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TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World

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Journal

TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 3(2)

ISSN

2154-1353

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Publication Date

2014

DOI

10.5070/T432022921

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Bare Life, Indigenous Viscerality and Cholo Barbarity in Jesús Lara's *Yanakuna*

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Published on the eve of the Bolivian National Revolution in 1952, Jesús Lara's *Yanakuna* begins with Sabasta, an indigenous woman, left destitute by her husband's death.¹ Unable to repay her debt to the *cholo* moneylender, Don Encarno, and his wife Elota, she is forced to sell them her young daughter, Wayra.² After years of grueling labor in the house of Don Encarno, Wayra escapes to Cochabamba to search for work. There, she meets her future husband, Simu, a runaway farmhand from the mountainous part of the Cochabamba valley. After setting up house in the city, Wayra and Simu eventually decide to return to Simu's village, where his family works in La Concordia, the *hacienda* of Isidoro Botado. *Yanakuna* then traces the indigenous rebellion of the *colonos* of La Concordia and concludes with Wayra sentenced to death for instigating Botado's murder. Thus, the novel's last few pages echo its opening scenes: the text opens with the destitution of Wayra's mother and concludes with the destitution of Wayra's children. In between, Lara's anti-mestizaje narrative runs the gamut of the local, as well as the national, social structures of pre-Revolutionary Bolivia.

Literary critics such as Leonardo García Pabón have argued that in *Yanakuna* Bolivia's leading *indigenista* writer documents the "proceso de *mestización*" of an indigenous woman (263). In a similar vein, Josefa Salmón writes that the novel's defense of the Indian is embedded in a "discurso de progreso . . . con el fin de aculturarlo [al indio]" (112). In contrast, my essay demonstrates that *Yanakuna* presents mestizaje as a circular discourse, rather than as a teleological process of acculturation. Wayra learns the skills of a good housekeeper under the tutelage of her *chola* mistress Doña Elota, spurred by her lashes. A lascivious priest, the son of her brutal *cholo* masters, teaches her the gospel and Spanish, but culminates these lessons by brutally violating her young body. The indigenous girl's entrance into the system of mestizaje thus entails her brutal dehumanization as a commodity of sex and labor for the *cholos*. But, far

from turning her into a Mestiza, this stupefying violence actually deepens her attachment to her indigenous identity. This indomitable indigeneity, and not her purported miscegenation, is the source of Wayra's political consciousness.³

Lara's spirited attack on mestizaje is especially pertinent in light of Javier Sanjinés' assertion that, unlike the Peruvian indigenistas, "the process of *indigenismo* in Bolivia remained the process of 'whitening,' as conceived from above by mestizo-criollo reformers" (17). The defense of an uncompromising autochthonous purity in *Yanakuna* complicates Sanjinés's characterization of Bolivian indigenismo as an acculturative project.⁴ Lara's strident critique of mestizaje, however, does not, by any means, imply that the novel's representation of the indigenous is unproblematic. Indeed, it is a text riven with contradictions that strives to articulate the indigenous political logic but, at the same time, also tries to identify the autochthonous community with a pristine and primeval landscape; consequently, this novel presents the subaltern subjects as pre-political beings. This paradoxical framing of the Indians' political project in a pre-political rubric stems from modernity's own need to imagine its Manichean others. Thus breaching the narrative between the state and the indigenous, the text banishes the indigenous to modernity's epistemological exteriority, a site beyond the nation-state's discursive pale. The ambivalent portrayal of the indigenous as both subaltern subjects endowed with an autonomous political consciousness, and as pre-political beings fusing with the landscape they inhabit—and not the novel's attempts, in Sanjinés's words, to "whiten" the indigenous subjects—underscores *Yanakuna's* position as a modern text.

Indeed, Lara's novel should be read as part of a larger debate on the indigenous' engagement with modernity and its impact on their own culture in early twentieth-century Andes. Lara references this discussion by distinguishing his approach to Quechua language and literature from that of his Peruvian counterpart, José María Arguedas. Much like Arguedas, Lara scrupulously compiled Quechuan folklore, plays and poetry into volumes that he himself translated into Spanish to foreground this autochthonous heritage while also writing several novels about the Indians' socioeconomic misery. But, as Lara notes, Arguedas wanted to reproduce Andean society's quotidian "Quechua mestizo" in his novels, whereas Lara strove to "depurarlo [el quechua] de todo el castellano que introdujeron los colonizadores y después los criollos" (Lara and Antezana 26). *Yanakuna* extends these reservations about Quechua's

interactions with Spanish to the assimilation of the indigenous population within the state by portraying the Indians as the only pure community and *cholo* culture as a deceitful mirage. In the intellectual debates on *mestizaje* within Bolivia, the novel offers a position of intransigent opposition to the ideology of *mestizaje* patronized by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), the party that would eventually spearhead the revolution. MNR's leading ideologue, Carlos Montenegro, for instance, in *Nacionalismo y coloniaje* (1944) upholds *mestizaje* as the state's pedagogical intervention to fashion its ideal citizens by assimilating them within the folds of a teleological modernity. Lara, on the other hand, disputes the emancipatory potential of any sort of assimilation. From his novel's perspective, such acculturative undertakings amount to a cooptation of the indigenous' trenchant force. Thus *Yanakuna* seeks to register, albeit not without the attendant contradictions of its elite position, what Sanjinés terms the *visceral* resistance to mestizo modernity championed by present-day radical indigenous movements. Burrowing through the layers of acculturation, the *visceral* enunciates a recalcitrant indigenous consciousness.

As such, the depiction of the body—both indigenous and the *cholo*—as irreducible dehumanized life anchors the construction of this viscosity in Lara's novel. García Pabón notes that Wayra's indigenous body represents “el grado cero de la construcción social boliviana, los orígenes sociales y culturales indios de todos los sujetos nacionales” (270). Wayra's political consciousness, according to this critic, is born when this corporeal ontology is seared by the *cholos'* violence. García Pabón's insightful reading, however, does not adequately account for the *cholos'* own portrayal as chimerical subjects, invisible without their material possessions. For in Lara's text both the Indian and *cholo* approximate what Giorgio Agamben calls bare life or, life devoid of a distinguishable, politicized identity and hence reduced to the “simple fact of living” (Agamben 1). Unlike most of its contemporary texts, *Yanakuna* simultaneously deploys the two prevailing registers of the term *cholo*—a pejorative reference to all mestizos and a word for racial mestizos culturally closer to the indigenous—in order to challenge the redemptive possibilities of *mestizaje* as an emancipatory discourse.⁵ *Yanakuna* frames the nation's ills as a struggle between the indigenous and the *cholos*, where the latter category includes both culturally indigenous and westernized mestizos. Indiscernible but for their ill-begotten material belongings, Lara's *cholos* project the same corporeal blankness that characterizes the author's indigenous characters. Thus,

the *cholo* and indigenous identities converge in their ontological insubstantiality, but simultaneously also confront each other as a binary of oppressors and the oppressed.

