire measuring five micrometers (equal to 0.005 mm) thick, can reach 50 miles, the distance between San Francisco and San José in California. More than half of the world's gold supply has been extracted in the last sixty years, and only twelve percent ends in technological machinery while jewelry accounts for seventy-eight percent.¹⁵

In *Máxima's* opening scene, the camera glides over a seemingly peaceful landscape, hovering over a medium size mountain (subtitled “the Andes, Peru”). The cinematic view is

¹⁵ According to the American Museum of Natural History, www.amnh.org/exhibitions/gold/eureka/gold-fun-facts

quickly interrupted by an aerial shot showing roads and what seems to be a campsite. The music, initially a soft wintry note, grows in crescendo to a baritone string that culminates with a full view of the open pit mine, (subtitled “the second largest gold mine in the world...”) surrounded by a dispersed set of Lego-like little trucks, square-shaped buildings and oxidized water sitting at the bottom (subtitled “is running out of its precious metal”). The narrative returns to a pristine set of small creeks and then a lake (“but there is an obstacle”), followed by Máxima Acuña’s profile. The camera then faces her as she looks to the horizon. Chirping birds and a reddish sun accompanied by the diegetic sound of running water suggests Máxima’s day has just begun.

Historians estimate that Atahualpa’s ransom offered to Pizarro during the siege of Cajamarca in 1533 amounted to over two hundred thousand ounces of gold, and twice that amount of silver (Bernstein 2000). Its current value would equal over three hundred million dollars. Atahualpa and Pizarro’s so-called encounter has been the topic of serious, conjectural and creative explorations from the very onset, although all initial accounts come from Christian Spanish military sources, which deeply informed their interests and perspectives (Lamana 2019). By 2000, Minera Yanacocha S.A. estimated gold reserves amounted to approximately thirty-seven million ounces at an average cost of US \$88 per ounce, one of the lowest in the world, which a decade later produced seven and a half million ounces of gold (Bury 2004), or about forty Atahualpa gold ransom, equaling thirteen billion dollars (own calculation). Despite the “canon minero,”¹⁶ mining generated wealth destined to local and regional arcs, 16 of poorest 20 districts in Peru are located in Cajamarca.¹⁷

¹⁶ The Peruvian Ministerio de Minas y Finanzas defines the Canon Minero as the economic benefit local and regional governments receive from mineral extraction. For more information, see www.mef.gob.pe/es/?option=com_content&language=es-ES&Itemid=100959&lang=es-ES&view=article&id=454

¹⁷ Information gathered from the Instituto Peruano de Economía, IPE. See <https://www.ipe.org.pe/porta/cajamarca-la-region-de-oro-con-mayor-pobreza-en-el-peru/>

From *Máxima* (2020) Claudia Sparrow ©



From *Máxima* (2020) Claudia Sparrow ©

The stakes of the Atahualpa-Pizarro encounter—in which masculine power, divinity and gold prevailed—make it the cornerstone of the colonial imagination, a fantastic brand especially propelled by William Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Peru* with over 245 editions in multiple languages (Lamana 2008 138). In this tale, upon hearing the Spanish Crown’s grand mission and requirements, Atahualpa replied: “I will be no man’s tributary. I am greater than any prince on earth... For my faith, I will not change it. Your God, as you say, was put to death by the very men he created” (206). Despite any narrative ornamentations, this power encounter was predominantly about imperial male business, hierarchical ways of conceiving, dominating and organizing life. For Máxima, Earth is a mother: “Yo lo considero la Tierra, yo lo amo la Tierra como si fuera mi madre,” an organicist relationality that permeates most Latin American Indigenous cultures, and increasingly inform feminist movements and “the possibility of incorporating a defense of the rights of nature as a defense of other kinds of life” (Silva-Santisteban 113).

Within the sweeping change brought by colonization, the masculine encounter between Pizarro-Atahualpa was integral to “the codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of ‘race’” (Quijano 2000). For Mignolo, “secular ‘whiteness,’ and both theological and secular ‘patriarchy’ were established as the point of reference to rank both the population of the planet and the different criteria for knowing and understanding” (2011 179). Referring to the works of Guaman Poma and Inca Garcilaso as counter writings, Gonzalo Lamana argues that their main difficulty “was not only how to make Spaniards understand the Andean culture, correcting the record, but more importantly how to make people who saw the world through whiteness realize they did this when words and concepts like ‘racism’ and ‘whiteness’ did not yet exist” (62). The Newmont-Máxima Acuña binary highlights the

persistent magnitude of racial and gendered hierarchies centuries later. Although *Máxima* does not present herself as an Indigenous woman—given the stigmatization and predominance of peasant identity—the unrelinquishing defense of her Cajamarca land and water is precisely what has made her the target of both harassment and violent attacks from private and public actors as well as recognition nationally and worldwide.

Máxima offers an in-depth yet collected glimpse of Acuña's struggle against Newmont. The narrative is cleverly paced; it unravels slowly during the first half-hour, builds up momentum to parallel the conflict, and finishes on a somber note, offering the viewer very little resolution. Although the documentary film highlights several uplifting and triumphant moments, it maintains a sober skepticism by revisiting points of downward inflection. Few close-ups, a vast majority of horizontal frames, and frequent aerial views convey a versatile gaze that is evidently aware of the power imbalance. These plays of scale and aerial movements could also suggest the colonial gaze surveying space in order to assess it as a site of production.

Since *Máxima* received the GEP award, and the documentary has premiered, she has become a global symbol of resistance and environmental justice. To emphasize *Máxima*'s courage and dignity, Sparrow avoids the pitfalls of violence pornography. In general, Peruvian mediatized Indigenous and peasant protests, especially under the centralized, urban and condescending press gaze, almost always become spectacles of suffering, or just backfire as obstacles to progress and development. It is noteworthy that Sparrow's gaze highlights several quotidian moments: *Máxima* tending to her animals; dyeing the collected wool; weaving and selling at the open market. In two other scenes, *Máxima* asks her lawyer Mirtha Vásquez if she should take off her hat, while during a flight from Cajamarca to Lima, *Máxima* comments to her husband on the outrageous cost of a water bottle.

Explicit physical violence against Maxima remits to two footage scenes recorded by witnesses. The first depicts the events of August 2011, when a group of policemen, who at the moment were under contract for Yanacocha, attempt to forcefully evict Maxima and her family from her land. While Maxima is dragged by the police, her daughter, Hilda, falls unconscious after suffering a head concussion during the struggle. In another scene--cell phone footage recorded by Mirtha Vasquez, Maxima's lawyer in national courts—Maxima shows her bruised upper arms while narrating her testimony. In the film, the role of Vasquez not only amplifies Maxima's voice but also serves as a powerful example of female solidarity. Vasquez then suggests that Hilda's unconscious state forced the police to retreat, who otherwise would have successfully evicted the Acuña family without repercussions.

The circumstances of Cajamarca then and now, that is, the hostage scenario of conquest about five centuries ago, and Newmont's preemptive treatment of Cajamarca and Maxima's land both highlight the violent incommensurability of power. By being inherently unequal, one side can actually hold the other hostage, while sequestering land, resources, livelihood and futures. Situating whiteness and masculinity at the center of the colonial matrix of power in Cajamarca/gold highlights the interlocking role of race and gender in producing such power inequality then and now. In one scene, a tearful Maxima narrates how she's constantly reminded not to fight the mining company: "You are just an ant while Yanacocha is an elephant." In the long run, Maxima alongside many other global defenders in precarious conditions represents incredibly resilient but temporary and fragmented resistance. As long as the structural inequality remains the same, the bitter reality is that, as obstacles, they will eventually be extracted or buried.

Although Máxima's voice dominates the documentary, Sparrow's choice for the first three individuals to appear on camera seems at first counterintuitive. Keith Slack from Oxfam America;¹⁸ Peter Koenig,¹⁹ economist and former World Bank employee; and Marco Simons from Earth Rights International, three highly educated white American men elaborate on the dangers and challenges mining poses primarily for peasant, Indigenous and poor populations. However, this frontal gaze upon experts on development, economics and the law lays out the documentary's fundamental goal: to reveal the immense power that corporations such as Newmont hold. As a chorus behind Máxima, this white male triangulation is potentially more effective in voicing a critique of the Peruvian government and U.S. imperialism than the frustration, complaints and protests of those at the margins.

