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Alegre Henderson, Magally

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Degenerate Heirs of the Empire. Climatic Determinism and Effeminacy in the *Mercurio Peruano*²⁸

Magally Alegre Henderson
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

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Abstract. Objective/context: The European Enlightenment debates on the influence of climate over a region's inhabitants created a gendered discourse that questioned the virility of European men born and raised in the Americas, while at the same time reducing American indigenous men to a state of infancy. These scientific discussions, which circulated throughout the American continent, had a particular resonance in Lima's Enlightenment newspaper the *Mercurio Peruano*. This was due to the broader discussion on the sources of effeminacy and feebleness among *Limeño* men of which this scientific debate was a part. **Originality:** This article explores the gendered dimension of European and American scientific discussions on climatic determinism, researching a particular case: the knowledge produced by the contributors to the *Mercurio Peruano* (*mercuristas*), dismissing European misrepresentations that claimed Peruvian men lacked virile features. **Methodology:** Looking primarily at natural history produced in Europe, the reactions in the Peruvian Enlightenment press, but also public debate and further knowledge produced in Peru, this research analyzes scientific discourses from a gender perspective centered on masculinities. **Conclusions:** Based on Connell's *masculinity* theory, this article demonstrates that the extensive scientific knowledge produced by the *Mercurio Peruano*, praising the benefits of the land for Peruvian manhood, promoted a new form of industrious fatherhood-centered masculinity.

Keywords: *Enlightenment, Gender Studies, history of science, Natural History, Peru.*

Herederos degenerados del Imperio. Determinismo climático y afeminación en el *Mercurio Peruano*

Resumen. Objetivo/contexto: Muy difundidos en Europa, los debates ilustrados acerca de la influencia del clima sobre los seres conllevan un discurso de género que cuestionaba la virilidad de aquellos hombres europeos nacidos y criados en el continente americano, al mismo tiempo que reducían a los indígenas americanos a una condición infantil. Este debate científico, que circuló en toda América, tuvo una particular resonancia en el periódico ilustrado *Mercurio Peruano*, debido a que se insertaba en una discusión más amplia acerca de las causas de una supuesta afeminación y condición delicada entre los hombres limeños. **Originalidad:** Este artículo investiga la dimensión de género en las discusiones científicas de determinismo climático entre Europa y América, atendiendo a un caso particular: el conocimiento producido por los autores del *Mercurio Peruano* (*mercuristas*) en oposición a las representaciones equivocadas que alegaban que los hombres peruanos carecían de rasgos viriles. **Metodología:** Teniendo en cuenta principalmente tratados de historia natural producidos en Europa y las respuestas desde la prensa ilustrada peruana, pero también la discusión pública y otras formas de conocimiento producidas en Perú, esta investigación analiza los discursos científicos desde una perspectiva de

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género centrada en las masculinidades. **Conclusión:** A partir de la teoría de Connell, se demuestra que el extenso conocimiento sobre el clima peruano creado por el *Mercurio Peruano* enfatizó los beneficios de esta tierra sobre la virilidad de sus habitantes y promovió una nueva masculinidad centrada en el trabajo y la paternidad.

Palabras clave: *estudios de género, historia de la ciencia, historia natural, Ilustración, Perú.*

Herdeiros degenerados do Império. Determinismo climático e efeminação no *Mercurio Peruano*

Resumo. Objetivo/contexto: Os debates do Iluminismo europeu sobre a influência do clima nos habitantes de uma região carregam um discurso de gênero que questionava a virilidade dos homens europeus nascidos e criados no continente americano, ao mesmo tempo que reduzia os indígenas americanos a uma condição infantil. Essa discussão científica, que circulou em toda a América, teve particular ressonância no *Mercurio Peruano*, um jornal iluminista de Lima. Isso ocorreu em parte por uma extensa discussão sobre as causas de uma suposta efeminação e de uma condição delicada entre os homens limenhos. **Originalidade:** Este artigo investiga a dimensão de gênero nas discussões científicas de determinismo climático entre a Europa e a América, e atende a um caso particular: o conhecimento produzido pelos autores de *Mercurio Peruano* (*mercuristas*) em oposição às representações equivocadas que alegavam que os homens peruanos careciam de características viris. **Metodologia:** Ao levar em consideração principalmente tratados de história natural produzidos na Europa e as respostas da imprensa iluminista peruana, mas também a discussão pública e outras formas de conhecimento produzidas no Peru, esta pesquisa analisa os discursos científicos a partir de uma perspectiva de gênero centrada nas masculinidades. **Conclusão:** A partir da teoria de Connell, demonstra-se que o extenso conhecimento sobre o clima peruano criado pelo *Mercurio Peruano* enfatizou os benefícios dessa terra sobre a virilidade de seus habitantes e promoveu uma nova masculinidade centrada no trabalho e na paternidade.

