Historiography, Historiographic Identity and Historical Consciousness in Peru

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On 27 April 2003, Lima’s newly elected mayor, Luis Castañeda, ordered the removal of Francisco Pizarro’s statue from the Plaza Mayor. For some 50 years, the equestrian statue of the conquistador from Extremadura had stood in a little adjacent plaza on the north-eastern corner of the main plaza. The mayor justified the decision to remove the statue on the grounds that ‘the little plaza must be a symbol of all Peru and for this reason it will be represented by its most distinguished insignia,’ and he vowed to erect three flags in its place, the Peruvian national flag, the flag of the city of Lima, and the flag of the Tawantinsuyo or Inca Empire. The removal provoked a heated debate between those who saw Castañeda’s decision as, at best, a hollow and demagogic gesture and, at worst, a case of cultural philistinism, and those who celebrated the gesture on a variety of grounds, ranging from a stress on the poor aesthetic qualities of the statue to the argument that the nation’s major plaza was no place for a foreign illiterate ruffian who had done little more than pillage and murder. Significantly, a large part of those who celebrated the removal of the statue did so on grounds not unlike those expressed by Adriana Doig Manucci, whose letter to La Industria of Trujillo (the city that Pizarro founded and named after his place of birth) was published in early May: ‘Pizarro’s statue is a symbol of the man who conquered us, the man who ended our culture in a violent way. I do not think that the man who began the invasion of our culture deserves a statue. Perhaps this is why we find it so difficult to find our identity.’ Such arguments were countered by those who pointed out that Pizarro did not conquer ‘us,’ since that ‘us’ was a product of that very conquest and that, as Mario Vargas Llosa noted, ‘the conquistadores of five hundred years ago are not the ones responsible for the
fact that in today’s Peru there is so much poverty, such harrowing inequality, such discrimination, ignorance and exploitation. [Those responsible] are Peruvians of all races and colours who are very much alive.  Pizarro’s conquest, these critics noted, was no less violent than that of the Incas whose empire is represented by the invented Tawantinsuyo flag that would stand where Pizarro’s statue had been.

In this study I will argue that this debate can be read as a reflection of the schizophrenia that characterises Peruvians’ historical consciousness, understood as ‘the area in which collective memory, the writing of history, and other modes of shaping images of the past in the public mind merge.’ This schizophrenic historical consciousness is a product of the exposure of most Peruvians to two contradictory and highly simplistic historical master narratives which have little in common with the historiography produced today by most Peruvian and foreign scholars. In an essay on French historiography in the twentieth century, Jacques Revel argues that ‘a certain French historiographic identity can be discerned despite the diversity of individual works and choices.’ If the Annales ‘movement,’ in its various and sometimes contradictory guises, was at the centre of French historiography, around what identity-conferring idea or movement does Peruvian historiography revolve? Is there such a thing as a ‘Peruvian historiographic identity?’ I will suggest that something resembling a Peruvian historiographic identity is taking shape and that its character, although far from static, is defined largely in relation to the historiographical revolution of the 1970s, which I have called elsewhere the Nueva Historia. In the last few decades, historians have begun to rewrite Peruvian history and are producing a version of the country’s past that, in moving beyond older Manichean interpretations, is providing one of the key elements in the construction of a more just and inclusive collective consciousness. Yet, this historiographic identity and the historiography that produces it have influenced only marginally the historical consciousness of most Peruvians. Although most historians are aware of the need to modify the historical master narratives that inform historical consciousness, until recently there had been few, if any, attempts to do so. However, as I will venture, recent developments are a cause for optimism.

As Michel de Certeau has argued, historiographical production is embedded in a locus of socio-economic, political and cultural production. This locus establishes the possibilities but also the limits of historiographical production: it allows but also forbids. Indeed, the emergence of a new history in the 1970s in Peru can only be properly understood in a broader social, political and cultural context. Like the French ‘nouvelle histoire’ of the 1930s, the Peruvian Nueva
Historia was built around a critique of traditional history, which it saw as little more than ‘a meaningless catalogue of presidents and public works, of battles and dates and heroic acts.’ In its place, the Nueva Historia proposed a scientific and politically relevant history, and one that would break down the walls of the discipline and incorporate the insights offered by other social sciences. The architects of the Nueva Historia were influenced by an eclectic mix of imported theoretical perspectives, including the new English social history, Althusserian Marxism, the Annales school and dependency theory. At the same time, they found in the works of José Carlos Mariátegui an original and largely autochthonous explanatory framework of Peruvian history and society. To be sure, the Nueva Historia also drew on a strong academic historical tradition, represented by Jorge Basadre and Pablo Macera, who trained many of the new historians. By contrast, it rejected the conservative and Hispanist historiography personified by José de la Riva Agüero and his disciples, such as José Agustín de la Puente and Guillermo Lohmann.

Both global and local political factors, such as the Cuban Revolution and the Velasco reforms of the late 1960s, accounted for the emergence of the Nueva Historia. The Nueva Historia practitioners themselves were representative of a society undergoing profound changes. Many were provincianos. Some were women. Significantly, a number had been trained in other disciplines, particularly sociology, and were not, strictly speaking, historians. Foreign historians, too, participated in this process. Most important, perhaps, many of these historians combined their scholarly pursuits with active political militancy. It is easy to forget the importance of the political left in Peru in the 1970s and 1980s. As Nelson Manrique noted in the mid-1980s: ‘at this time our country boasts the strongest guerrilla movement in South America, the legal Left with the greatest political presence – the United Left — and the most important reformist party, historically speaking, in power: APRA.’ In this political context, scholars of the left had a virtual cultural hegemony (though not an institutional academic hegemony). For left-wing scholars, the revolution that they were bringing about within academia could not be dissociated from the revolution at large. Indeed, most ‘new’ historians intended their research to contribute to bringing about a major social transformation, if not necessarily a revolution. Many topics of research were chosen for their political, indeed, revolutionary relevance. The purpose of the new history was not primarily to contribute to Peruvian historiography, but to change the national historical consciousness: to re-write Peruvian history in such as way as to bring to light the system of domination that the oligarchies, from the Conquista on, had put in place to keep Peruvians in chains, and to reclaim traditions of resistance that pointed to the subordinate’s potential for revolutionary struggle. As Brooke Larson noted, many of the studies
published in the 1970s on the nature of peasant economies and the hacienda regime 'set themselves the task of assessing the potential of peasants as revolutionaries.'