Throughout the documentary, Máxima voices the many violences she endured since 2011. She recounts Yanacocha's legal claim against her family; the police incursion and brutality; and how Cajamarca's corrupt local court sentenced her family to four years in jail, stipulating that additionally she ought to pay for economic reparations and return the property to Yanacocha. She also narrates the destruction of her potato crops, missing cattle and the killing of her dog, Micky, by two Yanacocha trucks.

Overall, lawyer Mirtha Vásquez's voice serves to amplify Máxima's, or at times, the two women's voices complement each other. In several scenes, after Máxima narrates some of the violent events with vivid anger and frustration, Mirtha follows with the legal counterpart or expands about next moves and strategies. However, the film also makes room for Mirtha's personal story: since becoming Máxima's lawyer, Mirtha tells she has received multiple threats

¹⁸ Oxfam is a global organization focused on alleviating poverty. See www.oxfamamerica.org/about/our-history/

¹⁹ Koenig is the author of *Implosion – An Economic Thriller about War, Environmental Destruction and Corporate Greed*, based on his 30-year work experience at the World Bank.

herself, and even her children have been followed by strangers. Fighting tears, she reflects on how her decision to counsel Maxima has not only changed her life but also made her vulnerable.

The lowest point in the documentary is not the scenes involving physical violence against Maxima, or her angry and tearful testimonies, but one of her most collected expressions: “Esto es muerte a pausas” (this is death by pauses). Similar to Rob Nixon’s concept of *slow violence*, Sparrow seems interested in highlighting not only Maxima’s long struggle but also the long run of extractive activities. Despite gold mining’s dramatic transformation of landscapes, soils, and water bodies, its effects are rather “incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (Nixon 2). Gold mining corporations exact revenues across generations, making sure to *give back* to the communities and visibilize their green efforts, but the inherent coloniality that organizes and allows their machinations in specific racialized geographies requires slow violence to guarantee enough tension without fully snapping. *Maxima’s* representational and narrative strategies reveal the relative invisibility of slow violence.

In her critique of the Peruvian gastronomic boom--which ran parallel to the mining boom, both fomented by the office of PromPeru--anthropologist Maria Elena Garca proposes the concept of the *settler-colonial sublime* as “the aesthetic alchemy through which the terrors of dispossession and colonial violence are transformed into pleasure [and] innocence” (22). Garca examines renowned Peruvian chef Virgilio Martnez’s *discoveries* of the Peruvian unknown regarding his culinary emporium and the larger gastronomic explosion, demonstrating the nimble colonial underpinnings connecting the extractive and the gastronomic booms that fueled the economic Peruvian miracle in the *postconflict*. While for wealthy, world-class educated white

Peruvians like Martínez—the owner of Central,²⁰ top restaurant in Latin America and sixth in the world—Peru *tastes* like (g)astronomical wonders in a landscape of vertical flavors, a recent study by the Ministerio de Salud²¹ reported that 43% of Peruvian children below three years old suffer anemia, and another high percentage has high levels of mercury, arsenic or lead.

The famous Rainbow Mountain in Quispicanchis, Cusco, could also be a case of settler-colonial sublime. At 17,100 feet above sea level, global warming has melted the icecap of a glacier, turning it into a tourist attraction for its multicolor stripes. In 2015, the Canadian Camino Minerals Corporation submitted and obtained a mining concession in Lima to extract lithium. Although a series of public protests derailed the mining project, the mountain remains a popular attraction. While in this case climate change has exposed the mountain's bittersweet beauty, the temporal scrutiny over its mineral deposits threatens its subliminal value. Between the fascination for rare metals and climate change displayed on full color-spectrum threads an alchemy of beautiful coloniality at work.

The political armed conflict between 1980-2000 extracted 70,000 Peruvians from the national body, a majority of them Quechua speakers, from peasant and Indigenous populations. Anti-Indigenous sentiments also translated into gendered forms of physical and symbolic violence: sexual violence, torture, and rape (Boesten 2014; Theidon 2013); and government-sponsored forced sterilizations (Villegas 2017), extraction of the reproductive health of poor and peasant Indigenous women's bodies disguised as family planning. These same anti-Indigenous sentiments combined with misogyny allowed comedian Jorge Benavides's profitable mediatized representation of a savage Indigenous woman for over two decades through his character called

²⁰ Ranking from www.theworlds50best.com/

²¹ *Documento técnico - plan nacional para la reducción y control de la anemia materno infantil y la desnutrición crónica infantil 2017-2021*. See www.bvs.minsa.gob.pe/local/MINSA/4189.pdf

“La paisana Jacinta.” Highlighting the spectacular Peruvian miracle of the *postconflict* has invisibilized the continuity of dispossession against racialized populations.

How can we trace and understand the continuity of material and discursive extractivism affecting racialized bodies and territories in Peru in the last two decades? The multiplicity of transnational circuits facilitating certain transfers in specific directions and to certain bodies requires a fluid analytical frame to account for such organized disparity. I propose the concept of *mercurial coloniality* as a theoretical frame that allows me to address three main ideas: how material and discursive extractivism co-constitute each other; how race, gender, and capitalism coincide in specifically racialized geographies in the Americas; and how certain languages (English, Spanish, and the Law) privilege some groups over others, or activate, delay or im/mobilize these circulations. As an organizing metaphor for the ever-changing figurations, ghosts, and afterlives of colonial pasts, it also denotes coloniality’s liminality and the impossibility of containment as it travels through human and more-than-human bodies.

Liminal, ever-changing, shape-shifting, *mercurial coloniality* penetrates not only the land but also air and water ecologies while morphing into normative codes, languages, and trade agreements, actively recreating and updating itself into larger-than-life bodies, such as corporations and the spectral land of transnational laws. Taking the shape of its container, it plunders mountains, depletes soils, poisons rivers, and trashes oceans, while it holds children hostage, mass-incarcerates Black and Brown bodies, and expels disposable immigrants. Refractive, volatile and dense, it distorts community land tenure (Bury 2005), legalizes land-grabbing (Özsu 2019), and supposedly levels the legal field. Despite the “justice cascade,” a sequence of legal victories for human rights in Latin America, and several peasants and Indigenous groups’ wins against transnational extractive corporations in Peru, such as Hudson

Bay and XTRATA, the expenses, lengthiness, and the legal language complexity, makes initiating and carrying a legal demand the exception.

As Indigenous leaders Tania Pariona, Ketty Marcelo, and Melania Canales argue, the Constitution as the fundamental law of the nation has never included or even considered Indigenous groups' opinions. The 1993 Constitution created under Fujimori's dictatorship has further disenfranchised Indigenous and Native populations in the organization and management of their territories. In the case of international law, Antony Anghie argues that it is “the grand project that has justified colonialism as a means of redeeming the backward, aberrant, violent, oppressed, undeveloped people of the non-European world by incorporating them into the universal civilization” (732), thus justifying intervention and conquest.

Máxima Acuña's fight against Newmont is paradigmatic of the many acts of violence Peruvian Indigenous, peasant, and marginalized women confront, the violence of colonial legacies. In her gendered examination of extractive industries in Peru, Rocío Silva-Santisteban identifies the multiplicity of events and processes extractivism unfolds, including stigmatization and criminalization of environmental defenders, local sexism and violence, symbolic disposability, *machinarios* (compound of macho and machine), and government normativity that excludes women (12). As bio-politics, extractivism occurs in alignment with the male-dominated, centralized agents of power who control and make decisions over the territory and its livelihoods. Peru is not so different from the global masculinization trend of land property, as 79% of agricultural land belongs to men (31), meaning that the big decisions are a masculine endeavor.

In the documentary, Mirtha Vásquez highlights that Newmont did not expect a woman like Máxima could twist their arm. Acuña's struggle thus visibilizes the hyper-masculine

colonial matrix of power. Indigenous and peasant women bear the cumulative casualties of dispossession, such as “colonial land theft; the individualizing and masculinizing of property; and the experience of continuing to be the primary tillers of the land under increasingly inclement circumstances, including soil erosion” (Nixon 140). However, even when women like Máxima succeed against overpowering entities, Peruvian elites running national politics and the private sector--institutions also deeply shaped by colonial and republican aristocracy--can in months undo years of progress. How could coloniality have ever left? Where or when would it go?



From *Máxima* (2020) Claudia Sparrow ©



Newmont's latest civil lawsuit accuses the Acuña family of several illegal trespasses between October 2017 and June 2020, which “involved land plowing, planting, and in one case the erection of a structure on company-owned lands” (Newmont website). Meanwhile, three decades after Yanacocha flooded Choropampa with almost two hundred fifty pounds of mercury, many community members continue suffering from illnesses and different cancers, while children complain of body aches and nosebleeds. How does coloniality/modernity fit in such disparate accusations, lawsuits, and defense arguments? What is more colonial than gold transformed into paper currency and power while the metal is withheld elsewhere?