In what follows, I trace Lara's systematic dismantlement of *mestizaje*. The first section examines the alienation of the novel's indigenous protagonists, who denounce the *cholo* state for showing more consideration to the cattle on the farms than to the Indians working on the same farms. This disenfranchisement—the denial of their humanity—constitutes the core of the indigenous' political consciousness. The essay's second section juxtaposes the novel's critique of the inhuman treatment meted out to the indigenous to the text's own repudiation of the *cholos'* intrinsic human worth. These contradictions highlight the text's anxieties about the *cholos'* appropriations of the discourse of modernity. The third section demonstrates that Lara's text upholds the indigenous' disengagement with the mainstream society as the manifestation of an undiluted indigenous identity, which permits a radical negation of this *cholo*-mestizo modernity.

Bare Life and the Birth of Rebellion in Indigenous Consciousness

At its most basic level, *Yanakuna* attacks the Bolivian state for not according the rights of citizenship to its indigenous inhabitants. As a result, the indigenous are treated as the elite's property and are equitable to—absent a politicized identity—"bare life." Western politics, according to Agamben, hinges on the distinction between "bare life" (zoē) and "politicized life" (bios). In the aftermath of the French Revolution "man" becomes the "vanishing ground" on which the citizen's entity is erected (Agamben 76). One's status as "a free and conscious political subject" now rests on one's recognition as a citizen, giving rise to the fiction that one's birth within the state automatically transforms one into its citizen. At the same time, sovereignty is embodied in the state's citizens who constitute the "members of the sovereign" (76). Paradoxically, this sovereign collectivity chips away at the fiction of an absolute overlap between man and citizen. Because the sovereignty of the state depends on the very definition of its citizens it must also now identify the non-citizens. "Hence . . . the rapid growth in the course of the French Revolution of regulatory provisions specifying which man was a citizen and which one not" (Agamben 76). The withholding of citizenship, however, consigns the subject to bare life since the human inalienable rights have been conflated with the citizen's rights. Thus, the camp—a permanent suspension of the rights of a particular population not recognized as citizens—is the

paradigm, Agamben asserts, of all modern nation-states and not just of totalitarian ones: “In the camp, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order” (96). This permanent exteriority is the dwelling place of the indigenous subjects of *Yanakuna*. The novel develops the contradictions inherent within the concept of citizenship —its potential to dehumanize those excluded from the state’s purview—from the vantage point of its Indian subjects. Agamben’s analysis, however, is one-sided in that it is only interested in examining how the modern state relegates human life to the status of bare life in the camp to consolidate its own sovereignty. In contrast, Lara politicizes the camp by surveying the Bolivian state from the camp’s space of exclusion.

The novel’s title “*Yanakuna*” alludes to the precariousness of this space because it means slaves in Quechua—the term dates back to the colonial period and refers to the indigenous people who were taken to work as free labor for *criollo* landowners. According to Silvia Rivera, this indigenous labor force, separated from the parent communities, was differentiated from the “*originarios*” (the Indians living in *ayllu* communities) by their dress (“La raíz” 65). Hence “*yanakuna*” connotes a double exclusion—both from the *criollo* and the indigenous societies. By the same token, the *yanakuna* enable the identity, on the one hand, of the “*originarios*” as culturally pure and, on the other, of the *mestizo-criollos* as the sovereign power. Although Lara uses the word more inclusively for all indigenous, in doing so he also underscores their status as slaves or bare life in contemporary Bolivia. José Sánchez Parga observes that in *Yanakuna* “el indio no dispone de otro espacio y tiempo de libertad que el de la huida de un espacio de ocupación a otro. La vida de Wayra es la ilustración de esta tesis, y la tesis tiene un nombre genérico: Yanakuna” (59). However, the fugitive space demarcated by the *yanakuna*’s vagrancy does not merely reduce them to bare life. García Pabón argues that “Wayra es una yana por su capacidad de anunciar cambios sociales e incluso de provocarlos” (275). Indeed, Wayra is not a *yana* because she leads the insurrection for justice, but, rather, she interpellates the state *from* the *yanakuna*’s locus. This itinerant site constitutes the figurative camp that operates not just as the exception enabling the state but also the exteriority empowering the indigenous’ resistance and their cultural autonomy.

Thus, the narrative at once endows the camp’s inhabitants with political consciousness and still conserves the location as bare life. With respect to the former, political consciousness

registers the awareness that the state, which must treat all its subjects equally, denies one's community the rights accorded to others. This knowledge motivates the group to mobilize for recognition by the state. With respect to the latter, the novel reinforces the indigenous' identification with the flora and fauna and thus presents them as pre-political beings, as bare life. In effect, the narrative registers its solidarity with the indigenous but, simultaneously, fails to imagine their transition from zo□ to bios.

Right from her childhood, Wayra is keenly aware of her precarious identity. When Sabasta sells her to the *cholo* moneylenders, she remonstrates “¿Por qué me vendes, madre? ¡Si no soy ni oveja ni pollo!.. ¡Soy tu hija!” (45). Salmón notes that Wayra's plea illustrates the relationship between ownership of material goods and liberty as command over one's environment. It is the loss of Wayra's flock that culminates in her surrender as payment to the moneylenders (124-25). For Salmón, the tension between possession and dispossession underpins indigenous integrity and their rebellion against its loss. In distinguishing between animals peddled as merchandise and filial identities imbued with an inalienable sanctity, Wayra, however, demonstrates a precocious political consciousness that conceives humanity, and not just indigenous identity, in terms of possession: Humans own and animals are owned. Wayra reiterates this distinction in the aftermath of her aborted attempt to escape from the cholos' house. To deter her from trying to escape again, doña Elota burns her ankles. The scars branded on her body lead the indigenous girl to compare her abjection to an animal's status, stating “me han marcado como a las bestias” (137). As she advances into womanhood dispossessed of her intrinsic human liberty, Wayra questions the position of the indigenous as the landlords' chattel— once again, deploying the vocabulary of animal and human identities. After her daughter Sisa's brutal rape by Isidro Botado, the *hacendado* of la Concordia, she muses upon the political and social system's failure to redress the indigenous' grievances. “Si alguna vez una potranca o una vaquilla amanecían destrozadas por el puma, se movilizaba toda la peonada; . . . Pero una india no valía tanto como una borrega, ni como una vaquilla, ni como una potranca” (305). Similarly, the indigenous' decision to rebel against the *hacendado* is also framed within the human versus animal imagery. After all her efforts to seek justice in the courts fail, Wayra berates her community: “¡Cobardes! . . . ¡No sois hombres para vengar a vuestras mujeres ni a vuestros compañeros! ¡Esclavos de cuerpo y de alma! ¡Los mulos y los caballos suelen mostrar su rebeldía

a coces! ¡Vosotros sois como los bueyes!” (317). Jolting the community members from their passivity, Wayra’s angry words spark the ensuing mutiny, which demands the recognition of their human status in the nation state.