The revolutionary duty of the militant historian seemed to be to provide Peruvians with alternative formative myths and historical examples of revolutionary behaviour.

However, far from being unitary or static, the Nueva Historia was characterised by a varied and dynamic scholarship, which produced several important debates. Indeed, two movements in the Nueva Historia 'revolution' are clearly definable. The first movement, a reaction against traditional, conservative, Hispanist historiography, was denunciatory in character: its goal was to subvert that historiography by bringing to light the systems of domination that the colonial and republican elites had constructed. In this view, the historical consciousness produced by that system of domination helped to sustain it. However, in denouncing it, scholars lost sight of the dominated: in this scholarship, those below – the subordinated — became passive and inert victims of the system. In bringing to light the system of domination, the agency of the subaltern was pushed back into the shadows. The second movement, though ideologically germane to the first, was a reaction to its oversimplification and to its failure to acknowledge the role of the subordinate sectors in shaping Peru’s history from below. As Magdalena Chocano and Alberto Flores Galindo have argued, though it sought to subvert traditional historiography, until the mid-1980s the Nueva Historia shared with its nemesis a common 'uchronic' vision of Peruvian history: according to this perspective, Peruvian history was a history of failure. Chocano argued that the uchronic vision could be traced back to José de la Riva Agüero, whose views, paradoxically, had been adopted by a new generation of historians in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Heraclio Bonilla, who sought to subvert the very order that Riva Agüero epitomized. In attempting to subvert the traditional historiographical interpretations, Bonilla reproduced the interpretative framework that Riva Agüero had originally put forward: a history of lost opportunities, of defeat, and of failure. Significantly, such paradoxes are not unique to Peruvian historiography. Indeed, the stigma of ‘failure’ induced by ‘deep structures’ and ‘persistence’ of ‘colonial legacies’ is a persistent theme in historiographical and other views of Latin American development. The political implications of these interpretations of history reveal why it could be held by both old conservatives and young Marxists. As Jeremy Adelman notes: ‘if the past is destiny, then the prospects for a stable progressive present are seldom great. For some this helps justify voluntarist calls for revolutionary ruptures to break the grip of inertial forces; for others it is a warning against tinkering with explosive social arrangements lest they be plunged into irrevocable chaos.’

In response to the history of failure, Flores Galindo called for a different
history, one that would bring to light how the country’s many problems ‘have been experienced by [history’s] protagonists, their ideas and feelings, their hopes so that in this way we may give the power of speech back to those who were condemned to silence.’ Chocano argued in favour of a history that rescued the voices and traditions of the poor and oppressed. This would be a non-unitary history: the point was not to lament the absence of a coherent nation, but to acknowledge the cultural diversity that characterized Peru. Indeed, a number of scholars, such as Steve Stern and Karen Spalding, had begun to unearth a different history, in which those from below, particularly Indians, played a prominent role. Though structures were certainly in place, the resistance to those structures was equally, if not more, important to these scholars. This new approach drew on developments within Marxist theory, in particular E. P. Thompson’s work on the moral economy, adapted to peasant societies by James C. Scott, and the growing influence of Gramscian notions of hegemony. More broadly, historians incorporated the methodological approaches of anthropology and psychoanalysis, shifting attention from objectivity, structures and economic processes to subjectivity, culture, and identity. One obvious and important development was the growing openness to ethnohistory and its methods and sources. These developments came to the fore in the now famous debate between Henri Favre and Bonilla, on one side, and Florencia Mallon and Nelson Manrique, on the other, regarding peasant nationalism during the War of the Pacific. As Flores Galindo suggested, the conclusion reached by Bonilla, and expressed more famously by Julio Cotler, that Peru was not a nation, amounted to an understanding of the country in terms of what it is not: i.e. a prototypical European country where nationalism was produced by a firmly established bourgeoisie. Set against this idealized model of the nation-state, Peru was bound to be found wanting.

Review essays of the 1980s show that these debates were beginning to bear fruit. Both Peruvian and foreign scholars had begun to produce a truly different Peruvian history, a history that sought to bring to light ‘the many faces of Peru,’ as Alberto Flores Galindo had hoped and whose Buscando un Inca marked this important shift in the literature. Flores Galindo and Manuel Burga’s co-authored Apogeo y crisis de la República Aristocrática had been an attempt to write a Peruvian ‘total history.’ In this book the authors had sought to ‘bring together the analysis of structures with that of mentalities, the perception of landscape with demographic calculations, the understanding of culture with political analysis.’ By contrast, Buscando un Inca, like Burga’s El nacimiento de una utopía, had started out as ‘total’ histories of rural Peru, but had ended up as histories of an idea: the Andean utopia. As such, the work of these scholars echoed the transition from total history based on structural analysis to a history
of mentalités. Indeed, the introduction to *Buscando un Inca* made this explicit. The Andean man, Flores Galindo argued, was constructed as a ‘a character at the margins of history, unchangeable, living eternally isolated and forcibly kept at arm’s length from any type of modernity. Immobile and passive. Unique and abstract.’ For Flores Galindo, *lo andino* ‘is not limited to the peasantry, it includes urban and mestizo people.’ However, he stresses, *lo andino* is also an ancient culture ‘which should be conceived of in terms similar to those used with the Greeks, the Egyptians and the Chinese,’ but which must be shorn of the myth that surrounds it. History is the answer: ‘history offers a way: to look for the ties between ideas, myths, dreams, objects and men who produce them and consume them, live and marvel at them.’ In this sense, History must be used to replace Myth. In so doing, the historian rescues *lo andino* from the museum window and puts it at centre stage in the constitution of the Peruvian nation. This same sentiment is evident in Manuel Burga’s contention that in his *Nacimiento de una utopía* ‘are expressed the anxieties, hopes and desires to give back to the Andean majorities all the singularity of their creative force in the formation of the Peruvian nation.’24 As such, the Andean utopia appears as an engine of national regeneration fuelled by an alternative historical consciousness. Indeed, for some scholars, like Nelson Manrique and Rodrigo Montoya, the scholarship on the Andean utopia needed to be understood as both a product of the crisis that Peru was undergoing in the 1980s and as the basis for a debate that would lead to the resolution of that crisis.26 As Guillermo Rochabrun noted, ‘the Andean utopia can be seen as the condensation of certain values, such as justice, work, discipline and collaboration. Values with which to build a future society whose becoming is based on the idealization [poetización] of the prehispanic world; and particularly although not necessarily, the Inca past.’27