Coloniality/modernity dialectics as conceptual separations or suspensions have been instrumental in revealing the bi-dimensional unfolding of colonialism and its workings into modernity and the present. However, this distinction seems insufficient when addressing not only the complexity but also the randomness and intensities of coloniality into multiple temporalities and geographies. Conceptually, *mercurial coloniality* can help fill up the nooks and cracks where

reversals, tensions, and breakdowns cannot simply be understood as ‘either-or.’ Missing here, present elsewhere, *mercurial coloniality* surfaces and submerges in distinct temporalities and spaces.

In a later scene of *Máxima*, as the U.S. Earthrights legal team prepares to appeal a court decision dismissing the case for the defense in the U.S., the camera follows Máxima strolling through the streets of Washington D.C. She is wearing her distinctive straw hat and polleras; in fact, she never wears anything else. Máxima bitterly reflects on the magnitude of the disparity between her Andean world and this one—metal and concrete-laden, clean and organized—where her rights, beliefs, and aspirations might prevail. Looking up and down, studying the World Bank building, Máxima gets emotional: “Si aquí ya tienen todo, ¿por qué les voy a dar mi tierra?”

Conclusions

While the health crisis in Peru has placed inequality under macroscopic lenses, the politically divided country will decide between two extremes: Keiko Fujimori and her “mano dura para volver a rescatar al Perú” (Del Águila), and Pedro Castillo, a Cajamarquino whose plan includes nationalizing the gas megaproject of Camisea and whose slogan reads “No más pobres en un país rico.” During the second presidential debate, candidate Ciro Gálvez from the Runa party offered several of his responses in Quechua, calling his opponents “liars, corrupted and evil” (Villaruel) while no one among the group understood his messages. Castillo, who skipped the debate as he was recovering from Coronavirus, would have been the only one able to understand Gálvez.

Máxima Acuña, gold mining, and now Pedro Castillo have symbolically placed Cajamarca—and by extension other Peruvian provinces—at the center of Peru. In this political

context, Sparrow's documentary has reignited and amplified the scope of Acuña's struggle while also highlighting the role of women's solidarity despite borders, occupations, hierarchies, and languages. Moreover, the documentary validates and reinvigorates the claims of many Indigenous and peasant women protesting against transnational extractive megaprojects and other forms of injustice sponsored by the captured Peruvian State, claims historically ignored as background noise in the grand Eurocentric symphony of Peruvian progress primarily orchestrated from Lima. Through a series of refusals—to accommodate powerful interests, to submit herself to the usual ways of men's business, and above all, to stay silent and relegated—*Máxima* set a precedent of epistemic disobedience, which *Máxima* depicts accurately while criticizing the brotherhood of power.

Using *mercurial coloniality* to examine *Máxima*, this analysis emphasizes the ever-becoming and co-constitutive complexity of power, race, and gender. Acuña's struggle against Newmont makes clear how anti-racist and anti-sexist activism are intrinsically related when it comes to social struggles for environmental justice. Building upon the work of Mignolo and the decolonial school of thought, *mercurial coloniality* also points toward conceptual analyses that embrace epistemic disobedience and border thinking beyond binaries. Instead of collapsing the temporality of Cajamarca events then and now, this research is interested in showing coloniality's organicist continuity, transformative power, but also the potential of cumulative epistemic disobediences to delink from systemic inequality, taking hold in the smaller interstices and events of the everyday.

Chapter 4

Unruly and Lopsided: The Geopolitics of Transnational Digital Feminist Solidarity

It was a different kind of vision of yourself that you experience in a truly ethical encounter, a kind of co-witnessing that enables people not only to mirror back pain but also to implicate one another in our survival (xi)

—Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals*

‘Hermana’ is the standard treatment among women at ONAMIAP (Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú).²² When I began participating in their workshops and collaborating in 2015, most of them extended me the same treatment. At first, I felt confused. Growing up in Cusco, I had attended an all-girl catholic school, thus I connected this type of sorority with religious institutions. Noticing my reaction, Tania Pariona Tarqui (Quechua) and Rosa Palomino (Aymara), from the younger and older generations of leaders respectively, explained to me that their sisterhood stemmed from their communal struggle as Peruvian women, to which I was welcome.

Five years of learning and unlearning later, I realize how my old condescending and paternalistic Peruvian mestizo gaze could remain hidden beneath my new gaze in the making: the acquired researcher/colonial gaze. As an immigrant and racialized woman of color in the U.S., I now may have more in common with these Peruvian women than when I lived in Cusco.

²² For an examination of ONAMIAP’s emergence, prominent role as national women-only Indigenous organization and history of collaboration see Rousseau & Morales (2017); Sieder & Barrera (2017); Chicmana (2020); Valdivia (2020).

However, the inherent inequality of occupying different geographies, social locations, political structures, while being enmeshed in distinct discourses on culture, diversity and inclusion—in sum the vast geopolitics between the Global North and South—places us in very unequal terms. Thus, the relevance of decolonial thought and methodologies and why they cut across my research and pedagogy. I had to decolonize my previous ideas of citizenship, belonging, linguistic privilege among many others, while being aware of how residual notions could inform my current scholarly expertise. Everytime I talk to Tania Pariona, Rosa and Yenny Palomino, Olinda Silvano, Melania Canales, Ketty Marcelo or Hilda Pérez, I look forward to calling them and being called hermana.

So much has been said about Indigenous women without them. Through digital storytelling, this last chapter centers on the experience of Peruvian Indigenous women in their roles and reflections on leadership within and beyond their communities. Following Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s reframe methodology, collaborative digital storytelling allows for “greater control over the ways in which indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled” (153). Peruvian research and ethnography on Indigenous issues remain affected by the ‘Indian problem’ tinted lens. While co-creating archives that counter stereotypical narratives of Indigenous women, an additional goal of these digital stories lies in their pedagogical potential. Given the U.S. ‘racial reckoning’ after the killing of George Floyd, and the stark Peruvian polarization between the political right and left, digital stories can be innovative material and methodology that connect with contemporary youth to facilitate dense discussions on gender and race both in the U.S. and Peru.

For many collaborating activists, leaders, and scholars, the pandemic has corroborated that transnational solidarity cannot happen without digital means. The collaborative storytelling production I initially envisioned and proposed to ONAMIAP leaders back in 2015 changed course over the years of completing this dissertation, mainly due to the lack of funding for a second trip and the inherent hastiness of graduate school. Of the seven, three digital stories were posted on ONAMIAP's Youtube channel, fulfilling the ultimate stage of true collaboration, while the rest contributed only to my research. Even when funding happens, participatory ethnography implies other untimely challenges before, during, and after the process. Although the collaborative project did not become what I thought it would be, a triumphant collection of Indigenous women's empowerment stories, its deviation bespeaks of the promising yet lopsided potential of transnational feminist solidarity between North/South situated geopolitics, as well as the limitations of digital ethnography itself.

On the other hand, the pandemic has prompted more digital and mediatized forms of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary programming, opening up other unique opportunities for collaboration. Responding to a call by the UC Davis Hemispheric Institute on the Americas seeking graduate student initiatives, together with fellow graduate students Carlos Tello from Native American Studies and Lucía Luna-Victoria from History, we proposed a panel with Tania Pariona, Ketty Marcelo, and Melania Canales. Our main goals centered on maximizing our guest speakers' time, designing the event with language accessibility in mind for English and Spanish speaking audiences, and extending the invitation to non-academic communities both in the U.S. and Peru. Thus, our collaboration involved posing open questions to our guest speakers, using our privileged institutional space and economic resources to amplify their knowledge,

disposition, and time, and fostering public dialogue on the current Peruvian political environment.

Finalizing the current research with a digital ethnographic component seemed like a reasonable methodology to disrupt the researcher/colonial gaze and Eurocentric text-centered canon six years ago. Yet, I now see collaboration and stories as only the first step in a never-ending process. In “Slow ethnography: A hut with a view” (2015), anthropologist Liza Grandia recalls the words of a Maya leader, whose name, unfortunately, escapes her: “We are organizing for the next five hundred years, not the next five” (312). Reflecting on the snail’s pace of the Zapatista ‘caracol’ process, Grandia argues that a decolonial ethnography can “only come of slow, mindful, long-lasting relationships of consequence” (313). Despite being trivialized, silenced, delegitimized, or criminalized, Indigenous political and cultural agency has become ever more influential in Latin America, fueled in part by Indigenous women’s greater participation.