The insurgents’ subsequent trial also centers on their human status. In a debate that sounds like a reenactment of the sixteenth century polemic between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, the public prosecutor and the defense lawyer heatedly discuss the insurgents’ right to freedom. The prosecutor claims that “esa raza había nacido para labrar la tierra y no pedía zafarse del imperativo de su destino . . . El indio era parte constitutiva de la tierra y por tanto su persona pertenecía . . . al propietario” (340). Not surprisingly, then, the judge is discomfited by the defense lawyer’s reference to the indigenous rebels as citizens because “era desusado llamar ciudadanos a los indios” (343). For his part, the defense lawyer argues that the indigenous were unfamiliar with the kind of slavery that had existed in Greek, Roman and even medieval European societies for the Incan rule had respected the human dignity of the empire’s subjects, and the produce of the land was meant for the consumption of the tillers and not for the “usurpador del esfuerzo ajeno” (344). The insurgents seek to wrest control of their labor from its usurpers and, in doing so, to assert their status as free political subjects. This subjectivity is evident in Wayra’s reflection that if the peons of all the haciendas revolted like those of La Concordia, then “la vida sería digna de ser vivida” (327).

That said, the contouring animal imagery of this politicization ironically limits the Indians to the domain of the camp. Bruce Willis notes that many early twentieth-century Latin American novels textually rend the Indian’s body to portray “an exploited proletariat . . . as a body politic struggling . . . against oppression” (132). This synecdochal operation, whereby the indigenous body parts enact the subaltern resistance to the hegemonic power, Willis asserts, paradoxically divests the Indian characters of psychological individuality. *Yanakuna* reflects a similar limitation in imagining the Indians’ human complexities; however, it does so not by fragmenting the Indians’ corporeality but by blending them with animals and the elements to depict an ontological wholeness rent asunder by the excesses of the state—the body politic. Hence, the mountains where the mutineers take refuge become “un reducto inaccesible” of freedom, where “se tendían como vizcachas” (326). This idyllic interlude, when the indigenous fuse with nature, recalls a stage of childlike innocence that parallels Wayra’s own unhampered freedom amidst her

childhood community: “Había que verla en las más delgadas ramas de los moles y por la orilla de los barrancos silbando, resbalando como el viento” (25). Lara’s insurgents, thus, conceive their political project as a return to a pre-political childlike insouciance that melds them into their landscape’s ontology. As a result, their mutiny does not articulate a possible indigenous project that illuminates the reason inspiring it. Instead, it remains a convulsive reaction to the violence they endure. Indeed, the narrative does not delve into the indigenous communal practices, thus further casting their milieu as modernity’s outlier rather than as an autonomous discursive space, textured by cultural and linguistic particularities.

For example, the description of the rigid membership rules that prevent a person who has left the community from reintegration, regardless of the circumstances, must be understood within the community’s linguistic context. Quechua’s grammatical structure contains two forms for the pronoun “we”: ñoqanchik and ñoqayku. While ñoqanchik is an inclusive “we” i.e., a “we” that comprises the speaker(s) as well as the person(s) addressed, the ñoqayku is a discrete “we,” i.e., one that excludes the listener(s) from the speaker(s)’ collective group. Admittedly, exclusion is integral to the discursive formation of all languages. Nonetheless, the existence of these two distinct first-person collective pronouns indicates that notions of interiority and exteriority are ingrained in Quechua linguistic structure and that this structure reflects and shapes the community’s worldview. But without any explicit reference to the Quechua grammar, Wayra’s expulsion projects the community as trenchantly resistant to any interaction with the mainstream society and occludes their autonomous mediation of Eurocentric modernity, in Ranajit Guha’s words, as “subjects of their own history” (38).

In effect, Lara’s indigenous are curiously devoid of any historical memory necessary for charting an alternative project to counteract modernity’s totalizing logic. The novel’s only indigenous person with an awareness of his community’s status as an oppressed “nation” and not just an exploited group is, ironically, the thief in Cochabamba who steals Simu’s life’s savings. Their unfamiliarity with the workings of the state dramatizes their victimization by its agents. This fact is poignantly brought out at the novel’s end by the bewilderment the insurgents evince at their trial. Paradoxically, while their lawyer explains their rebellion in terms of the Inca administrative system’s egalitarianism, the indigenous characters themselves lack even the semblance of a distinct cultural identity rooted in an awareness of the longstanding cycle of

anticolonial indigenous rebellions, what Silvia Rivera has called the “*memoria larga*” (*Oprimidos* 12). *Memoria larga* registers the Indians’ awareness that their colonization did not end with the independence and formation of Bolivia but continues under the Republic. Despite its fervid advocacy for the indigenous’ inclusion as politicized life, as bios, within the state’s parameters, the novel cannot visualize them as subjects of their own history. Thus, resisting the state from the camp, Lara’s indigenous subjects embody bare life as well as politicized life.

This ontological bareness is not unique to the indigenous in Lara’s novel because the text also represents the *cholo* identity as an intrinsically hollow one. But while the *indio*’s reduction to bare life ultimately bespeaks the state’s institutional failure, the *cholo*’s existential vacuity produces the state’s moral collapse. The former’s absolute disengagement from the state distills their setting into a primeval cultural essence. The latter’s encroachments into the state’s economy and politics ferments modernity into a toxic brew precipitating the state’s decadence. At stake, thus, in the *cholo*’s portrayal as a disruptive presence is the very conceptualization of modernity.

The Barbarity and the Bare Life of the Cholos

The term *cholo* denotes the slippery slope of Bolivia’s intricate racial and social hierarchies. It is used pejoratively for racial mestizos and also descriptively for mestizos closer to the indigenous culture. As mestizos culturally closer to the indigenous, the *cholos* navigate the fluid overlaps between the indigenous and modernity from the site of subalternity. Their engagements with the state resonate with John Beverley’s notion of “transculturation from below,” i.e., the “ways in which the indigenous population appropriates European and creole . . . tradition to serve its interests” (54-55). Imbued with the exigencies of a specific time and space, “transculturation from below” registers the indelible imprint of culturally non-European subject-agents on the pristine fabric of intellectual modernity. Needless to say, this unscripted adaptation—a *cholo* modernity, so to speak—clashes with the *a priori* Eurocentric image of the nation-state that inspires doctrinaire modernity’s emancipatory narrative. Framed within a paradigmatic modern discourse, elite texts are hard put to accommodate these subversive transculturative undertakings. Hence, these works embody such disruptive agency, according to Beverley, as the “barbarian,” thereby negating the validity of subaltern appropriations of modernity (58). In this sense, the barbarian’s figure is comparable to bare life, which lacks the

status of political subjecthood. At the same time, however, while bare life denotes a passive submission to this denial, the barbarian combats marginalization. Indeed, in Lara's text, the *cholo* body stages this struggle between representational containment and unrepresentable excess of *cholo* modernity.