However, the notion of an Andean utopia as national regeneration came under criticism, from both the right and the left. For María Isabel Remy, the Andean utopia was taken to absurd extremes: “‘The” Andean (geography and history) is seen as possessing all possible virtues (it is conservationist, it generates new soil, it is balanced, collectivist, uses renewable energy sources, is based on reciprocity, barter and abundance) whereas “the” Western is seen as possessing all that is negative ([it is] depredating, based on individual accumulation, exploitation, concentration [of wealth], individualism and penury).’28 According to Fernando Iwasaki, the Nueva Historia only sought to deny the existence of the Peruvian nation. Drawing on the writings of Víctor Andrés Belaúnde, a conservative Catholic writer and historian, Iwasaki called for an *utopía indicativa* to replace Flores Galindo’s *utopía andina*: ‘Peruvians must look for solutions not by stressing what divides us, but rather what unites us: history, state, Church, heroes and culture.’29 Others, like Cecilia Méndez, criticised the neo-indigenismo
of the ‘historian-prophets’ of the Andean utopia (she conceded that Flores Galindo’s treatment of the Andean utopia was more sophisticated than that of others) and pointed out that recent studies revealed that most assumptions regarding the discourses on the Andean utopia were mistaken. Méndez called for greater intellectual honesty: ‘what undermines this research, more than Indians constantly “resisting” the Western “onslaught” are the social scientists who refuse to accept reality (both historical and contemporary); thus sacrificing its rich complexity in favour of Manichean reductionisms and dichotomous schema.’ This historiography, she pointed out, was subordinating history to politics, where politics is ‘conceived as a movement “from the intellectual to the people,” in which history is more an instrument than knowledge, a tool for change vaguely desired by intellectuals, and in accordance with which, heroes, myths and golden ages are invented, recreated or glorified.’

Henrique Urbano criticised the Andean utopia for being anti-modern and authoritarian: ‘in the hands of a new middle class moulded in the dogmatic and sectarian atmosphere of universities and political parties that shares many of the characteristics of a fragmentary US evangelism, the historical purpose of the Andean utopia crushes that which it should liberate: the collective word, communication between free and ethically responsible men, sharing equal conditions, when it expresses its longing in a language that is rationally unintelligible.’ According to these views, in attempting to undermine the mythologizing traditional perspectives of Peruvian history, the scholars of the Andean utopia had substituted those myths with new myths; in the process, the richness and complexity of Peru’s history was compromised and made hostage to a political goal.

The debates around the Andean utopia coincided with the beginning of another transition in Peruvian historiography. Despite its growth and success, in the mid- to late 1980s the Nueva Historia faced a number of challenges, which gradually began to erode its dominance of historiographical production. On the one hand, a severe economic crisis had begun to undermine the capacity of historians to undertake research. Hyperinflation ate away at their meagre university salaries. Many left their university positions or were forced to combine their academic pursuits with jobs in other areas. Some may have even become one of Michael F. Jimenez’s ‘taxicab-historians.’ Others joined the economic migratory flow to the north. Yet others became consultants in local NGOs. At the same time and no less important, the internal war between the Shining Path and the Peruvian state made historical research a dangerous pursuit. Some regions of the country were practically sealed off. It was not unknown for historians on the left to be accused of sympathizing with, or being, ‘subversives.’ Many foreign scholars, justifiably, were frightened away from doing research in Peru. For Peruvian scholars the war added to the difficulties brought about by the economic
crisis. Finally, the Nueva Historia had also to confront the collapse of the bipolar world and its impact on the Peruvian left. The crisis of the left, and Marxism, coincided with the death, in 1990, of Alberto Flores Galindo, one of the most influential new historians. The same factors that undermined the scholars had an even greater impact on the sectors (particularly the urban working class and the rural proletariat) that their scholarship sought both to redeem historiographically and to empower politically. By the 1990s, the Peruvian left, and the paradigm that sustained it (a revolutionary transformation of society leading to socialism), had become strongly debased. In this sense, the crisis of the Nueva Historia was not primarily that of a particular form of historical scholarship (Marxism in the broad sense), but of the role that the historians of the Nueva Historia had created for themselves (i.e. the ideologues of a revolutionary historical consciousness) and for the social sectors that, once conscious, would undertake the transformation of Peruvian society.