In this chapter, I first outline some general trends in participatory media and digital storytelling as pedagogical tools for critical race and Indigenous studies. I then offer two representative examples of such projects in Peru, the *Quipu Project* and *PeruDigital.org*, pointing to the possibilities and limitations of academic research and collaborative media as competing agendas and objectives meet physical and virtual boundaries. This analysis serves me as a comparative frame to reflect on how I initially envisioned the collaboration with women from ONAMIAP to how the meaning-making creative process had to be negotiated and adapted according to emerging challenges. Focusing on Olinda Silvano (Shipibo-Konibo), Hilda Pérez Mancori (Ashaninka), and Rosa Palomino Chahuares (Aymara) digital stories, I examine their narratives of individual and collective leadership from their Indigenous communities to become

part of a larger national movement, and the layered negotiations in a context of dominant male leadership within and beyond their communities.

Digital Storytelling and Participatory Digital Ethnography

Since the 1990s, digital storytelling has become prominent as research and pedagogy methodology, especially in education (Wu & Chen 2020) as well as critical race studies and scholarly fields addressing race and racism: “Race(ing) stories: digital storytelling as a tool for critical race scholarship” (Rolón-Dow 2011); “Using Digital Storytelling to Unearth Racism and Galvanize Action” (Hess 2019); Digital Storytelling as Racial Justice: Digital Hopes for Deconstructing Whiteness in Teacher Education (Matías and Grosland 2016); “Imagining my ideal: a critical case study of digital storytelling as reflective practice” (Coggin et al 2019). Storytelling as Indigenous methodology (Smith 1990) has embraced digital means and platforms to advance Indigenous critical studies for research and pedagogy: “The Listening Key: Unlocking the Democratic Potential of Indigenous Participatory Media” (Waller 2015); "Indigenous Digital Storytelling in Video: Witnessing with Alma Desjarlais" (Iseke 2011); "Enunciation: Urban Indigenous Being, Digital Storytelling And Indigenous Film Aesthetics" (Dion & Salamanca 2018); "Community-Based Indigenous Digital Storytelling with Elders and Youth" (Iseke et al 2011); "Digital Storytelling: Capturing the Stories of Mentors in Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience" (Kervin et al 2021).

The question of how the concept of digital technology relates to the concept of Indigeneity in Peru must take into account the bigger issue of who has had access to information and communication media. Before the digital age in Latin America, as Angel Rama demonstrated, ‘la ciudad letrada’ has been the privileged site of knowledge production,

circulation, and consumption (1984), which additionally have historically been a male-dominated endeavor. While the primarily masculine and urban Peruvian intellectuality was preoccupied with populating the nation's cultural imaginaries, it similarly maintained a zealous gaze over the racialized and gendered bodies and their role in the construction of the nation-state.

Paraphrasing the Carlisle School principle behind U.S. Native American boarding schools “kill the Indian, save the man,” the predominant view of Indigenous Peru has been “kill the Indian, save the Inca.” Inca nostalgia follows what Svetlana Boym calls “restorative nostalgia,” an urge to “return to national symbols and myths” (41) to fulfill historical memory. In this account, while Peruvian Indigenous women might have very well been the social, economic and cultural backbone of the nation, their contribution has rarely been acknowledged much less included.

When considered, as Indigenous expert, leader, and activist Tarcila Rivera Zea points out in CHIRAPAQ's annual report *Nada sobre nosotras sin nosotras* (2015), Indigenous women figure as “annexes, addendums, citations, and phrases, generally included in the ‘vulnerable sectors’ section in order to provide documentation with color and diversity. We have recognized the need to build for ourselves to avoid being represented, interpreted and placed as part of the discourse” (5). Since their founding, both leading Indigenous women organizations, CHIRAPAQ (Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú) and ONAMIAP have extensively deployed digital technologies and social media.

In the last two decades, digital technologies have become vital tools in articulating Indigenous issues and movements of intra- and transnational scope in Latin America. However, making a video of Indigenous peoples is not the same as making a video for and with Indigenous peoples. As Jennifer Gómez Menjívar and Gloria Elizabeth Chacón note, “even as the concept of

‘communicative sovereignty’ (Reilly 2016) has surfaced in political and academic spheres across Abiyala/Latin America, analyses of information technology have centered on non-Indigenous sectors in the nation-states of the region. Specialists on new media have omitted contemporary Indigenous experience from their studies of digital theory and media ecology” (10). This reflection complicates not only the question of sovereignty but also situated knowledge, institutions, and distinct goals in a collaborative digital storytelling project.

Few approaches to digital ethnography in Peru point to these conundrums of mediated collaborative interventions. Examining the Quipu Project (quipu-project.com), an interactive, multimedia documentary on unconsented sterilization in Peru, Matthew Brown and Karen Tucker recognize the potential and limits of digital technologies and research. Among the latter, the authors recognize the geographic, social, and linguistic divides, and the challenge of streamlining collaboration: “Quipu’s many partners—the sterilized people, academics, activists, documentary-makers, creative technologists and activists—have all come to the project with their own expectations, their own politics, and their own ideas about what the project could and should achieve” (1193). Although the researchers conclude that participatory media can foster greater engagement, they highlight that relationships with participants “still need to be nurtured; time and space still need to be carved out for trust-building, learning and meaning-making amongst research partners. The dangers of sacrificing depth for reach, inherent in digital projects, may make an investment in research relations even more valuable” (1199).

The second case of digital ethnography in Peru is PeruDigital.org, a cultural website that presents the culture and history of Peru’s festivals and related folklore (Kim & Underberg 2011). According to the project description, the main methodology, participatory design, brings together “multidisciplinary experts and actual users to see how they collaborate with each other” (22).

Their conclusions ring similar digital alarms: While PeruDigital is successful in transforming “the understanding of real-life Peruvian festivals into digital domains... it lacked an appropriate match between visuals and text in the pilot project in terms of the perspective of the anticipated audience due to the gaps between the three researchers” (26). Between the complexities of digital ethnography itself and academic and non-academic collaboration as pulling forces, projects run the risk of becoming flat.

Whether fully anticipated or not, our ethnographic and mediatized interventions have an impact on the lives of those who we research. In “Decolonizing the Technological,” Maria Elena Duarte emphasizes the importance of considering “the multidimensional sensory, epistemic nature of digital systems and the ways Indigenous peoples live through their uses” (122). One direct approach, as Duarte continues: “We have to ask ourselves what makes a flourishing quality of life for Indigenous peoples in various places, given the current rhythms of globalization and the relationship of digital technologies to that quality of life” (Ibid.) In addition to posting the stories on ONAMIAP’s Youtube channel,²³ they have also been featured in events regarding territory and Indigenous women leadership. As my research took a fuller shape, I have realized that it should follow their lead, meaning being attentive not only to their mission and vision, but also the changing context of the broader Indigenous peoples and women’s struggle, which currently involves extractivism and climate change.

Although the relationship established with my collaborators has been made possible through a series of institutional mediations, i.e. ONAMIAP and UC Davis, collegial and personal friendships have been crucial in easing the process of collaboration. Renzo Aroni and Mary

²³ Olinda’s and Rosa’s digital stories are no longer available at ONAMIAP’s YouTube channel; Hilda’s can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRO_OqG9dLg&t=10s

Lobyl, with whom I shared curricular and extra-curricular activities as part of our shared interest in Peru and the Andes, introduced me to Indigenous leader and activist Tania Pariona Tarqui, back then, one of the youngest newly elected members to Congress. Tania, who had a trajectory of leadership since childhood in Ayacucho, not only shared with me her expertise but also opened her home to me. Traveling with Tania in Ayacucho, and Lima, witnessing each conversation with council members and community organizers, attending workshops by government and non-profit educators, and participating in small towns and barrio celebrations provided me with the greatest experience on what it means to be an Indigenous woman leader no academic book could have.

Adapting Digital Storytelling, Meaning Making and Meeting Halfway

According to the University of Houston *Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling* website, digital storytelling “is the practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories... they all revolve around the idea of combining the art of telling stories with a variety of multimedia, including graphics, audio, video, and web publishing” (www.digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu). A distinction of my collaborative project with women from ONAMIAP lies in the autobiographical narrative of the stories, centered on their trajectories of leadership from their Indigenous or native communities to ONAMIAP, and their aspirations for future generations.