Exaggerated portrayals of the *cholos'* cruelty inversely register the text's struggle to quell their anarchic interventions in the nation's economic, political and intellectual life. The narrative can only do so by turning the *cholos* into a savage presence that unravels the nation-state's order. In other words, the *cholo* difference projects the nation's failure to measure up to the Eurocentric model of modernity, and it is this failure that leads to the indigenous' miserable condition. Thus, doña Elota, a shrewd businesswoman, is more at ease in Quechua, at best managing only a halting Spanish. The informal economy that enables the *cholos* to climb up the social ladder distorts the nation's principal pillars—the church, the judiciary and the political system. For example, don Encarno, whose business activities are described in great detail, is also the one who strips Wayra's mother, Sabasta, of all her sources of livelihood and ultimately buys Wayra. Don Encarno makes his fortune primarily by buying and selling poultry and livestock in the local fair, a prominent part of the Cochabamba region's economic and social life well into the mid-twentieth century. Significantly, these local fairs project *mestizaje* as a conflict-ridden negotiation between the elite and subaltern classes in the region. Rich hacendados negotiated with petty farmers and migrant workers in these markets, thus generating a spontaneous commercial community. Often regarded by the local elite as an impediment to the country's modernization, the fairs and the corn beer, *chicha*, associated with the corn economy, could never be completely abolished from urban life in the region as Rodríguez and Solares point out.

En una sociedad tan mestiza como la cochabambina, pese al cierto racismo de los sectores dominantes, las fronteras étnicas se habían acortado. Lo mestizo era un espacio cultural que articulaba lo blanco con lo indio y la chichería ayudaba a concretar este sincretismo en una suerte de cultura 'intermedia' común a todos los miembros de la sociedad regional. (148)

Don Encarno also owed his wealth to the *chicha* trade and, thus, to the circulation and transmission networks of this cultural economy. In portraying him as a ruthless moneylender and his economic enterprise as corrosive, the text betrays its anxiety about this unmediated social and ethnic intermingling. Similarly, the Botados' ill-gotten control over the country's politics,

economy and its cultural life spells the country's moral doom. Read against the grain, the portrayal of the *cholos'* barbarism documents their transculturative agency as autonomous subjects, capable of wielding modernity to advance their own interests.

Referencing Jose Carlos Mariátegui's essay, "El problema del indio," Willy O Muñoz asserts that *Yanakuna* demonstrates "que el problema del indio es más un problema . . . económico que racial" (226). In making this point, however, the *indigenista* author not only aims to defend the Indians but also attempts to check the *cholos'* relentless march through the nation's networks of power and wealth. Their untrammelled influence occasions the state wherein the Indians are treated as bare life. As uneducated racial mestizos with a hodgepodge of modern knowledge at their disposal, the *cholos* impede the nation from coming into its own, that is, to fulfill modernity's emancipatory promise. From this perspective, their autonomy threatens the novel's own discursive limits as a modern text. Thus, it is that while painting the *cholos* as uncivilized brutes the novel also counters their anarchic interventions in modernity by negating the *cholos'* identity. Lara's *cholos* are bereft of an intrinsic human worth. If the *cholos* were stripped of the material markers of their presence, the text suggests they would be non-existent: that is to say, they too would be bare life.

This intrinsic insignificance of Lara's *cholos* dovetails with Bolivia's social hierarchy wherein to call someone a *cholo* is tantamount to denying her/his position as legitimate citizens. Rivera observes that "lo cholo en Bolivia no sólo [no es] 'en sí' ni 'para sí' mismo sino ante todo 'para otros'; o sea, [es] una identidad resultante de una permanente confrontación de imágenes y autoimágenes; de estereotipos y contraestereotipos" ("La raíz" 57). A mirage produced by this play of prejudices, the *cholo* is symptomatic of Bolivian society's self-alienation. *Yanakuna's* portrayal of *cholos* echoes this fractured national identity by reducing Elota and the Botados to an illusion of their material possessions.

By dint of her hard work and enterprise, doña Elota, Wayra's worst tormentor, rises to be the most successful *chichera* of the town. To the townspeople, however, Elota's biography is the story of the gradual migration of an antique cloak and a pair of gold earrings from their original upper-class owners to her person. The jewelry had once belonged to a devout upper-class colonial woman who donated the earrings for the idol of the "Virgen patrona" expressly brought to the town for the new temple being constructed. Instead of adorning the idol with the earrings, the

chaplain kept them for his indigenous servant-lover (69). After the matron's death, the ornaments were openly flaunted by the lover and were later passed on as a family heirloom to the couple's illegitimate children who gradually came to acquire the status of an illustrious creole family. Falling upon hard times, a descendant of the family was forced to pawn them to a moneylender from where they passed on to the possession of the latter's dissolute grandson who presented them to Elota's sister, hoping to secure her sexual favors. Not only did his seductions fail, he ended up accidentally killing the sister and losing the earrings to Elota's family. As such, the history of the earrings' peregrinations through different owners becomes an eloquent symbol of Bolivian society's moral descent even as the ornaments' luster also indexes the social rise of the popular classes. Similarly, the Botados, the landlords of La Concordia, owe their wealth and political power to the enterprising skills of their *cholo* ancestors, cobblers by trade. On seeing Elota pass by in her glittering jewelry, the townspeople would comment, "Doña Elota sabe conservar lo ajeno" (57). The gold-earrings are a mute testimony to Elota's usurpation of that which did not rightfully belong to her. Likewise, the Botados' social and political prominence also represents that which they have appropriated by unscrupulously manipulating the system.

Without this deceptive aura of wealth and power, the Botados are essentially invisible like Elota would be without her earrings. This intrinsic insubstantiality becomes starkly evident at Isidoro Botado's imminent immolation by the insurgents. As the landlord is pushed into a bonfire at the center of an ever-growing multitude of spectral figures, Wayra, the insurgents' instigator, discovers that the longed-for thrill of vengeance still eludes her. She is unable to associate the puppet-like body with the man who had killed her daughter and her husband, leaving her bereft of all family ties.

En lugar de aquel genio maligno que se nutría de las desgracias de los pobres . . . , ahora se veía apenas un muñeco desvencijado. En ñu Isicu . . . [h]abían muerto por anticipado sus atributos de ser vivo. Ya no infundía ni miedo, ni odio, ni siquiera lástima . . . Ya no era un enemigo. Ya no era un hombre. Era un gusano miserable.
(326)

Shorn of the paraphernalia of authority, Botado loses his awe-inspiring presence, leaving Wayra groping for an appropriate word to describe his new avatar. The word she settles on—"worm"—not only reflects her contempt but also alludes to the confusion about his identity. In asserting their own subjectivity, the angry peasants find Botado to be an inert presence that

qualifies as life by virtue of being a breathing body but also, sans his material power, remains less than human in his passivity.

In fact, the *cholos'* relationship to their materiality contrasts sharply with that of the indigenous characters. While ownership is central to the conceptualization of indigenous integrity, as Salmón's reading suggests, it operates as the cloak hiding the *cholos'* essential nothingness. The Indians are reduced to bare life when they are turned into others' possessions. In contrast, the *cholos* are essentially bare life, but their economic and political power disguises this insignificance. The Indians' transformation into chattel, into bare life, epitomizes the state's failure. At the same time, though, the *cholos'* transformation into owners, into politicized life, also illustrates the state's failure. As a cholo, Botado is the bare life whose sacrifice will restore the nation's orderliness. This sacrifice translates into a containment of the *cholo's* transculturative agency and, thus, promotes a strict adherence to racial and class limits as a prerequisite for a just society.