Palavras-chave: *estudos de gênero, história das ciências, história natural, Iluminismo, Peru.*

Introduction

Like the *petimetres*, who were often depicted as Spanish creoles, or the *maricones* —who were often described as being of African ascent— late colonial Peruvian society associated distinct masculinities with different racial phenotypes.¹ Relying upon the scientific discourses of the Enlightenment, the colonial intellectual elite reinforced the relation between specific masculinities and each racial phenotype: creoles, African descendants, indigenous people and *castas* (“free mixed-race individuals”). The partial appropriation of strongly contested European theories of climatic determinism helped to create a gendered discourse that questioned the virility of European men born and raised in the Americas (creoles), depicting them as feeble and effeminate; but also questioned the virility of indigenous men who were taken to be in a state of infancy, and were therefore lacking in sexual interest.

1 Frequently mention in the *Diario de Lima*, *petimetre* designated a young man with an extreme penchant for fashion and gallantry. Rebecca Haidt, “Fashion, Effeminacy, and Homoerotic Desire (?): The Question of the Petimetres,” *Letras Peninsulares* 12, n.º 1 (1999): 65-80; Frederic Prot, “Las afinidades equívocas del Petimetre con el discurso Ilustrado en la España del siglo XVIII,” *Dieciocho: Hispanic Enlightenment* 25, n.º 2 (2002): 303-320. Also, Tomás Méndez y Lachica, one of the main authors of the *Mercurio Peruano*, defined *maricones* as “males whose voice, whose movements, whose mores fully contradict [their male character], and are most analogous to those of the delicate sex.” “Carta remitida a la Sociedad,” *Mercurio Peruano* 4, n.º 18 (1792): 118-119.

The Enlightenment discourses also served to criticize the aristocratic elite as a group immersed in a sumptuous, dissolute, and idle life. The press and the scientific literature characterized the male courtesan manners of the late colonial period as effeminate, and hence as a *subordinate* type of masculinity. In doing so, the Enlightenment discourses contributed to a progressive transformation of gender practices and to the development of an industrious fatherhood-centered masculinity (a new bourgeois masculinity that would only become hegemonic after the 1850s).

In response to those European theories, the writers at the *Mercurio Peruano* produced an extensive body of knowledge on the Peruvian climate, asserting their benefits about the land in relation to Peruvian manhood. This is significant because the scientific discussion on the effect of climate over creole men had broader political connotations, in regard to the capacity of American-born Spaniards to fulfill their responsibilities, first, as subjects of the King, and after 1820s, in regard to how competent these (male) citizens would be in ruling themselves in the new republic. Based on Connell's *hegemonic masculinity* theory, this article aims to demonstrate that the complex interactions between European science and knowledge-production in the Americas had a gendered dimension; in this case, related to the construction of citizenship and to the development of a new hegemonic masculinity.²

1. The *Mercurio Peruano* and the Enlightenment Press

Four newspapers were published in Lima in the 1790s. Among them, only the *Mercurio Peruano* was a scientific and literary newspaper published by an economic society.³ In 1791, the *Sociedad de Amantes del País* founded the *Mercurio* to promote a scientific study of the country as a means to foster economic development. Like other Enlightenment newspapers of the time, i.e., *Diario*

2 I follow Raewyn Connell's theory on the different types of relations among masculinities in a specific time and society, where a *hegemonic masculinity* dominates over other types of *subordinated* and *marginalized* masculinities. *Hegemonic masculinity* is defined as a 'currently accepted' strategy with which to defend the legitimacy of patriarchy and guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (London: Polity Press, 2005), 77. Postcolonial studies have also influenced my understanding of the complexities of the racial and the gendered dimensions of colonial knowledge production, in particular. See Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003); Sueann Caufield, Sarah Chambers, and Lara Putnam, eds., *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