II

In this context, a different generation of historians emerged. These historians were the product of a different ‘locus’ of historical production, one in which the political debates of the 1970s had become less and less relevant. Though they were not all marching to the same drum-beat, the scholars of the Nueva Historia had a great deal in common. They were not all Marxists but most worked from a Marxist perspective. Moreover, they saw themselves as members of a distinct movement, an intellectual and political vanguard. They shared a common overtly-stated goal: to challenge conservative historiography and contribute to a radical transformation of Peruvian society. By contrast, the historians who have emerged in the late 1980s and the 1990s are not bound by a common ideology, nor do they espouse a common political cause. Moreover, their work is informed by a much broader and eclectic mix of theoretical and methodological perspectives. In part, the absence of a single overarching logic is a product of the professionalisation of the teaching of history in Peru at the university level, a process in which the Nueva Historia pioneers played a key role as teachers (although often they did so from the institutional margins of the historical profession, since access to the history departments was still controlled by traditional historians). It is also the product of the absence of an ideologically and politically charged context such as that which characterised the late 1970s and early 1980s, when combining historical scholarship and militancy was deemed both natural and necessary. Critically, whereas the Nueva Historia generation grew up in period of relative hope (marked by the Cuban revolution, decolonisation, etc.), the new generation of historians has grown up in a period of sustained economic and political crisis. They have survived incompetent
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(Belaúnde), corrupt (García), and Mafioso (Fujimori) governments, one of the bloodiest internal wars in Latin America, and a succession of economic policies that have all failed to address Peru’s perennial problems (deep inequality and mass poverty) and exacerbated others (the tendency towards authoritarianism and corruption). But some historians, like Cecilia Méndez, see in this enduring crisis the emergence of a new hope in the ‘cholification’ of the country: ‘the fact is that we find ourselves faced with an unstoppable process of cultural fusion and integration – in which communications and migration play a predominant role – that would seem to signal the birth of a new nation.’ There may be some truth to this argument, but we should be careful not to replace the old Andean utopia with a new, and equally problematic, *cholo* utopia.

The new trends in Peruvian history are part of broader global trends towards ‘heteroglossia’ and, as such, can be seen as contributions to a historical master narrative that emphasises, and to some extent celebrates, diversity over unity. As elsewhere, the ‘postmodern challenge,’ with its denial of the possibility of historical truth, has not undermined Peruvian historiography, but rather helped reinvigorate it by opening up a series of new and exciting avenues of investigation. Whereas the Nueva Historia drew strongly on structuralism and Marxist analysis, today the analytical tools employed are increasingly diverse, ranging from textual deconstruction to Neo-Tocquevillian political theory. Marxism has not been altogether abandoned, but it is no longer the interpretative hegemon that it once was. If it survives, it is no longer in its scientific/Althusserian mode, but through the interpretative lenses of Antonio Gramsci or E. P. Thompson. However, historians have added to their box of interpretative lenses the perspectives offered by Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, as well as Mikhail Bakhtin, Roger Chartier, Michel de Certeau, Joan W. Scott, Benedict Anderson, Clifford Geertz and Ranajit Guha. Indeed, whereas the advent of the Nueva Historia signalled a clear caesura with traditional historiography, the recent scholarship is engaged in a dialogue with the Nueva Historia, often simply fine-tuning previous arguments, although sometimes providing important re-interpretations. Most important, perhaps, the range of historical fields of investigation has increased considerably, to include areas such as the history of reading, the history of music or the history of urban planning. The notion of source material has expanded beyond the written text to the spoken word, the object and the image. Although there is no Peruvian ‘New Cultural History’ to match the Mexican NCH, say, most new studies (particularly but not exclusively those by US-based historians) are strongly influenced by that particular scholarship. Significantly, although historians continue to give priority to those at the bottom of the heap, today subaltern groups other than Indians, such as women, blacks, Amazon Indians, and immigrants are subject to study. Similarly,
the analysis of domination and resistance has broadened to newer areas: indeed, though much of the early attention was focused on disputes over land between haciendas and peasant communities, today historians have turned to other arenas of contention and negotiation, such as the home or the convent.

Lack of space prevents a more detailed analysis of the recent literature, although I want to highlight four areas that seem to me particularly worthy of attention. Perhaps the most valuable legacy of the structural economic history that dominated in the 1970s, and parts of the 1980s, is that today we have fine regional histories, or regionally based studies of export commodities, labour relations and other topics, for almost every region in Peru. The last decade has seen a series of studies that have expanded regional history to previously neglected regions, and which have moved beyond the realm of economic history to incorporate political and cultural approaches to the study of Peru’s regions. Unlike regional history, political history was largely neglected by the Nueva Historia, but has come into its own in the last ten years or so. This is part of a broader Latin American trend and, as a recent review essay shows, historians working on Peru are playing a key role in the development of this literature. Admittedly, most studies concentrate on the ‘long’ nineteenth century, and it remains to be seen whether the new political history will spread to other periods. Though broadly conceived as a new history of politics and ideas, the issues examined are varied and include citizenship, elections, sociability, public opinion and, more vaguely, political ‘culture.’ Recently, Nils Jacobsen and Cristobal Aljovín have suggested that this literature can be grouped into two camps: ‘on the one hand, those identified with the analysis of hegemony, with subaltern studies and with the concept of post-colonialism (exemplified by the work of Florencia Mallon); on the other hand, approaches to political culture that might be called “neo-Tocquevillian,” focusing on civil society, the public sphere, the ideological and institutional nature of political regimes, and citizenship (exemplified by the work of François Xavier Guerra).’ Clearly, as Jacobsen and Aljovín themselves admit in a footnote, this line is too neatly drawn.