Juan E. De Castro notes that whereas transculturation foregrounds Latin American heterogeneity *mestizaje* is an intellectual discourse that "uses that heterogeneity to imagine . . . a homogenous future" (9). The shared future, Castro alludes to, is predicated on the whitening of the indigenous population through pedagogical instruction. Lara's text, however, assails all mutations of racial and cultural boundaries, not just transculturation from below, but also pedagogical uplift, as *cholaje*. In effect, *Yanakuna* takes issue not just with *cholo* modernity but also with mestizo modernity, which it presents as irredeemably embedded in the former. The Botados' ascent in the social pyramid, facilitated not just by their wealth but also with their acquisition of education, presents the intertwining between the homegrown *cholo* version and the Eurocentric modernity. Thus don Cantito Botado's success as a leather dealer permits him to educate his children in a private school, enabling Cantito junior to pose as a poet, which, in its turn, gains him entry to the corridors of political power. Once ensconced as respectable members of the upper classes, don Cantito and his family, however, disavow their *cholo* antecedents and jeer at the group's purportedly incorrigible immorality. The following repartee on the *cholos* in Latin amongst the Botado siblings brings out the pungent humor with which Lara scathingly disputes education's uplifting value, a central belief in the discourse of *mestizaje*:

--No hay cholo que no sea terco—terció Arturo Rimbaud.

--Choliviris nunquam bonus—enunció Marcel Atala--, como se decía en mis tiempos.

--Et si bonus—continuó Ruth Isela—nunquam perfectus.
--Et si perfectus—concluyó Mabel Nausica—semper choliviris.
--Sí, dedujo hondamente convencido el padre--, no hay nada peor que el cholo.
(262)

Evidently, the Botados' schooling, while enabling them to deny their *cholo* origins more artfully, ultimately, only deepens their self-alienation. When considered in light of the fact that many texts on *mestizaje* lay down the separation from *cholo* antecedents as the foundation for the shaping of the mestizo subject, Lara's derisive portrayal of the *cholos'* education amounts to a rejection of the emancipatory mestizo modernity.⁶ The gradual expansion of *mestizaje* to form the overarching rubric of national life comes to signify the disfigurement of the nation state's silhouette by parvenus who mask their inherent insignificance under the guise of a false social, cultural and political capital. In this nation of imposters, the indigenous present the only pure community, undiluted by the *cholos'* deceptive modernity.

Muñoz writes that *Yanakuna* presents "la realidad del feudalismo agrario boliviano, que . . . impide el desarrollo cultural de un pueblo netamente agricultor" (227). At the same time, though, the novel also casts the indigenous' innate cultural purity—their lack of contact with the *cholo* modernity—as their most potent resistance not only to rural feudalism but also to the decadent national society it spawns. Put another way, the novel suggests that to release the nation from the shackles of feudalism and to foment its national culture requires, paradoxically, the Indians' cultural isolation in the countryside's setting.

Challenging the *Cholo* State from the Camp's Ramparts

It is significant that the name of the Botados' hacienda sounds very similar to the Liberal-Republican oligarchic alliance formed in 1936 to combat the growing threat of the leftist parties, i.e., La Concordia. The exploitative forces of the hacienda are synonymous with the oligarchy, but by accentuating the *cholo* antecedents of La Concordia, Lara also brands the leaders of the oligarchy as *cholos*. This comparison suggests that Lara eventually came to regard racial and cultural miscegenation as the catalyst for Bolivia's downfall. As such, *Yanakuna* strives to fortify the rigid demarcation between the indigenous setting and the modern/mestizo milieu. The indigenous embody the resistance to the decadent system from the ramparts of their uncompromising exteriority. If the *cholos* rise to prominence by disguising their obscurity in

stolen vestments, the indigenous challenge this illegitimate dominance by remaining true to their primeval identity. Accordingly, Wayra's shield against her maltreatment at doña Elota's house is her indigenousness. She refuses to respond to the new name "Guadalupe" that Elota gives her in a bid to Christianize her because to the *chola* "Wayra," meaning wind, was no name for a Christian. Wayra, however, sticks to the name given to her by her parents, the name by which her community knew her and, which is, consequently, infused with her memories and her cultural experiences. "Por más que tuviesen que apalearla como a los burros, ella no renunciaría a su verdadero nombre" (84). Rejecting her new name translates into a refusal to embrace the *cholo-mestizo* identity. Thus, she does not like being referred to as a *cholita* in her *cholo* masters' house (154). Indeed, she falls in love with don Waylaychitu precisely because he addresses her as *imilla*, a Quechua word meaning "girl," that the *mestizo-criollos* often used as a derogatory term for the indigenous: "El joven de las mejillas encendidas [don Waylaychitu] le había dicho: 'imilla guapa.' Esto sí le gustaba porque ella era exactamente una 'imilla.' Sí, una 'imilla'" (154). Revaluing, in this way, the term as one bearing pride, Wayra refuses assimilation into the caste and class hierarchies that give rise to *mestizaje*. Repudiating *mestizaje's* uplifting potential, she resignifies, instead, her Indian identity as her indomitable spirit.

While this self-affirmation foregrounds her agency against the violence inflicted on her, the representation of her tenacious attachment to her indigenousness also privileges a static "original" identity, constant despite her vagrancy through different national milieus—countryside, the town and the city. *Yanakuna*, thus, encloses the indigenous in the camp, the state's exteriority, in order to highlight their visceral resistance to modernity. For Agamben, the camp is the internal exception on which the state's construction is premised. Arguably, then, the camp itself is a construct marshaled to enable the state. Regarded from the state's perspective, the camp demarcates its frontiers. But surveyed from the camp's vantage point, the state is the frontier reinforcing the camp's perimeters. The camp thus also enables a stringent critique of the state and its aporias, because it always functions as the outside *of* the modern state.

Likewise, Lara contests the oligarchy's hegemony from the locus of the indigenous exteriority. The indigenous resistance in his text resonates with Ángel Rama's observations about the indigenista novels. Rama notes that the indigenista writers' fixation on the indigenous people's socio-economic marginalization to the exclusion of their culture indexed these

intellectuals' own location as a rising middle class that challenged the oligarchy's hegemony. In the "economic reductionism" of their writings one can discern the perspective of a different culture, i.e., non-indigenous culture, and its "filters for ordering reality" (Rama 103). Influenced by socialist ideas, the indigenista writers sought the indigenous' integration into the productive workforce. At the same time, they also sought to preserve values that industrialization had squandered but which the indigenous societies, purportedly untouched by modernity, still retained. Socialist indigenismo's twin goals, thus, reveal a contradiction: the first called for the integration of the indigenous into the modern workforce whereas the second envisioned them as discrete and as bearers of mythic values irredeemably lost in modernity. Although Rama calls this textual reorganization of reality and the accompanying imposition of representational filters a mestizo project, because the writers leading this enterprise belonged to the emergent mestizo middle class, as an indigenista text, *Yanakuna* is a "visceral" indictment of *mestizaje*, that is, it negates *mestizaje* from the indigenous locus of enunciation.