I became familiar with digital storytelling through two projects, one as part of a Cultural Studies seminar, and the other with the UC Davis collaborative project, *Sexualidades Campesinas* (www.sexualidadescampesinas.ucdavis.edu), an initiative that generated a collective reflection (Lizarazo et al) and contributed to my understanding of the genre. In both cases, Joe Lambert’s *Digital storytelling: capturing lives, creating community* (2012) served as main

playbook for the digital story creating process, which provides a 7-step model (i.e. Step 1: Owning your insights; Step 2: Owning your emotions; Step 3: Finding the moment; Step 4: Seeing your story; Step 5: Hearing your story; Step 6: Assembling your story; Step 7: Sharing your story). A key aspect of Lambert's methodology lies in authorship as ownership: the resulting story "may achieve a larger impact or audience, but the honoring of each individual's process of authorship, and resulting control over the context of the story being shown, is critical. The storyteller ideally owns the stories, in every sense" (38).

As part of this ownership, ONAMIAP's priorities, workshop schedule, and participants availability made it necessary to adapt the creative process. Working on digital storytelling collaboration with transgender women in Mexico and Cuba, David Tenorio reflects that "whether finished or unfinished, linear or cyclical, digital storytelling opens up a necessary debate about the politics of listening and speaking in participatory media practices" (140). One of ONAMIAP's organizational strengths derives from a system of recurring extensive workshops addressing Indigenous women's most pressing issues, such as a sorority, public speaking, climate change, and territorial rights among others, in which Andean and Amazonian Indigenous women participate for several days.

Maximizing my listening meant making the most of my participation. Attending and participating in these workshops also allowed my collaboration to be an exercise of learning *with* them rather than learning *about* them. In what follows, I offer a reflection on three digital stories, each one representing a different geographic, gendered and social context.

Olinda Silvano: “El arte es vida”

The Cantagallo community and Olinda Silvano cannot be separated. The growing Shipibo-Konibo community established in the Rímac district in Lima in 2000, and its leader, artist and activist Olinda Silvano, exist and persist, echoing Sonya Atalay (2012), *with, by and for* each other. Olinda Silvano, whose name in Shipibo is Reshinjabe Inuma, comes from the Pahoyán native community, located in Bajo Ucayali, Loreto. The Shipibo-Conibo hyphenated name refers to the intermarried and intertwined traditions of two distinct groups that over the centuries are now nearly indistinguishable (Eakin et al., 1986), and as a native group are among the largest and most recognizable peoples of the Peruvian Amazon (Wali & Odland 2).

Olinda migrated to Lima as part of an Amazonian exodus forced by illegal extractive logging and mining at the turn of the century. Ever since, along with several recognized artists from ASHIREL, the Association of Shipibo Artists Living in Lima, Olinda has been featured in prominent national and international newspapers and online cultural pages, and has represented Peru in several international art festivals in Colombia, Mexico, Spain, Russia and Canada, mainly promoting and teaching Shipibo *kené* art.²⁴ A scheduled trip to present her work at UC Davis Native American Studies in February 2018 fell through when the Trump’s administration denied Silvano a visa.

Olinda begins her story introducing herself in Shipibo-Konibo, immediately going to the heart of her migrant story: “Hace 17 años estoy acá en Lima, la capital. Sigo trabajando acá;

²⁴ Kené in Shipibo-Conibo means “design” and encompasses “a variety of geometric patterns made by women on the surface of bodies and objects... [with] contrasting colors, heavy and fine brushstrokes, straight and curved lines, and filigree fillings, *kene’* designs constitute webs of complex compositions... The art of *kené*, however, is not exclusively a material and visible female art. It has an intangible existence intimately related to shamanism and plants. In order to make *kené*, women must first see *kené* in their thoughts in “*shinan*,” a concept that includes imagination and dreams” (Belaunde 2016 81). Belaunde also examines the association between *kené* designs and the traditional use of ayahuasca (2012).

venimos en busca de un poquito calidad de vida o para hacer la enseñanza de nuestros hijos.”²⁵

When we met in 2015, the Cantagallo community was in the middle of a pending relocation to the northern areas of Lima for the second time, as the administration intended to convert the landfill they occupied into a park. The relocation never took place. In the last four years the precarious conditions have caused two major fires. On November 4th 2016, the largest fire ravaged the community, affecting over two thousand people (Espinosa 172). In coordination with Olinda and a UC Davis group of scholars and colleagues, we led a fundraising campaign for Cantagallo, monies that provided a home for several families.



²⁵ “Since seventeen years ago, I have been living here in Lima, the capital. I keep working here; we come searching for a little more quality of life or for our children’s education” (own translation.)



Olinda Silvano ©

As the firstborn of Miguel Silvano Flores y Dora Inuma Ramirez, Olinda recognizes her leadership as a seamless extension of her family role: “Desde niña fui líder en mi hogar con mi familia.”²⁶ Russell Bishop suggests that digital storytelling as a research tool is a “useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the 'diversities of truth' within which the story teller rather than the researcher retains control” (24). Since the purpose of the collaborative storytelling was to emphasize Indigenous women’s leadership trajectories, participants reflected on important personal milestones. Following the storytelling frame, Olinda’s narrative of leadership integrates land tenure, her family’s hard-working tradition, to then highlight the transition from the prominent father figure to her becoming and staying as leader:

Quizá yo tendría 12 ó 13 años, pero como hija mayor mi papá me daba la oportunidad de cómo liderar su gente. Mi papá fue un hombre muy trabajador y hacíamos la chacra 3-4 hectáreas en la selva, porque en la selva hay un montón de terrenos. Cuando yo primera vez quería manejar como yo era niña ellos eran adultos, entonces yo veía que no me iban a hacer caso. Pero si tú eres buen líder, haces cosas buenas y pagas a la gente puntual, entonces a la gente no le interesa que seas niña, te siguen. Entonces trabajan, tú tienes que ver, andando, caminando y mirando quiénes están trabajando y qué no se está haciendo. Y trabajar juntos porque un líder no puede ser yo soy el mando y yo voy a estar mirando no más. No, tú también tienes que agarrar machete y seguir, entonces te siguen. Si tú no descansas, tampoco descansan ellos.²⁷

²⁶ “I have been a leader since childhood, in my home with my family” (own translation.)

²⁷ “I was about 12 or 13 years old, but as the oldest daughter, my father gave me the opportunity to lead his people. My father was a hard-working man and we used to work 3-4 acres in the jungle, because the jungle has plenty of fields. The first time I wanted to lead, since I was a girl and they were adults, I saw that they would not follow me. But if you are a good leader, you do good work and pay people timely, then people don’t mind if you are a kid and follow you. So they work. You have to observe, walk around

In a systematic review of digital storytelling, Wu and Chen (2020) identify five main digital storytelling orientations: appropriative, agentive, reflective, reconstructive, and reflexive. Although their analysis concerns educational digital storytelling, two categorizations resonate with the main goals of this research: agentive, “to engage storytellers to experience a certain degree of autonomy and self-directedness,” (5) and reflexive “refers to the experience where one negotiates and manages his/her understanding of self (and others)” (6). Olinda’s narrative also reflects how knowledge is not individual but a collective process gained from her father, her community and the land. This embodied understanding of interconnectedness is also reflected in Olinda’s strong collective work ethic.

While the open question on leadership trajectory offers participants the opportunity to *direct* the story, the inherent relationality of being a leader as an Indigenous woman outside the usual geographic and social landscape shapes the storytelling process with an exploration of identity:

Así hice mi trabajo, mi padre estuvo muy contento hasta que yo llegué a la capital y también agarré la dirigencia. Empezamos con el terreno que estamos en Cantagallo y hemos luchado tantos años. Éramos 270 familias, y ahora nos quedamos 230 familias. Algunos se reubicaron y algunos quedamos, los que queremos estar realmente en la capital. Cantagallo es una historia, es una comunidad nativa que lleva sus costumbres, que lleva su cultura y que tiene su colegio bilingüe.²⁸

watching who’s working and what needs to be done. And work altogether because a leader cannot be just bossing around and watching. No, you must grab the machete and keep going so they follow you. If you don’t rest, then they don’t rest” (translation mine.)

²⁸ “That is how I worked and my father was happy. I then arrived in the capital and became a leader. We began with the land we occupy in Cantagallo and have been fighting for it for many years. We used to be 270 families and now we are only 230 families. Some relocated and some stayed, the ones who truly want to be in the capital. Cantagallo is a story, a native community that carries its traditions and culture, and has its own bilingual school” (translation mine.)