As with politics, the Nueva Historia largely neglected the study of religion. Today, however, the history of religion is a burgeoning area of research. Yet it is an extremely varied field with attention falling on, among other themes, the construction or ‘invention’ of an ‘Andean Catholicism’ in the early colonial period, idolatry and extirpation in the seventeenth century, hagiographies of Santa Rosa and San Martín de Porras that, unlike traditional historiography, place the saints within a broader economic, social and political context, and Church-state relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Another important development in Peruvian historiography has been the growing attention to women and gender. Until recently, women had received very little attention
from historians (even from female historians, who played an important role in the early years of the Nueva Historia). As elsewhere, an early focus on writing a history of women (and very often of ‘great’ women), or ‘herstory,’ has made way for studies that place much greater emphasis on gender relations. There are now important articles, monographs and collected volumes on the colonial and republican periods that examine a variety of largely neglected topics from new and innovative perspectives, including the gendered economic and cultural roles of beaterios, recogimientos and convents in the colonial period, the role played by liberalism in determining the outcome of conflict among partners in the nineteenth century, and medical discourse on women in the early twentieth century. The interweaving of gender and ethnicity, very much present in many of these studies, is also evident in a number of essays in recent collected volumes on the history of women, gender and the family, and particularly in Marisol de la Cadena’s brilliant study of mestizaje in Cuzco in the twentieth century.

These are only a few of the themes that Peruvian historiography has developed in the last decade or so. Of course, there are several fields that remain largely unexplored. In contrast to other Latin American countries such as Mexico or Brazil, the new economic history (especially of the cliometric kind) has yet to make much of an impact in Peru, although Alfonso Quiroz and Paul Gootenberg have produced fine studies of finance, prices, and nineteenth-century economic ideas. Similarly, as Rory Miller has shown, despite its relative paucity and the many obstacles encountered by researchers, business history in Peru has made an important contribution to understanding Peru’s economic development.

Environmental history, a growing field in many countries, is still in its infancy in Peru. Despite these obvious lacunae, the new historiography has built up enough of a critical mass to form the basis of new single-volume histories. Nelson Manrique has published a history of the republican period that draws extensively on the regional history that he helped pioneer. Both Marcos Cueto and Carlos Contreras’ Historia del Perú Contemporáneo, intended as a textbook for undergraduates, and Peter Klarén’s comprehensive English-language study of Peruvian history, draw extensively on the new literature. Of these new syntheses (and there are others), the volume by Cueto and Contreras makes the most explicit case for developing a new master narrative. The authors stress the problem they are trying to address: the absence of historical textbooks informed by recent scholarship that offer a more sophisticated interpretation of Peruvian history. Crucially, the resolution of the problem is seen in terms that merge education, development, and equity: ‘The failure to resolve this problem can be extremely serious, since it promotes the diffusion of a superficial historical perception of the past, full of clichés and easy and Manichean interpretations that undermine reflection on the origins of these problems, dilute the possibility
of identification and binding with different social and ethnic groups that inhabit a common territory, and reduce the capacity to imagine development and to aspire collectively to a better future. In this sense, the authors view their textbook, and therefore the more sophisticated historical consciousness that it aims to help produce, as a tool for social change.

Indeed, in spite of the markedly different ideological and political context in which the new scholarship is being produced, most recent historians share the belief held by scholars of the Nueva Historia generation that historical production has a political (in the broad sense), if not revolutionary, role to play. In this sense, they conceive of their *metier* in terms that would seem alien to many European or US historians today. They work under the assumption that their research is not only relevant to modern Peru, but may actually hold one of the keys to making the country a better place for them and others to live in. To the extent that Peruvian society continues to be characterised by deep social, racial and gender inequalities and mass poverty, the social *engagement* of Peruvian historians is hardly surprising. What is less clearly stated in these studies is how these findings will make Peru a better place. Academic history books are read by a very small percentage of Peruvians, and usually by those who are least affected by the many social and economic problems that most Peruvians face. Presumably, like the Nueva Historia scholars before them, these younger scholars intend that their findings filter through to and alter the historical master narrative, and thus influence Peru’s historical consciousness. If so, as many acknowledge, we must pay greater attention to the mechanisms of transmission.

III

Arguably, the school, the ‘citizen factory,’ is the main institution that forges a country’s historical consciousness. As Philippe Joutard has noted, the teaching of history at school traditionally has had four goals: (i) to establish a collective memory, (ii) to act as a vector of national identity, (iii) to prepare the pupil to understand the world in which she will grow up and (iv) to develop a critical mind. Typically, in Peru as elsewhere, the teaching of history at school has concentrated on the first two goals. It has done so, moreover, by inventing linear and unitary national histories and promoting vulgar forms of nationalism. In a recent article, after revising a sample of textbooks, Chuck Walker argues that ‘traditional history’ still dominates the Peruvian master narrative: ‘textbooks used in Peru tend to replicate conventional perspectives. These seemingly antiquated but quite persistent interpretations overlook the role of the lower classes and the provinces in modern Peru or use essentialized [sic], often blatantly racist depictions of the Indians.’ Walker concludes that the ‘national narratives have not caught up with recent historiography or, more precisely, historians
have not managed to lodge their innovative findings into broader writings and discussions about Peru’s past and its weight on the present. This conclusion echoes the findings of a group of Peruvian historians who, in 1993, published a short book that discussed the nature of history teaching in Peru. According to their analysis of the history curricula set by the Ministry for Education, the teaching of history left a lot to be desired. Though good textbooks (by Franklin Pease, Juan Ansón and Pablo Macera, as well as one used at the Reyes Rojos School) were available, the best selling textbooks reproduced a mythologized history, to be memorised and regurgitated, leaving no room for discussion and for the creative use of historical information. In this sense, the publication of the Cueto and Contreras book is a cause for optimism. The book has its failings. It is quite traditional in its structure. It concentrates on politics and, to a much lesser extent, economics. Cultural processes are hardly mentioned. Women are very much absent. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction.