The category of the *visceral* in Sanjinés's formulation works in conjunction with two other somatic metaphors—the *skeletal* and the *carnal*—to explain Bolivian intellectuals' approaches to the country's contemporary reality. The *skeletal* privileges the modern infrastructure of political democracy and the class system in order to conceptualize Bolivian reality. The indigenista writers' expressed objective to incorporate the indigenous into the nation-state's political economy as a productive workforce reflects the skeletal filter through which they reorganize reality. The *carnal* refers to the ethnic aspects of identity formation in Bolivia and can thus be considered as foregrounding the *cholo* circuits of identity formation. The *visceral*, as we have seen, foregrounds the indigenous worldview as an alternative project that negates modernity's premises.

Sanjinés' scheme also suggests that Bolivian intellectuals have struggled to grasp the country as a dynamic wholeness in which the *skeletal*, the *carnal* and the *visceral* actively intertwine. Although Sanjinés has conceived of these bodily metaphors to elucidate the social and political imaginary of post 1952 Bolivia I find his scheme useful for illuminating the dilemmas of Lara's pre-revolutionary text. For the visualization of the nation's live, pulsating body is also the challenge confronting *Yanakuna*. The text's ultimate inability to grasp this wholeness explains its ambivalence about the indigenous' position in the national society. On the one hand, Lara's

novel denounces the state for the indigenous' segregation from its juridical ambit. On the other, it suggests that the state's own sovereignty has been compromised by the *cholos'* carnality. Their anarchic appropriations of its framework must be repulsed to maintain the state's hegemony. Epitomized in the *cholo's* slippery identity, the carnal undulations of culture are projected as the corrosion of the state's skeletal framework. Thus, the Botados, who monopolize political and economic power, register the nation's decadence because their rise smudges the class demarcations that delineate the state's *skeletal* ordering.

Wayra's experiences in Cochabamba further illustrate the text's insistence on maintaining the Indian as an undiluted alterity in the countryside's "external" setting. Just as don Encarno made his fortune by buying and selling maize in the region's local fairs, Wayra stabilizes her family's income through her shrewd negotiations at the biweekly local market (230). Not surprisingly though, entering this economy imperils her identity as an indigenous woman. At the same time that Wayra risks morphing into a *chola*, her husband, Simu, encounters the city as a treacherous place: his mugging by another escaped farmhand literally strips him bare of his life's savings. Here we see how the heightened awareness of being an exploited group paradoxically leads the indigenous migrants to prey on one another. Instead of collectively resisting abuse, they replicate it to survive the urban violence. The fluid interaction between various ethnicities in the city economy thus spawns a culture of layered exploitation in which the poor can only persevere against their own oppression by cheating those weaker than them. Battling this mistreatment from within the system, however, strips them of their indigenous "purity" and turns them into *cholos*. A *skeletal* framework impaired by the *cholos'* duplicitous maneuverings can only be interrogated from its outside. Thus, Wayra and Simu's departure from the city shores up a subaltern identity, unblemished by any intersections with urban life. The incommensurability of the indigenous ethos with modernity, signified by the city, reinforces the countryside, Wayra's new location, as the camp. As modernity's exteriority, the hinterland facilitates a radical interrogation of its premises.

The novel's dilemma is that even as it seeks to articulate the indigenous political consciousness, it also insists on confining them to the camp in order to effectively challenge the state. In his text on the intersections between indigenismo and modernity in the Andes, Coronado contends that indigenismo chooses "precisely the non-modern in order to articulate

the modern, “that is to say, deploys the *indio* “to communicate ideas about how the Andes should enter into and reap the benefits” of modernity (11). This assertion rings true for Lara’s novel, which constructs the Indian as a non-modern other in order to expose the failing of political, social and economic modernity in Bolivia. Accordingly, the narrative tacitly supports the community’s exclusionary culture as its strongest weapon of resistance against its cooption by the system because the vindication of indigenous rights requires a scrupulous curtailment of all unnecessary interaction with the “*quapajkuna*,” Quechua for the rich and powerful. If the landlords claim to own the indigenous bodies, then the Indians reassert their political subjectivity by excluding these owners from the sphere of their cultural life. By thus transforming their subjugated bodies into a source of exclusionary resistance, the subaltern agents of *Yanakuna* turn the camp from the location of bare life into a site of political subjectivity. The production and consumption of the chicha on La Concordia eloquently brings out this contest of power seared on Wayra’s body.

The peasants’ yearly calendar is structured around the festival of the hacienda’s patron saint, even though they are included in the festivities only as mute, grueling labor. Wayra spends days in the kitchen fermenting the *chicha* for the guests, but she cannot taste it or take some for her family. When, on one occasion, she tries to smuggle a small amount for her family, Botado snatches the canister from her and locks her up in a room for the night. Wayra avenges this injustice by celebrating her husband’s birthday amidst the hacienda farmhands for whom she prepares a special *chicha* “como la cual los patrones no lograrían jamás a probar” (283). By not inviting the landlord to partake of her special libation, Wayra strives, in effect, to reclaim ownership over her labor and over her body. Botado too reads Wayra’s reluctance to offer him her *chicha* as her defiance and disrupts their feast in retaliation. He seals Wayra’s punishment by brutally raping her, thus, returning her to the status of bare life that she occupies in the hacienda’s social and economic setup. Despite this violation, Wayra triumphs, nevertheless, even in this ostensible defeat. For in mobilizing exclusion to combat subjugation, she accomplishes the camp’s politicization.

In thus politicizing the camp, the novel reconfigures this site of segregation as the “dark side” of the state (Sanjinés 9). While the indigenous setting calls attention to the state’s excesses, the group’s radical disengagement with modernity negates the state rather than address its system

from an indigenous “locus of enunciation” (Mignolo 5). Categorically focused on denouncing the state’s victimization of the indigenous, the text ends up consigning the indigenous to be its perpetual victims. Sanjinés observes that the indigenous movements reject the notion of modernity’s vanishing point in order to intervene in modernity from multiple points. Such transculturation from below is, as we have seen, anathema to Lara’s text, and it is here, perhaps, that the novel’s location as a mestizo-criollo elite text is discernible. Coronado asserts that the trope of the Indian’s redemption expresses “novel forms of communal identity in the Andes” (11). The communal identity sketched in *Yanakuna*’s scathing indictment of the *latifundista* state is one of an uncompromising divide, along social, economic and cultural lines, between the indigenous populations and the rest of the society. This outright rejection of *mestizaje* underscores a paternalistic view that cannot envision the indigenous as subjects of their own projects. Significantly, although the author claims that the novel was inspired by the “gran insurrección indígena” of 1947, Lara’s text does not allude to any of the rebellion’s demands (Lara & Antezana 27). Rivera points out that besides the restitution of their traditional *ayllu* lands, leaders of the 1947 insurrection also called for the establishment of schools and defense of the local markets, thus, reflecting the indigenous’ reception of modernity from their specific socio-cultural and economic vantage point (*Oprimidos* 126-27). In neglecting this engagement with modernity, *Yanakuna* reveals Lara’s refusal to reconcile the *visceral* agency with the *carnal* experiences of the indigenous.