3 For more on the Peruvian Enlightenment press, see Roberto Forns, "Relectura del *Semanario Crítico* de Juan Antonio de Olavarrieta (Lima, 1791)," *Lexis* 25, n.º 1 (1991): 76; Claudia Rosas, "Educando al bello sexo: La mujer en el discurso ilustrado," in *El Perú en el siglo XVIII. La Era Borbónica*, compiled by Scarlett O'Phelan (Lima: PUCP, IRA, 1999), 109; Claudia Rosas, "Madre sólo hay una. Ilustración, maternidad y medicina en el Perú del siglo XVIII," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 61, n.º 1 (2004): 109-110, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2004.v61.i1.144>; Margarita Zegarra, "Olavarrieta, la familia ilustrada y la lactancia materna," in *Passeurs, mediadores culturales y agentes de la primera globalización en el Mundo Ibérico, siglos XVI-XIX*, edited by Scarlett O'Phelan and Carmen Salazar-Soler (Lima: PUCP, IRA, and IFEA, 2005); María del Rosario Solís, "La obra de José Rossi y Rubí en el *Mercurio Peruano*: búsqueda y creación del lector criollo ilustrado," *Tinkuy. Boletín de Investigación y Debate* 6 (2007): 32; Magally Alegre Henderson, "Androginopolis: Dissident Masculinities and the Creation of Republican Peru (Lima, 1790-1850)," Ph.D dissertation, Stony Brook University (2012), 139-149; Mónica Ricketts, "De la palabra a la acción. Oradores, editores, abogados y conspiradores en el virreinato del Perú, 1780-1808," *Revista de Indias* 73, n.º 258 (2013): 399-430; Adam Sharman, "Towards a Literary Public Sphere: the *Mercurio Peruano*, Lima, 1791," *Hispanic Research Journal* 18, n.º 4 (2017): 306-319, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682737.2017.1337880>

de Lima, *Semanario Crítico* and *Gaceta de Lima*; the *Mercurio Peruano* developed a reader base covering a range of socio-economic sectors and promoted a public sphere of political debate in taverns, cafes, and salons, where it was publicly read and discussed.⁴ However, none appealed more to an elite audience than the *Mercurio*, both for the social distinction of being a subscriber, as well as for its scientific articles that focused on the country. The Creole and Spanish colonial elites comprised the majority of the *Mercurio* readership, particularly public authorities and officials, scholars, the clergy, landowners, skilled businessmen, and occasionally elite ladies.⁵ It reflected the “hegemonic discourses of an intelligentsia attached to the dominant class.”⁶

The *Mercurio Peruano* was published by the *Sociedad Académica de Amantes del País* (Academic Society of Lovers of the Country), established in 1790 and inspired by the Spanish Economic Societies of Friends of the Country. The *Mercurio Peruano* sought to further the study of Peru, an endeavor that gave rise to a number of articles devoted to descriptions of different regions and their natural resources, in addition to reflections on their climate, geography, social institutions, and history. It also analyzed the potential and current economic activities, and the progress of medical and natural sciences in Peru.⁷ An example of the enthusiasm creoles had for exalting all things national, the *Mercurio Peruano* has been described as one of the highest cultural products of the American Enlightenment. The writers, the *mercuristas*, included some of the more renowned intellectuals of the Viceroyalty of Peru —scholars, public officials, and clergy members.⁸

Among them was José Rossi y Rubí, the scion of a noble and well-connected Milanese family. He established himself in Lima after arriving with the Malaspina scientific expedition and became

4 Rosas, “Madre sólo hay una,” 110. For the early nineteenth century, see Ascensión Martínez, *La Prensa Doctrinal en la Independencia del Perú, 1811-1824* (Madrid: Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, 1985), 61-66. To place Habermas in late eighteenth-century Lima, see: Solís, “La obra de José Rossi y Rubí,” and, most recently, Sharman, “Towards a Literary Public Sphere: The *Mercurio Peruano*.”

5 Jean Pierre Clement dedicated several studies to the *Mercurio Peruano* that ranged from its editorial team and audience, to its content and journalistic style. According to Clement, the price of the subscription —14 reales for 8 issues a month— represented at the time 3.5% of the monthly salary an *oidor* (judge) had, 8.2% of an accountant's, 9.3% of a colonel's in the viceregal cavalry, and overall 28% of the salary of a low civil servant. On the other hand, the cost of the subscription to the daily *Diario de Lima* was first 15 reales and then 12, and the *Semanario Crítico* was only 6 reales for 4 issues a month. Jean Pierre Clement, “Índices del *Mercurio Peruano*,” *Fénix. Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional*, n.º 26-27 (1979): 11; Olavarrieta, “Prospecto del nuevo papel periodico,” *Semanario Crítico* (1791): 9; Carranza, “La poesía en un periódico de la Ilustración,” 67-68; Rosas, “Madre sólo hay una,” 108-109; Estuardo Núñez, “Nueva lectura del viejo *Mercurio Peruano*,” *Boletín de la Biblioteca Nacional* 21-22, n.º 43-44 (1967): 10.