However, and crucially, textbooks and curricula are not the only means of transmission of the national historical narrative. Writing in 1988, Flores Galindo noted that though textbooks continued to portray the traditional view of Peruvian history, the teaching of history in the classrooms had begun to change. Drawing on research by sociologist Gonzalo Portocarrero, Flores Galindo argued that the idea crítica had filtered through to school and university students, and in some cases had substituted the traditional interpretation of national history. According to Flores Galindo, the idea crítica amounted to the following: ‘the country’s problems begin with the conquest, the Incas were a time [sic] of splendidous development that was cut short by the colonial period (mita and depopulation), [the consequences of which] could not be overcome following independence while the liquidation of its legacy is a key duty for the immediate future.’ This version of history, which moved from the university to schools, carried by schoolteachers, was highly influential in the classrooms. Thus, despite the persistence of the traditional version of Peru’s history in the textbooks, what pupils and students are taught by their teachers at school and university does not necessarily conform to what they find in their books. At school and in most universities, then, Peruvians are exposed to a historiographical schizophrenia. Peruvian history, as it is taught to most Peruvians and as the debate on the removal of Pizarro’s statue revealed, is based on two contradictory and largely negative master narratives, which are impervious to the more recent historiography that I have briefly reviewed here and which neither stimulate intellectual skills nor invite critical reflection. As such, it is not surprising that most Peruvians develop a historical consciousness that, in addition to being broadly negative in its outlook, fails to either prepare them to understand the world in which they live or to develop a critical mind.
One recent ‘poll’ may help illustrate, if only in a very superficial manner, some of the problems I am pointing to. This poll, analysed by Wilfredo Kapsoli in a recently published essay, includes the answers from 224 students from five different public universities (José Faustino Sánchez Carrión in Huacho, Daniel Alcides Carrión in Cerro de Pasco, San Agustín in Arequipa, and Enrique Guzmán y Valle and San Marcos in Lima). When asked to grade different ‘historiographical tendencies’ from 1 to 10, the students awarded historical materialism an average top mark of 7.26, followed closely by structuralism (6.19), ‘the enlightenment’ (6.16), functionalism (5.77), (neo) positivism [sic] (5.45) and ‘Annales’ (4.40). Asked what attitude should historians adopt vis-à-vis ‘political power,’ 42 percent answered that it was the historian’s duty to criticise it, while another 25.9 percent thought that it was necessary to transform it. Asked about the ‘the historian’s stance vis-à-vis ethic, social and political commitment,’ 31.3 percent answered that it was the ‘most important dimension of history’ and another 25 percent that such an ethic dimension had to adopted without sacrificing ‘rigour,’ leading Kapsoli to remark ‘we can see here that the historian must adopt an intellectual and moral commitment vis-à-vis the age he lives in and society.’ The students were then asked about the best and worst parts of Peruvian history. In their estimation, the most important period of Peruvian history was the prehispanic period (27.7), followed by the period of independence (13.8). By contrast, the most ‘dramatic’ periods were ‘Colonial [sic]’ (18.3), ‘The War with Chile’ (15.6) and ‘The present crisis’ (12.5). Similarly, in answering the intriguing question ‘First person (or hero) who should not figure in Peruvian history,’ the students top choices were ‘Colonial [sic]’ (18.3) and Francisco Pizarro (12.1). By contrast, when asked about the ‘fundamental heroes of the country,’ the students voted overwhelmingly for Miguel Grau (33.5), followed by Tupac Amaru II (11.6). It is worth pointing out that in all of these questions, the number of ‘do not know/do not have an opinion’ was between 30 and 40 percent.

Clearly, this poll says almost as much about the outlook of the person who set it as about those who answered it. Indeed, both the choice of questions and the choice of answers (and, more worryingly, Kapsoli’s comments) make for depressing reading. What are we to make of the choice of ‘historical materialism’ and ‘structuralism’ as the historiographical tendencies of choice? Few historians, I believe, would share Kapsoli’s conclusion that such choices ‘show us that in public universities a critical consciousness has not been lost in spite of the enslavement by sleep-inducing ideologies and the attempts to depoliticise society.’ Instead, such choices point, in part, to the all too obvious problems faced by Peruvian public universities that result from a critical lack of funding, which makes the purchase of new books a near impossibility. But they also
point to the failure of some university historians to incorporate new historiographical perspectives into their teaching and update their curricula. If we turn to the questions regarding the ethical and political engagement of historians, the answers should not surprise us. As I have noted above, such a perspective on the historian’s *metier* is widespread in Peru and for good reasons. More problematic are the answers (and the questions) regarding the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ periods and figures of Peruvian history. The *idea crítica* that Flores Galindo points to is evident here: the prehispanic period is perceived, as Kapsoli suggests, as ‘an ideal society, where none of the anomalies that were established later existed,’ while the ‘Colonia’ is seen as the most ‘dramatic’ period, considerably more dramatic than the period described in the poll as ‘The terrorism (The 80s),’ which only obtained 1.3 of the vote. Finally, and significantly, when the students were asked to choose the nation’s top hero, Miguel Grau, the favourite of the nationalist and militaristic tradition beat Tupac Amaru II with ease.

Although far from conclusive, this poll seems to me to illustrate and confirm the idea of a schizophrenic historical consciousness. Building on outdated and oversimplified historiographical foundations, both university teachers and students appear to be reproducing a highly simplified and Manichean view of the past that incorporates elements of both the traditional nationalist perspective and the oversimplifications of the *idea crítica*. What results is an understanding of history that precludes critical analysis: history is taught as dogma. The fact that this dogmatic history consists of two highly antagonistic master narratives only serves to confirm its dogmatic character: the antagonisms are dissipated or simply ignored, while received truths from either master narrative, or even from both at the same time, are invoked to explain away the past, or indeed, the present. Yet this tendency may be undergoing some change. As Carlos Contreras has shown, the history theses at the Universidad Católica are a useful indicator of the type of history that is being produced in Peru (or at the very least in the history department of that particular university). Contreras studied the theses submitted between 1975 and 1982 and showed that, in terms of coverage, colonial history marginally outweighed republican history, and that the two extreme centuries, the sixteenth and the twentieth, received the bulk of attention. The pre-Hispanic period, he lamented, was practically ignored. Thematical, the emphasis was very much on economic and social history. If we reproduce this exercise for the period 1983-2001, we find an interesting change. Over one third of the theses concentrate on the nineteenth century. The twentieth century receives less attention than all other periods, with the exception of the pre-Hispanic period, which remains largely neglected. Thematically, political history and cultural history now outweigh economic and social history. If we divide the 1980s and the 1990s, we find that in the 1990s the shift towards a loosely termed...
cultural history is even greater. However, to see trends beyond the growing importance of political and cultural history is difficult.