In the same systematic review, Wu and Chen pinpoint the issue of “rosy picture of positive outcomes” in digital storytelling due to the novelty of the methodology and a lesser preference for negative results (9). When I asked Olinda if other Andean migrant groups had shown support for the Shipibo-Konibo cause, she told me exactly the opposite happened. Many favored the relocation measure believing the Cantagallo community had it too easy by being so close to the center of Lima. Although this information does not come through in the digital story, my questioning indeed anticipated a positive result but Olinda corrected me. In a 2017 interview for *Cultural Survival*, Olinda narrates the initial encounters of the Shipibo-Konibo with the hyper-racialized geography of Lima:

So many things happened to me when I arrived, a lot of humiliation, a lot of discrimination. People have a lot of wrong ideas about Shipibos, thinking we are beggars, that we will offer our bodies to anyone for money. Eventually, I began to see that I could use my art as a way to educate them about the richness of our culture... Cantagallo is the continuation of our living culture, a community that carries its identity proudly” (Verán).

In Cantagallo, women’s presence and activities compete with those of men, leading most of the cultural and artistic practices, including painting, pottery, crafts, as well as dance and music. Anthropologist Virginia Zavala notes that women in Cantagallo “not only use language more than men; they also interact in a way that displays their agency. Combining womanhood, language, and access to power through the production and sale of crafts, they have contributed to maintaining the nexus between language and ethnic identity in the city” (50). However, behind this seemingly empowering picture hides the reality of gendered labor inequality. In addition to their daily work, many Cantagallo women must contribute hours to the bilingual community

school. Founded and sustained by a group of dedicated mothers, women carry the majority of domestic labor, which Olinda does not hesitate to mention:

Ser una mujer líder, ser presidenta o ser secretaria no fue, no es fácil. Una mujer líder lidera a su hogar desde el comienzo con los niños, en la cocina, quehaceres en la casa. La mujer trabaja más que el hombre y así también aparte lidera a la comunidad.²⁹

Olinda's words manifest one of the greatest discrepancies Indigenous women have against feminist ideals pushing for gender equality. She voices the reality of most women, whose work is disproportionately greater than men's; if Indigenous women want to be effective leaders beyond the in domestic sphere, they must account for that reality of extra work to succeed.

Olga Mori Díaz, a mother of five kids, echoes Olinda's words, emphasizing the unique combination of work and children education opportunities women mothers have found in Cantagallo: "If we can rebuild our school in the new site and have enough space for a market where we can sell our own crafts, I'll be happy" (Guidi). In Cantagallo, "las mujeres sacan adelante a la comunidad" (Macahuachi et al 121), as evidenced by the ubiquitous work of several Shipibo-Konibo women artists in Lima, as well as their fundraising efforts during the fires, and the widely recognized bilingual school. The Shipibo-Konibo vitality is also a result of the community's active social media, especially through the Facebook page, "Comunidad Shipiba de Cantagallo."³⁰

²⁹ "To be a woman leader, president or secretary, it hasn't been and is not easy. A woman leader leads from her home, beginning with the children, in the kitchen and domestic chores. Women work more than men and in addition to this she also leads her community" (translation mine.)

³⁰ See www.facebook.com/limashipibo

It is nothing new that women have disproportionate wages and hours at work and at home, a condition that weighs even more for Indigenous women in urban spaces, not to mention the unequal treatment they have historically received by state officials. Although Cantagallo women artists stick together to promote their work collectively, they sporadically face suspicion and distrust from male leaders. During the initial fundraiser coordinated with Olinda and UC Davis colleagues, a male leader from Cantagallo, who somehow learned about our collaboration, contacted us questioning Olinda's prominent role, and suggesting that, since she was already participating in another local fundraising activity, we should rather coordinate with him.

As the first generation of Shipibo-Konibo, Olinda Silvano's decades of work and activism has shown her not only that women are the backbone of Cantagallo, but also that she is better supported by other women. Since I met her, Olinda's nonstop work has taken a toll on her health, suffering from diabetes, chronic pain and remnants of a back injury. Thus, is not surprising that she hopes for more women like her:

Ahora lo que quiero en mi futuro es querer llegar algún día ver a las mujeres indígenas que sean buenas líderes, seguir mi camino, verme cómo estoy logrando y ayudar a ellos, y todos los que no conocen Lima, todos los que nunca participan en la feria, darle oportunidades a las mujeres que no son conocidas y que ellas también tengan oportunidad de venir a Lima y ofrecer su trabajo, su cultura, su herencia y su conocimiento.³¹

³¹ "What I want in my future is to one day see other Indigenous women to become great leaders, to follow my path and see how I am doing it. Helping them and others who do not know Lima; those who never participate in the Fair give them opportunities; those women who are not known so they can also have the opportunity to come to Lima to offer their work, culture, their heritage and knowledge" (own translation.)

Nancy Gardner Feldman concludes that Shipibo-Konibo artists working in urban spaces such as Lima demonstrate how “visual arts and design can drive cultural, political, and economic awareness of indigenous communities in Peru” (51). While Olinda’s story highlights the combination of unique work, economic, and cultural prospects Shipibo-Konibo women *could* find in Lima, it also demonstrates the gendered dimension of labor implied in negotiating an Amazonian Indigenous identity in extremely competitive urban spaces. While her work ethic clearly stems from Indigenous collective understandings, it also reveals the invisible domestic labor women must fulfill and the reality that women must do much more work than men to be recognized.

Hilda: “Empoderada y sin vergüenza”

Hilda Pérez Mancori has been part of several organizations before joining ONAMIAP, where she currently serves as Vicepresident. Like Olinda, Hilda shares a broad Amazonian identity but comes from the Ashaninka native community of Shintoriato in the district of Perené, in Chanchamayo, Junín. As the largest Amazonian group according to the 2017 national census, the Ashaninka includes 520 native communities (INEI 17). The Ashaninka peoples have been widely recognized for a strong male collective organization through practices such as ayumpari or ayómpari, a system that encompasses several functions, such as social inclusion and male prestige (Varese 2006), and trade partnership and godparenting (Killick 2009). It is noteworthy that during the political armed conflict, Ashaninkas resisted both Shining Path and MRTA attacks by forming the “Ejército Ashaninka,” as well as rondas o comités de autodefensa (Espinosa 1993).

The political armed conflict not only devastated and instilled fear and distrust among Indigenous organizations (Rojas, 2016; Barrantes, 2006; CVR, 2003); it also hindered the emerging participation of women in the Amazon (Chicmana 74). In the last two decades, Amazonian women, in general, have gained considerable political space within and beyond their organizations (Rousseau & Morales 2015) and have found women-only organizations to be “a crucial space for developing leadership skills and advancing indigenous and women’s agendas” (Espinosa 2017 229). In 2014, Ashaninka leader Ruth Buendía received the Goldman Environmental Prize for protecting the Ene river by stopping the construction of a mega-dam. However, in the Ashaninka competitive male atmosphere, women’s security and access to resources still greatly depend on men (Veber 86). Hilda’s story offers an account of leadership negotiation within her native community, to two regional organizations, mixed CECONSEC (Central de Comunidades Nativas de la Selva Central) and women-only OMIASEC (Organización de Mujeres Indígenas de la Selva Central), to the nationally recognized women-only organization, ONAMIAP.