Conclusion

Yanakuna’s paradox is that its resistance to a universalizing modernity reiterates the novel’s own location as a modern text. In constricting the indigenous to a visceral exteriority, Lara reifies them as resistance to modernity and negates their status as active agents in its elaboration. While this position does not envision the indigenous’ transculturation from below, it also unequivocally opposes the imperative to westernize them as a precondition for their recognition as citizens. From this perspective, despite its obvious limitations, Lara’s text does approximate later indigenous movements’ own express objectives of countering mestizo modernity from a visceral exteriority. The novel is part of a trajectory registering the intellectual’s shifts from the position of a detached and neutral observer to that of a participant in the subaltern project. Hence, we

have Lara's own admission that his novel's goal was to "denunciar" the exploitation of the indigenous (Lara & Antezana 28). By the same token, though, *Yanakuna* also highlights the predicaments of this visceral exteriority: implicated in intellectual reorganizations of modernity but striving to articulate a subaltern logic beyond its discursive reach.

Sanjinés contrasts the state's paternalistic attempts to include the indigenous subjects as its citizens with the contemporary indigenous mobilizations for cultural and political vindication and asserts that unlike the previous state-centered "top down" approaches the recent indigenous movements clamor to participate in the "very act of inclusion" as autonomous agents (10-11). These calls for active participation are spearheaded by a "group of university-educated intellectuals" who present the indigenous perspective from an "exteriority [that] uncover[s] the things that modernity marginalizes . . . while revealing the viscosity of a rebellious movement" (11). The "viscosity" in this account, however, remains as much of a construct as the state is, because the description is mediated by intellectual—albeit ethnically indigenous—agency. Indeed, the fact that this *visceral* outside of modernity is envisioned and enunciated by university-educated indigenous intellectuals reveals the notion's embeddedness in modernity because these scholars' preparation in universities—bastions of modern thought—influences their own reconstruction of their identity in stark opposition to the precepts of the "western" discourse.

A brief comparison of the pre-revolutionary indigenous rebellions with the post-revolutionary radical *katarismo* elucidates their different relationships to modernity.⁷ From the end of the Federal Revolution of 1899, which the Liberal Party had won with the help of the indigenous—though its leaders later reneged on the promises made to their Indian allies—the pre-revolutionary rebellions were a mixture of demands for indigenous sovereignty and modernization. Calls for the return to the historic notion of two Bolivias: one mestizo-criollo and the other indigenous, restitution of indigenous lands, abolition of feudalism, etc. mingled with demands for Spanish language instruction and access to local markets in these mobilizations, concentrated for the most part in the countryside and led by the *comunarios*, the indigenous village leaders. In the aftermath of the 1952 Revolution, the new regime was—with the help of measures like the Agrarian Reform, universal suffrage and access to education—able to incorporate the indigenous within its fold, even though this integration was riven with deep-seated contradictions. A couple of decades into the post-revolutionary era, the indigenous youth,

beneficiaries of the desired education, discovered that despite this preparation, they were still considered second-class citizens. It was this disillusionment with the promises of the revolution that propelled the radical *katarista* movements, centered on the vindication of ethnic identity. While in the pre-revolutionary period, the indigenous uprisings had been a rural product, in the post 1952 period they originated often as urban phenomenon, which spread from the city to the hinterlands. Pre-revolutionary insurgencies constitute what Rivera calls “ciclos rebeldes” but contemporary indigenous movements are articulated through the platform of political parties, an instrument of modernity (*Oprimidos* 94).⁸ Whereas the pre-revolutionary rebellions demanded the establishment of rural schools with Spanish as their medium of instruction, *katarismo* now calls for a revalorization of local indigenous languages with an accompanying emphasis on indigenous history. *Katarismo* is, hence, a byproduct of the very mestizo modernity it staunchly contests. Radical *katarismo*’s coincidence with Lara’s own text in its reassertion of a stark divide between the indigenous and the state is indicative of their shared genealogy in that both are modern discourses that produce the non-modern to challenge modernity’s premises.⁹

Indeed, the example given by Sanjinés to illustrate the ways in which radical indigenous movements negate modernity resonates with Lara’s own depiction of the indigenous exteriority in his novel. Sanjinés examines the response of Felipe Quispe, leader of the hardline Movimiento Indio Pachakuti, to then President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada’s inaugural address in 2002. In his speech to the National Congress, the new President had described the modernizing endeavors taken during his previous tenure and had then outlined several measures that his new government would undertake within a timeframe established by him to ameliorate the country’s economic woes. When asked his opinion on the speech, el *Mallku* (as Quispe is popularly called) quipped that he “would have made better use of the day if he had spent it in the countryside in the company of his fellow Aymara villagers” (Sanjinés 8). According to Sanjinés, as “a space of liberation,” the countryside, in Quispe’s reply, is emblematic of the outside of “the dominant discourse” (8). Quispe’s dismissive words represent, in this reading, the “inverse logic” to the western temporality evinced in Sánchez de Lozada’s speech (Sanjinés 8).¹⁰ The radical indigenous leader, however, identifies the countryside as the non-modern exteriority to the mestizo modernity the way Lara had done half a century earlier in his indigenista text. Both instances foreground an attempt to articulate the non-modern from the locus of the modern. If Lara

speaks as a modern writer, Quispe too speaks as a political leader implicated in the modernity he refutes by brandishing the Aymara countryside as a site devoid of its presence. Indeed, both regard this rural indigenous setting as unmarked by any change, and this constancy offers, in both intellectuals' opinion, the most trenchant interrogation of modernity's premises.

Yet another example that illustrates *Yanakuna's* resonances with indigenous thought and also the paradoxes of these resonances is Fausto Reinaga's meditation on what he terms Bolivia's *cholo* intelligentsia. A firebrand indigenous intellectual and a contemporary of Lara's, Reinaga founded one of the earliest indigenous political parties in 1962, Partido Indio Aymara Keshwa (PIAK). Reinaga accuses the indigenista writer of wanting the Indians' "asimilación por el cholaje" instead of seeking their liberation as Indians (106). What is significant in Reinaga's allegations is that he inflects the term *cholo* with the same pejorative connotations that Lara accords it by associating it with the loss of an Indian purity. In Reinaga's formulation, the *cholo* constitutes "el eco de ecos y reflejo de reflejos de Europa" (30). The Indian, in contrast, "resiste en soma y carne y persiste en espíritu y alma" (28). Despite Reinaga's accusations, Lara's formulations of both the *cholo* and indigenous entities coincide with the indigenous leader's own conceptualizations. Both writers conceive of the *cholo* as a mirage and emphasize the Indian's materiality, which both link inextricably with her physical resistance and spiritual endurance. Reading both instances inversely, *cholaje* emerges as the negation of the nation's ethnic and social fluidity. Both writers—Reinaga, the forerunner of the latter-day indigenous movements, and Lara, Bolivia's leading indigenista writer,—construct this negation as resistance to the hegemonic designs of the dominant society.