Recent theses on political history include a study of the 1912 elections, a biography of Jorge Guillermo Leguía, a study of the Partido Constitucional, examinations of the intellectual world of the young Mariátegui and of the ideology and politics of the young Riva Agüero, the political thought of Nicolas de Piérola, the leadership of the Partido Civil and the ‘oligarchic mentality.’ Clearly, all these theses focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some are no doubt influenced by the work of Carmen Mc Evoy on the Partido Civil and nineteenth century citizenship, but others, such as the study of Mariátegui in his youth, correspond to a different historiographic tradition. Within the broadly defined ‘cultural’ realm, we find an even greater diversity. The history of mentalités has clearly been influential in a number of cases, such as Claudia Rosas’ study of the view of the French Revolution in late eighteenth-century Peru. Several young historians have turned to the family as a unit of historical analysis. One interesting development is the attention given to education policy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In addition, there are several studies on immigration to Peru, covering its Jewish, Polynesian, Italian, and Swiss and German variants. The iconography and the demographic, political, social and cultural dimensions of death and dying are examined for the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The arts and leisure also receive attention, with theses on photography in the early twentieth century, dramatic arts in the transition from the colonial to the republican periods, the political and social roles of music in the colonial period, theatre and nation-building in the early nineteenth century, and public entertainment in the early twentieth century.

A more detailed study of these theses is clearly warranted. Nevertheless, the diversity in the topics chosen by history students at La Católica points to a dynamic scholarship, and one which is largely receptive to broader trends. This is surprising given that, with some exceptions, conservative historians still dominate the history department of La Católica. Some of the dynamism comes from the students themselves, who for several years have been holding a yearly Coloquio de Estudiantes de Historia. The role of the recently deceased Franklin Pease, who supervised the theses of several of the finer historians of the last three decades, must also be stressed. Moreover, many former history students of the university are now teaching there, and their input has no doubt helped reinvigorate the teaching of history. Of course, La Católica is a private university, with more funds than the public universities. But as I have noted above, the problem is not merely financial. What is needed also is a revaluation of how history is taught. At San Marcos University, Manuel Burga, now dean of the university, has taken an important step in this direction by bringing together an
impressive team of young historians, which includes Cristobal Aljovín, Tito Bracamonte, María Emma Mannarelli, Iván Hinojosa and Fanni Muñoz, in the Unidad de Postgrado of the Social Science Faculty. Many of these are former history students of La Católica. The Unidad provides both masters and doctoral courses. It is particularly significant that one of the stated aims of the masters degree is to ‘raise significantly the levels of teaching and training of graduates and university teachers, which, in a short time, will influence the quality of teaching that is provided at the undergraduate level, which will allow the UNMSM to regain, innovate and develop its traditional leadership in historical investigation in Peru.’ Whether such initiatives will be reproduced in other Lima universities, and in the provinces, remains to be seen.

IV

Where, to conclude, does this leave the debate on the removal of Pizarro’s statue from the Plaza Mayor? I hope to have shown that Peruvian historiography is developing the elements needed to overcome the Manichean and simplistic narratives that informed this debate. Historians working today may not be as motivated by political objectives as those of the Nueva Historia generation, but, I would suggest, they are no less committed to producing a politically relevant history, one that may not lead to a socialist revolution but that in producing a new historical consciousness will help Peruvians engage their past in more constructive ways. The point is not to replace the pessimistic historical narratives that have dominated Peruvian historical consciousness with a bombastic celebratory history of, say, subaltern resistance, but rather to produce a national historical narrative that takes into account the convergent and divergent forces that have shaped (and continue to shape) the Peruvian nation. What remains to be done is to ensure that such a historical narrative filters through to the population at large, a project to which, as we have seen, more and more historians are according the importance it deserves. It is to be hoped that the Peruvian government and, particularly, the Ministry of Education will do likewise. In light of the conclusions of the recent report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which point to the deep social, ethnic and gender inequalities that helped produce, and were reproduced by, the violence that brought the Peruvian nation to near collapse in the 1980s and early 1990s, and which stress the need to construct a ‘national memory’ that can form the basis of a more equal, just, and prosperous society, such a project seems all the more relevant.
NOTES

4.  I take this definition of historical consciousness from the journal *History and Memory*.
12.  See, for example, the conclusion to Flores Galindo’s book on the Lima *plebe* in the late eighteenth century: ‘To some extent, the main argument of this book can be summed up in a negative way. The circumstances that explain why a revolution failed to take place.’ A. Flores Galindo, *Aristocracia y plebe: Lima, 1760-1830* (Lima, 1984), p. 235.


16. S. Stem, Peru’s Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640 (Madison, 1982); K. Spalding, Huarochirí: an Andean society under Inca and Spanish rule (Stanford, 1984).