6 Solís, “La obra de José Rossi y Rubí,” 13.

7 The *Mercurio* was published twice a week, on Thursdays and Sundays, for four years (January 2, 1791 - August 31, 1794). Pedro Guibovich has demonstrated that it closed due to economic hardships, in contrast with previous interpretations that attributed the closing to the mistrust that the newspaper's Enlightenment inspiration stirred among the Spanish colonial authorities, in particular after the news of the execution of the French Royal family reached Lima. Pedro Guibovich, “Alcances y límites de un proyecto ilustrado: la Sociedad de Amantes del País y el *Mercurio Peruano*,” *Histórica* 29, n.º 2 (2005): 62-66. Also, Iago Gil Aguado gives further evidence in this regard. Iago Gil Aguado, “La clausura del *Mercurio Peruano*. Una perspectiva a contracorriente,” *Revista de Indias* 76, n.º 267 (2016): 497-499, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3989/revindias.2016.015>. For the circulation of Enlightenment ideas and the literary production of creoles in the *Mercurio Peruano*, see Margarita Eva Rodríguez García, *Criollismo y Patria en la Lima Ilustrada (1732-1795)* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2006), chapter 4.

8 For a complete list of authors, see Clement, “Índices del *Mercurio Peruano*,” 133-138. For an analysis of its most important contributors, see Catherine Poupeney Hart, “Hacia una cartografía ideológica de la Ilustración americana: los pliegues de la escritura en el *Mercurio Peruano*,” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 35, n.º 70 (2009): 165-182.

a consultant for the Mining Tribunal of Lima. Rossi y Rubí had an active role in promoting the creation of the *Sociedad de Amantes del País*. It was he who proposed the publication of a newspaper as the Society's voice. In so doing, Rossi y Rubí became the "father" of the *Mercurio* and the author of many of its articles.⁹ José Baquíjano y Carrillo, the Society's President, was a prestigious Law professor. His interest in modernizing education in San Marcos University earned him the respect of many young scholars.¹⁰ Hipólito Unanue, the young physician and Professor of Anatomy, enjoyed the favor of several aristocratic families and the support of the viceroys Francisco Gil de Taboada, Ambrosio O'Higgins, and José Abascal. He would later be considered the champion of the Enlightenment in the Viceroyalty of Peru and was a leading figure in contesting climatic determinism theories imported from Europe.¹¹ José María Egaña was mayor of Lima and one of the main authors of the *Mercurio*, along with Jacinto Calero y Moreira—a lawyer and the newspaper's first editor—and all of the individuals mentioned above. Three clergymen were also central to the development of the *Mercurio*: the botanist friar Francisco González Laguna, the priest Tomás de Méndez y Lachica, who would be a congressman after Independence, and friar Diego Cisneros, who placed his private library, full of prohibited authors such as Cornelius de Pauw (1734-1799) and Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal (1713-1796), at the service of the *Sociedad Académica de Amantes del País*, and paid for the publication of the last volume of the *Mercurio* (vol. 12).¹²

The *Sociedad de Amantes del País* and the *Mercurio* were very close to the viceregal authorities and did not criticize either the monarchic institution or the colonial order. On the contrary, the newspaper had the support of Viceroy Gil de Taboada, who gave the final approval for the admission of all new members to the *Sociedad*, and any new contributors to the *Mercurio*. Despite these close ties with the colonial power, the *Mercurio* raised an interest in producing knowledge about the country. This

9 Among the numerous contributions to the *Mercurio* that Rossi y Rubí has been attributed with are the "Prospecto," the remarkable piece that opened the first issue. For more on Rossi Rubí see Poupene Hart, "Prensa e ilustración: José Rossi y Rubí, del *Mercurio Peruano* a la *Gaceta de Guatemala*," *Itsmo. Revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos* 13 (2006): s. p., <<http://istmo.denison.edu/n13/proyectos/prensa.html>>; Solís, "La obra de José Rossi y Rubí," 7, 76; Jean Pierre Clement, *El Mercurio Peruano, 1790-1795* (Fráncfort y Madrid: Vervuert / Iberoamericana, 1997), 31, 125.

10 Clement, *El Mercurio Peruano*, 32; Clement, "Índices del *Mercurio Peruano*," 98; Manuel de Mendiburu, "Baquíjano y Carrillo," in *Diccionario Histórico-Biográfico del Perú* (Lima: Imprenta Enrique Palacios, 1932), 2: 351-372.