The defense of this site of permanent resistance to the nation-state's hegemony explains *Yanakuna's* ambivalent position: striving to voice the indigenous standpoint but, at the same time, seeking to curb their intercessions in modernity. The indigenous subjects' assimilation would have counteracted this intransigence and, thus, led to the totalization of mestizo modernity. Ultimately one must learn from *Yanakuna's* own fixation on intractable ethnic categories in order to better appreciate the novel's significance not just within Bolivian literature but as a cultural artifact traversing the gamut of its society. The novel admittedly reifies the indigenous in its bid to articulate a virgin identity. At the same time, though, Lara writes a text ahead of its time in its portrayal of a defiant indigenous consciousness. In disregarding the text's prescience solely

because of its author's mestizo-criollo provenance, one risks repeating Lara's mistake: retrenching identities in narrowly-defined cultural and/or racial parameters. Despite the difficulties, we must, in effect, suspend the categories of race and class when appraising the novel in order to appreciate indigenismo and indigenous movements, notwithstanding their many divergences, as different though not contradictory moments in the quest to apprehend indigenous political consciousness as autonomous but nonetheless actively engaged with modernity.

Notes

¹ The 1952 National Revolution marked the culmination of a tumultuous period of political and discursive agitation against the ruling oligarchy that became particularly intense in the aftermath of the Chaco War with Paraguay (1931-1935) in which Bolivia suffered a humiliating defeat. In the Chaco's arid trenches, the urban middle-class soldiers witnessed firsthand the abject treatment the indigenous conscripts received, coerced by the government to fight for a country whose existence barely registered on their consciousness. Moved by their plight, many of these educated young men went on to write novels and short stories, decrying the war and highlighting the abyss between the Indians and the Bolivia they were supposed to be defending. A case in point would be Augusto Cespedes's short story, "El pozo" included in his anthology, *Sangre de mestizos* (1936). It was in this context that Lara inaugurated his literary career with *Repete* (1937), an autobiographical account of his experiences in the Chaco War. Unsurprisingly, Lara's literary production was intertwined with his political commitments. In 1940, he went on to form, with collaborators, the Partido Izquierdista Revolucionario (PIR), a Stalinist political party.

² The term "cholo" was used commonly in Bolivia as a pejorative term for mestizos. At the same time, the term also connoted racial mestizos who, however, had more cultural affinities with the indigenous.

³ Even within Lara's own bibliography, *Yanakuna* stands out for its strident criticism of *mestizaje*. His earlier novel *Surumi* (1942) presents education, as well as marriage, between the plebian indigenous and the upper-class *criollo* elite as the ideal means for preparing the nation for an eventual revolution and thus evinces decidedly mestizo overtones. In contrast, his later trilogy (*Yawarninchij*, 1959, *Sinchikay*, 1962, and *Llallipacha*, 1965) is schematically Marxist and doctrinaire. Lara's conceptual shift can perhaps be explained by the changing context. In early 1940s when Lara wrote *Surumi*, the ideological differences between his party PIR and the MNR were still somewhat nebulous as both parties were still relatively new. By the time *Yanakuna* was conceived, the political divide between the two parties was marked. By his own admission, Lara wrote the trilogy at the behest of a particularly insistent functionary of the Communist Party (Lara and Antezana 40-41). The doctrinaire tone of these later texts might have to do with this officer's and Lara's own political affiliations, and the fact that their principal interlocutor was the MNR's post-revolutionary bourgeois state.

⁴ In the words of Jorge Coronado, indigenismo, a movement that began in the mid-nineteenth century and continued well into the 1970s, was "an array of cultural and political practices [that] sought the political and social vindication of the [Andean] region's indigenous peoples. . . . Intellectuals went to great lengths to imagine a nation that would count all of the region's subjects as equal citizens. Indigenismo's myriad representations—in literature, visual culture, anthropology, social theory—functioned as a kind of first step towards the desired inclusiveness" (55).

⁵ The *cholos* were routinely presented as uncouth, deceitful and disruptive in texts authored by proponents of *mestizaje*. An example would be Antonio Díaz Villamil's 1948 *La niña de sus ojos*. However, here the state's ideal mestiza national subject was sculpted out of the *cholos'* exuberant vulgarity through education. This mestiza, in turn, becomes the harbinger of education to a remote indigenous community, thus facilitating its integration within the modern nation state. In contrast, *Yanakuna* holds out no hope for the *cholos'* moral and intellectual uplift, despite their education.

⁶ One of the most important novels to propose this pedagogical cleaving between the *cholos* and the *mestizos* was Antonio Díaz Villamil's *La niña de sus ojos* (1948). But right from the beginning of the twentieth century, intellectuals as ideologically disparate as the radical modernist, Franz Tamayo (*Creación de la pedagogía nacional* 1910) and the conservative Enrique Finot (*Historia de la pedagogía boliviana* 1917) had advocated the state's pedagogical intervention in order to sculpt the ideal mestizo citizen out of the cholo and the indigenous masses.

⁷ Katarismo refers to the Bolivian indigenous movement that crystallized during the mid-1970s around an explicitly cultural agenda. The movement traced its antecedents to the 1781 uprising of the eighteenth-century revolutionary leader Tupac Katari, regarded along with the uprising of Tupac Amará, as one of the earliest attempts to overthrow Spanish colonial domination. The promotion of local indigenous languages and the recovery of a distinctly indigenous historical memory become important objectives of the twentieth-century kataristas. In 1978 Katarismo split into two political parties: Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Katari (MRTK) and Movimiento Indio Revolucionario Tupak Katari (MIRTK). Later day indigenous political outfits develop out of the initial Katarismo movement.

⁸ Rivera favors the term "ciclo" for pre-revolutionary indigenous rebellions in light of the ideological and organizational overlaps between seemingly sporadic insurrections occurring in close succession across different

settings. These rebellions, she argues, are better understood within the context of “base estructural del ayllú andino” (*Oprimidos* 94).

⁹ For more on indigenous rebellions in the twentieth century see Silvia Rivera’s *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: Luchas del campesinado Aymara y Qhechwa: 1900-1980*.

¹⁰ Significantly, it would not be Quispe’s hardline MIP but Evo Morales’ more inclusive and less radically indigenous Movimiento hacia el Socialismo (MAS) that would sweep the 2005 national elections. Morales’ continuing popularity lies in his pragmatic governance, which, to borrow from Rivera’s eloquent description of contemporary indigenous participation in national (and not just indigenous) affairs, reflects “esa ‘nación desde abajo’ que quizás sea más capaz [...] de articular pactos sociales inclusivos, refundar la democracia, hallar salidas productivas soberanas” (Rivera 68). This “nation from below” attests to the subalterns’ active interpellation of modernity.

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