20. See J. Cotler, Clases, estado y nación en el Perú (Lima, 1992 [originally published in 1978]).


22. A. Flores Galindo, Buscando un Inca: Identidad y utopía en los Andes (Havana, 1986).

23. Cáceres Valdivia, “‘No hay tal lugar’,” pp. 11-27.

24. Flores Galindo, Buscando un Inca, p. 6.


29. F. Iwasaki, Nación peruana: entelequia o utopía. Trayectoria de una falacia (Lima, 1988), p. 232. According to Iwasaki, ‘Belaunde’s indicative utopia consists of the acknowledgement of a national character which enriches itself through history (duration [sic]), stimulated by the vital élan of moral duty in a process that will never conclude and that transforms Peruvianess (Peruanidad) into a living synthesis’ (p. 228). See
Flores Galindo’s appraisal of Iwasaki’s critique in A. Flores Galindo, ‘El rescate de la tradición,’ Márbenes, Año IV, No. 8 (1991), pp. 7-19.


32. Recently, Eduardo Cáceres has argued that those scholars who have criticized the notion of an Andean utopia as yet another simplistic starting point for national regeneration have missed the subtleties of Flores Galindo’s text. See Cáceres, ‘No hay tal lugar,’ p. 20.


34. Lack of space prevents a discussion of the differences (in preference for certain topics, methodological approaches, theoretical perspectives) between the foreign ‘Peruvianist’ historians and Peruvian historians discussed here. I would suggest that the lines of division have always been blurred and are becoming increasingly so, as more and more Peruvian historians go abroad to complete their training (or indeed, to pursue academic careers). For this reason, I make no differentiation between the two historiographical productions.


39. See, for example, the contributions to the peasant nationalism debate by Florencia Mallon and Mark Thurner, which draw on postcolonial approaches. F. Mallon, Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1995); M. Thurner, From Two Republics to One Divided: Contradictions of Postcolonial Nationmaking in Andean Peru (Durham and London, 1997).


41. See, however, the relevant essays in S. López Maguiña et al., Estudios culturales: Discursos, poderes, pulsiones (Lima, 2001).

42. This is particularly the case with the north and the Amazonian and ceja de selva regions. On the north, see K. Apel, De la hacienda a la comunidad: La sierra de Piura 1934-1990 (Lima, 1996); A. Díez Hurtado, Comunes y Haciendas: Procesos de Comunalización


44. Admittedly, the new political history has begun to influence studies of the Bourbon period. See C. Walker (ed.), Entre la retórica y la insurgencia: las ideas y los movimientos sociales en los Andes, Siglo XVIII (Cuzco, 1996); S. O’Phelan Godoy (ed.), El Perú en el siglo XVIII: La era borbónica (Lima, 1999); J. Fisher, El Perú borbónico 1750-1824 (Lima, 2000).


46. Excellent examples of the first camp include F. Mallon, Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru (Berkeley, 1994); M. Thurner, From Two Republics to One Divided: Contradictions of Postcolonial Nationmaking in Andean Peru (Durham and London, 1997); C. Walker, Smoldering Ashes: Cuzco and the Creation of Republican Peru (Durham and London, 1999); S. Chambers, From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender and Politics in Arequipa, Peru 1780-1854 (University Park, 1999); as well as a growing literature on slavery, which includes P. Blanchard, Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru (Wilmington, 1992); C. Aguirre, Agentes de su propia libertad: Los esclavos de Lima y la desintegración de la esclavitud, 1821-1854 (Lima, 1993); C. Hünefeldt, Paying the Price of Freedom: Family and Labor among Lima’s Slaves, 1800-1854 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994). The second camp is no less prolific, with numerous articles by G. Chiaramonte, V. Peloso, V. Peralta, J. Chassin, C. Walker, U. Mucke and others on elections, the formation of public opinion, and nineteenth century republicanism. Recent monographs include: A. del Aguila, Callejones y mansiones: Espacios de opinión pública y redes sociales y políticas en la Lima del 900 (Lima, 1997); Carmen McEvoy, La utopía republicana: Ideales y realidades en la formación de la cultura política peruana (1871-1919) (Lima, 1997); Ulrich Mucke, Der Partido Civil in Peru. 1871-1879. Zur Geschichte, politischer Parteien und Representation in Lateinamerika (Stuttgart, 1998); C. Aljovín de Losada, Caudillos y constituciones. Perú 1821-1845 (Lima, 2000). For Peru in comparative perspective, see Marie Danielle Demétas, La Invención Política: Bolivia, Ecuador, Perú en el siglo XIX (Lima, 2003) and Carlos Forment, Democracy in Latin America 1760-1900: Civic Selfhood and Public Life in Mexico and Peru (Chicago, 2003).

47. On Andean Catholicism, see among others, S. MacCormack, Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru (Princeton, 1991); the articles in the special issue of the Revista Andina ‘La invención del catolicismo andino, siglos XVI-


55. I develop this point in Drinot, ‘After the Nueva Historia.’


58. It is interesting to note that websites with historical content, yet another transmission mechanism for the historical master narrative, tend to reproduce the traditional historiography. See www.adonde.com/historia/index.html.


63. Contreras, Nuevas tendencias.

64. Admittedly, the conclusions here are tentative. I have not read all these theses, and I am guided in my comments principally by their titles.


67. F. Janssen Frasson, ‘Tierra y familia: el caso de la Hacienda Torreblanca (1548-1862)’ (2000); J. A. Cosamalon Aguilar, ‘Matrimonios indígenas y convivencia inter-racial en Lima colonial, Santa Ana, 1795-1820’ (1993); D. González del Riego Espinoza,


74. Another promising development, which also points to the growing awareness of the need to improve the teaching of history among schoolteachers and university professors, is the project developed by the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos and PromPerú in 1999 and 2000, which resulted in 18 workshops that were attended by 5000 people in Lima, Callao and another 10 cities. This project brought together 25 distinguished scholars of history and the social sciences’ with secondary schoolteachers and their students, as well as university professors from Education faculties and pedagogical instrument from across the country. See P. Oliart, Territorio, cultura e historia: Materiales para la renovación de la enseñanza sobre la sociedad peruana (Lima, 2003).