From Hilda Pérez ©

As president of the Club de Madres, Hilda's first leadership experience was indeed tied to prescient communal needs within gendered spaces. Oscar Espinosa identifies it as a "matter of the utmost importance for indigenous women leaders in their struggle against sexist discrimination and domestic violence" (2016 216). Unlike Olinda, whose story centers on art, culture, and showmanship, Hilda's reflection emphasizes the systemic limited opportunities Indigenous women initially face within their communities, and more importantly, the internalization of those difficulties as character traits, i.e., shyness:

En primer lugar, en mi comunidad me eligieron como presidenta del club de madres en asamblea comunal. En primer instante, como mujeres algunas veces tenemos temor de enfrentar y hablar y esa es la timidez. Pero gracias al apoyo de mi esposo que tengo, es maravilloso que él me ha ayudado a impulsarme a ser buen líder y dirigir a todas las mujeres para poder trabajar y tener mucha incentivación, conversación. A veces las mujeres asháninkas nosotras tenemos el temor de hablar, sugerir y opinar. ³²

In Hilda's original narrative, expressions such as "temor de hablar y enfrentar," "la timidez," and "mujeres tímidas" mean more than shyness, or at least, shyness due to fear. In a comparative analysis of Amazonian women's leadership in mixed and women-only organizations, Victoria Del Pilar Chicmana notes that several women expressed similar

³² "Initially, in my community assembly, I was elected as president of the Mothers Club. At first, like women sometimes we are afraid of confronting and speaking up, that is the shyness. However, thanks to my husband's support that I have, it is wonderful that he has helped me push myself to be a good leader and lead all the women to work with motivation [and] dialogue. Sometimes we Asháninka women are afraid of talking, suggesting and expressing our opinions" (translation mine.)

sentiments: “las mujeres antes tenían miedo de hablar en público o incluso, de ejercer un cargo” (93). Considering the broadly male predominance in Indigenous communities as well as in Ashaninka organizations, and the violence and fear during the years of political armed conflict, could *shyness* as an expression of subjectivity be the result of these compounded past experiences of sexism and violence? In addition to these historical and structural challenges, Spanish linguistic privilege over Indigenous languages sets an unequal field for Indigenous women, whose limited socialization affects their Spanish speaking skills.

While Olinda highlights the role of other Indigenous women in gaining access to educational and work opportunities within Limeño urban context, Hilda’s story threads her leadership in both her native community in Junín and in Lima-based ONAMIAP. This requires not only frequent traveling to sustain both networks but also a linguistic shift. Despite diverse efforts toward Indigenous languages revitalization, “proper Spanish” beliefs and the renewed practice of calling someone *motoso/motosa* to describe a linguistic marker of speaking an Indigenous language, still serve as forms of social policing, status assessment, and/or racialization in urban areas (Rousseau & Dargent 2019; Zavala 2019).



From Hilda Pérez ©

Hilda's emphasis on the challenges Indigenous women have to speak up also raises questions about the micro and macro aggressions that produce women's silence and the naturalized male embodiment and voicing of authority. In this regard, her story reveals the weight of male leadership on women's agency, authority, and self-esteem. After recognizing her husband's support, which suggests a productive force, Hilda denotes the imminent role played by Héctor Martín Manchi, president of CECONSEC in 2012, where Hilda served as Treasurer. Manchi, Hilda and several Ashaninka women agreed on the creation of CECONSEC' Concejo de la Mujer:

Después de eso de un congreso, me eligen como tesorera de la organización CECONSEC. También ahí gané experiencia. El presidente de la asociación Héctor Martín Manchi nos da el espacio que las mujeres también tienen que empoderarse a que sean buenos líderes en la gobernabilidad. Hay muchas experiencias que he llevado paso a paso. En la organización, el presidente nos seguía inculcando que nosotras debemos tener la igualdad de ellos. Claro, nosotras somos mujeres también tenemos capacidad de seguir adelante.³³

Two years later, CECONSEC's Concejo de la Mujer became OMIASEC in 2014, the women-only autonomous organization, with Hilda serving as President.



From ONAMIAP, National Women's March 2016 ©

³³ “After a congress, I was elected treasurer of the CECONSEC organization. I gained more experience, alongside its president, Héctor Martín Manchi. He made a space for us women to empower ourselves and become governance leaders. I have had many experiences step by step. The organization and the president kept pushing us to be equals. As women, we have the same capacity to continue forward” (translation mine.)

Hilda's affective narrative illuminates the complexity of Indigenous women's internalized conflict resulting from the compounded difficulties they must overcome if they want to speak up in their communities. According to the 2017 National Census of Peasant and Native Communities, 4-5% of peasant and native communities are presided by women (INEI 2017). In 2017, ONAMIAP, the non-profit association SER (Rural Educational Services), and Indigenous congress representative Tania Pariona made possible to amend articles 5, 6 and 19 of the Ley General de Comunidades Campesinas (Ley N° 24656) to guarantee a gender quota of women participation up to thirty percent (Aguilar 11). What women experience as shyness encompasses a structure of social, cultural, and economic barriers shaped by the colonial matrix of power (Quijano 2016) as co-constitutive of Indigenous women's invisibility and silence. However, the fact that Hilda addresses these barriers and now trains other women in Lima and her community represents a rupture from imposed submission. It also conveys that Indigenous women's freedom of expression is intrinsically the freedom to transmit knowledge.



From ONAMIAP, FOSPA ©

Rosa Palomino: “Mi aymara nunca se termina”

When I contacted ONAMIAP, Rosa Palomino was not included in the programming. Due to her age, she could not afford the craggy twenty-hour-plus bus trip from Puno to Lima. The organization could not afford a flight ticket, so her daughter Yeny Palomino, who has majored in Communications at the Universidad Nacional del Altiplano and follows her mom’s steps, would attend instead. After negotiating with ONAMIAP’s organizers, I agreed to cover for Rosa’s air travel and half of her lodging expenses; Yeny traveled by bus with her toddler daughter Sumita. We all met before and after the workshops and I accompanied them to other events they had in Lima. Representing the Red de Comunicadores Indígenas de la Región Puno (REDCIRP), Rosa and Yeny offered a workshop based on their Aymara radio broadcasting at the Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya. She is also a founding member of the Unión de Mujeres Aymaras de Abya Yala (UMA).

Rosa, Yeny, and Sumita come from the comunidad campesina of Camacani, located in the district of Platería, Puno, the Peruvian Altiplano. Rosa’s charismatic leadership spans over four decades and transnational borders since she became a local educator in the 1970s, and then launched her radio show “Wiñay Pankara (Always Blooming) in 1988. In 2014, commemorating International Women’s Day, the Peruvian government recognized Rosa Palomino and other twenty women, including Indigenous leader Tarcila Rivera Zea, for their outstanding contribution to Peruvian culture, art, education, research, and political and cultural activism. In 2015, she participated as a guest speaker at the University of Pennsylvania and Rutgers University, presenting her views on Indigenous language revitalization.

Like Hilda, much of Rosa's story focuses on systemic linguistic and educational inequality against Indigenous women. However, Rosa has experienced more violent racism and sexism as an Aymara woman. She narrates how at her mother's insistence, she had to leave her community in order to obtain a better education: “Mi mamá decía, yo sufro porque soy analfabeta, la gente me discrimina, los hombres me maltratan, todo el mundo habla español, si no puedo responder me asusto y no puedo hacer nada.”³⁴ Rosa attended primary school in Platería, and secondary in Puno, where discrimination and abuse were normalized:



Rosa Palomino with daughter Yeny Palomino and granddaughter Sumita ©

³⁴ “My mother said, I suffer because I am illiterate, people discriminate against me, men mistreat me, everyone speaks Spanish, if I can’t respond I get frightened and can’t do anything” (own translation.)

Desde mi niñez yo hablaba puro Aymara, desde que salí del vientre de mi mamá. Me he educado en una escuela de distrito de Platería hasta la edad de 15 años y luego con el apoyo de mi mamá me tuve que ir a la ciudad. Pero en la ciudad, si yo no podía hablar español he recibido golpes, maltratos, me decían india, chola, zonza, no sabes hacer nada... La mujer es vista como menos, la educación era más para el varón, ¿para qué para la mujer?³⁵

Rosa 's narrative also highlights her husband's active support and encouragement to speak up. After graduating from the university, he became a sindical leader and took Rosa with him to attend a national meeting in Lima, where men were the overwhelming majority and very few women spoke about their conditions: “empecé a llorar pero no podía hablar. ¿Cómo hablo, cómo hablo? Temblaba el primer día, el segundo día tampoco pude hablar. Mi esposo me decía -dígame, mándate, habla- pero el miedo no me dejaba... El tercer día me he puesto fuerte y dije ‘voy a hablar.’”³⁶ Rosa’s narrative echoes Hilda’s experience of shyness but her tone of anguish reveals both her internal conflict intensity and the open racism she endured since her formative years.

In an interview for Cultural Survival, an organization that has provided financial support to Rosa’s radio project, she reflects how her program *Wiñay Pankara* has become the main platform for Aymara people. Rosa particularly shares how women have appropriated this medium and have lost their fear of speaking up: “Women now know what our rights are...[they

³⁵ “Since childhood, I only spoke Aymara, since I was born from my mother’s womb. I attended school in the district of Platería until I was 15 years old; then, with my mother’s support I had to go to the city. But in the city, when I couldn’t speak Spanish, I was beaten, mistreated, called Indian, chola, dumb, you’re good for nothing... Women are seen as less, education was more for men, why educate women?” (translation mine.)

³⁶ “I began crying and could not talk. How do I talk, how do I talk? a llorar pero no podía hablar. ¿Cómo hablo, cómo hablo? The first day I was shaking, the second day I could not talk either. My husband told me -say it, let it out, speak- but fear would not let me... On the third day, I put myself together and said ‘I am going to talk’” (translation mine.)

know] our culture, the rights of women, our wisdom. Speaking on the radio makes the authorities respect us. Everyone listens to our participation and our word. Our children also listen to us, to whom we are saying what the situation on earth is like” (Rao). Rosa’s extensive pedagogical and broadcasting experience make her an incredible public speaker. At ONAMIAP and elsewhere, her workshops were among the most fun, dynamic, and insightful, and the most widely attended.

Rosa Palomino has not stopped expressing herself and communicating since that third day when she decided to speak up. She proudly reminisces how at that meeting with her husband by her side, after denouncing Indigenous women’s conditions in Puno--discrimination, child and invisible domestic labor, unrecognized contribution to the economy--the audience stood up and applauded her:

La gente me aplaudió y yo temblando. Qué bueno he hablado, parece que está bien. Mi esposo me felicita y me dice, ahora te voy a comprar el libro de Domitila Chungara y puedes ser una dirigente. He leído cuarenta mil veces, ya está viejito el libro. Entonces he tomado la decisión. ¿Quién va a luchar entonces por estas mujeres? No va a ser otra persona de Lima que a nosotros va a defender, no creo. Nosotros sabemos nuestra situación.³⁷

During our last meeting in 2016, Rosa told me she had been compiling her life story and asked me if we could write her book together. I almost accepted but excused myself explaining my many limitations. Commemorating this year's International Women’s Day, sociologist and political scientist Marlene Julia Chura presented her book *Mamá Rosa: Mujer Aymara* (2021), a testimonial on her life and trajectory. Chura, who had met Rosa Palomino in the 90s, confessed

³⁷ “People applauded me and I was shaking. It is good that I talked, it seems alright. My husband congratulates me and tells me he will buy me Domitila Chungara’s book so I can be a leader. I have read it forty thousand times, the book is so old. So I made my decision. Who is going to fight for these women? It won’t be a person from Lima who will defend us, I don’t think so. We know our situation” (translation mine.)

an admiration ever since and wrote the book to honor women like her, fighting for other women and Aymara culture (Servindi). The cover features a smiling Rosa Palomino in front of a professional microphone and diaphragm condenser at Pachamama radio station. In the book, the question of confidence in her Spanish-speaking skills is still a frequent theme but a sense of determination replaces the unbearable anguish of imminent silence: “Ahora hablo Español, pero pienso que como no es mi idioma materno a veces se me va a acabar; sin embargo mi Aymara nunca se termina”³⁸ (Chura 26).



From Rosa Palomino ©

³⁸ “I now speak Spanish, but since it is not my maternal language sometimes I run out of it; however, my Aymara never runs out” (own translation.)

Conclusions

Through digital storytelling as ethnography this research offers a response to a unique question that other traditional text-centered methodologies could not. Digital ethnography “is always unique to the research question and challenges to which it is responding” (Pink et al 8). How organized Peruvian Indigenous women are challenging stereotypical discourses and countering them through their lived experiences, leadership, and subjectivity? While the previous chapters examine the politics and poetics of anti-Indigenous sentiments through decolonial feminist lenses, they did not account for the immediate, sensory, and embodied experience of Indigenous women today, whose lives upend stereotypes, sexism, and the teleological narrative of progress or leadership for women.

As a meaning-making process, these digital stories reveal how language, education, race, and gender socialization as pillars of a hierarchical postcolonial society co-constitute the invisibility and silence of Indigenous people but especially of Indigenous women. They also illuminate the strategies, anticipation, and urgency of passing their experiences, knowledge, and networks from women-to-women and mothers-to-daughters, as well as the inexorability of Spanish and formal education. Most importantly, directly or indirectly, these narratives show the complex negotiations Indigenous women must make when it comes to sharing the political spotlight with men within their communities, and the weight of male leadership for making space, supporting, and/or amplifying Indigenous women’s voices, leadership, and political participation.

Images from ONAMIAP ©



Workshop on June 2016. Images from ONAMIAP ©



Author with Rosa Palomino after a workshop

Conclusion

Imagine, what would it have been like if 300,000 men had a testicle removed? Would it have been forgotten? Because we are rural women, because we cannot read or write, our rights are taken from us.
—Lourdes Huaranca, President of FENMUCARINAP.

This research is thoroughly enmeshed in decolonial critique and Indigenous methodologies. Although initially set to primarily address issues of race and gender, it became apparent that I needed an extra toolbox, which I found in critical race studies. Parallel to the specific research questions behind this project, I had an interest (or concern) in understanding the reservation, reluctance and sometimes silence when questioning racism in Peruvian academe. As a formerly undocumented immigrant I had to enter U.S. higher education through the back door. Learning to navigate systemic inequality at predominantly white institutions, I finally understand that, to some extent, this resistance to recognize and accept racism is related to the privileged and overwhelming space elites have occupied in higher education institutions. Universities and the nation-state primarily uphold a Western model of modernity and development.

A decolonial feminist examination of Indigeneity and Indigenous women's representations also reveals that despite the Peruvian and Latin American "multicultural turn"—in the U.S. known as "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion"—emerging social movements, demographic and cultural changes rekindle certain unresolved anxieties. In the Peruvian case, the coming presidential elections have pinched in some a racist or a sexist nerve, individual reactions in the long-contested relationship between Indigeneity and national identity. While individual and organized Indigenous women work tirelessly, risk their livelihoods seeking justice, and

denounce the abuse of corporations and authorities, others seek to erase racialized markers or Indigenous connections. As argued in the second chapter, Benavides's characterization made visible the magnitude of the pedagogical work needed to overcome racism and sexism.

As argued in Chapter 3, Máxima Acuña, gold mining, and now Pedro Castillo have placed Cajamarca—and the political growing power of Peruvian provinces—at the center of Peru. Although neither Castillo nor Acuña identify themselves as Indigenous or openly claim a relationship to Indigenous movements, Indigenous groups and movements have been vocal in supporting both of them. In this context, Claudia Sparrow's documentary on Máxima's struggle validates and reinvigorates the claims of other Indigenous and peasant women protesting against different injustices: racist representations, extractive industries, and the forced sterilizations during Alberto Fujimori regime, that Keiko Fujimori recently denominated "Planificación Familiar." Máxima's refusal to stay silent and invisible has set another precedent of epistemic disobedience. The concept of *mercurial coloniality* allowed me to expand the gender-race analysis in connection to discursive and material dispossession. *Mercurial coloniality* highlights coloniality's liminality, shape-shifting, and the impossibility of containment, as it travels through different human and other-than-human bodies, especially in contexts of racial capitalism. In connection with decolonial thought, Máxima represents a harbinger of epistemic disobedience to delink from inequality with dignity.

As stated in Chapter 4, the ethnographic component of this research came in response to a unique question: How organized Peruvian Indigenous women are challenging stereotypical discourses and countering them through their lived experiences, leadership, and subjectivity? This question seeks to account for the affective, immediate and embodied experience of Indigenous women today. The three digital narratives highlight distinct aspects of leadership: in

the domestic sphere with children and husbands; at work, leading the community with specific knowledge and skills: public speaking, artistic presentations and workshops, and radio broadcasting. The stories also serve as testimonies of Indigenous women's work ethic, the persistence of domestic labor inequality, and the importance of the Spanish language and formal education. They also demonstrate the undeniable collective nature of Indigenous movements, the solidarity among women from different geographies and contexts to create knowledge and learn together, and the inexorable role of male leaders in supporting and amplifying Indigenous women's voices.

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List of Organizations

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| ASHIREL | Asociación de Artesanos Shipibos Residentes en Lima |
| CECONSEC | Central de Comunidades Nativas de la Selva Central |
| CHIRAPAQ | Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú |
| FENMUCARINAP | Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Indígenas, Nativas, y Asalariadas del Perú |
| FOSPA | Foro Social Panamazónico |
| INEI | Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática |
| OMIASEC | Organización de Mujeres Indígenas de la Selva Central |
| ONAMIAP | Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú |
| REDCIRP | Red de Comunicadores Indígenas de la Región Puno |
| UMA | Unión de Mujeres Aymaras de Abya Yala |