11 Some of the most relevant literature on Unanue includes Joseph Dager, "Hipólito Unanue en el *Mercurio Peruano*," *Revista de Historia de América* 128 (2001): 97-121; Uriel García Cáceres, *La magia de Unanue* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2010), 99-108; Adam Warren, "Piety and Danger: Popular Ritual, Epidemics, and Medical Reforms in Lima, Peru, 1750-1860," Ph.D dissertation, San Diego: University of California, 2004, 195-205; Juan Pablo Murillo, "Hipólito Unanue y el proceso de construcción del discurso epidemiológico peruano," *Anales de la Facultad de Medicina. Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos* 66, 4 (2005): 344-356, doi: 10.15381/anales.v66i4.1332; Jorge Cañizares, "The Utopia of Hipolito Unanue: Commerce, Nature and Religion in Peru," in *Saberes andinos: Ciencia y tecnología en Bolivia, Ecuador y Perú*, edited by Marcos Cueto (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1995): 91-108.

12 According to Clement, one of the more active participants in the *Mercurio*. The confessor of Maria Luisa of Parma, Cisneros enjoyed the protection of the Princess. When he decided to move to Peru, Maria Luisa, who already was the Queen Consort of Spain, granted him the Royal privilege to sell catechisms and devotional books. The royal protection and his religious privileges allowed him to secretly sell forbidden books written by Enlightenment philosophers and by the authors of the *Encyclopedia*. Thanks to his wealth, he edited and printed at his own expense the last volume of the *Mercurio Peruano* (vol. 12). Juan José Saldaña, "Ilustración, Ciencia y Técnica en América," in *La Ilustración en América Colonial. Bibliografía Crítica*, edited by Diana Soto, Miguel Angel Puig and Luis Carlos Arboleda (Madrid: CSIC, Ediciones Doce Calles, Colciencias, 1995), 26-27; Clement, "Índices del *Mercurio Peruano*," 103-104; Clement, "Aproximación al *Diario de Lima*," Manuel de Mendiburu, "Cisneros," in *Diccionario Histórico-Biográfico del Perú* (Lima: Imprenta Enrique Palacios, 1932), 4: 159-166.

knowledge later served as the canvas where the Peruvian nation was imagined as the future Republic.¹³ Conceived under the principles of the Enlightenment and inspired by the *Encyclopedists*, the authors of the *Mercurio* served the pragmatic purpose of seeking the well-being of the country through knowledge and reasoning. The *Sociedad de Amantes del País* trusted that the use of Reason would lead to better knowledge of the country, and therefore bring progress and happiness to the Peruvian nation.¹⁴

2. Climatic Determinism and Effeminacy

For the *Mercurio Peruano*, promoting a better knowledge of the country was an epistemological mission established in relation, but also in opposition, to previous knowledge produced, especially from Europe. As stated on its first issue, the *Mercurio Peruano*'s main objective was to make Peru "better known; [...] against which foreign authors have published so many false arguments."¹⁵ Arguing for a better understanding of the country based on their condition as local witnesses, *Mercurio Peruano* devoted itself to what Jorge Cañizares Esguerra has defined as "patriotic epistemology," discrediting European misrepresentations of the American continent.¹⁶

Many of these misrepresentations were inspired by philosophers like Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Bacon, who had theorized the influence of geography and climate in shaping society and human character. This argument was profusely discussed by naturalists like George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), who described and compared the continents' climate in relation to its influence over their inhabitants.¹⁷ In so doing, these European authors exalted the benevolence and multiple benefits of

13 Dager, *Historiografía y nación en el Perú del siglo XIX* (Lima: PUCP, 2009), chapter 2. Also, Nuñez, "Nueva lectura;" Manuel de Mendiburu, "Unanue," *Diccionario Histórico Biográfico del Perú* (Lima: Librería e Imprenta Gil, 1934), 11: 91.

14 Clement, *El Mercurio Peruano*; Clement, "Índices del *Mercurio Peruano*;" Carranza, "La Poesía en un Periódico," 66-68; Dager, "Hipólito Unanue en el *Mercurio Peruano*," 99.

15 Joseph Rossi y Rubi (attributed), "Idea General del Perú," *Mercurio Peruano* 1, n.º 1 (January 2, 1791): 1. The interest in dismissing Enlightenment theories of climatic determinism was common to creole communities throughout the Americas, such as the recently independent United States of America (Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin) or the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Francisco J. Clavijero). Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, *Cómo escribir la historia del Nuevo Mundo* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007), 368; Gerbi, *La Disputa del Nuevo Mundo*, 165; Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, "The Mexican Declaration of Independence," *Journal of American History* 85, n.º 4 (1999): 1362-1369, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2568257>; Francisco Clavigero, *Historia Antigua de Méjico*, 10 vols. (London: R. Ackermann, 1826); Rodríguez García, *Criollismo y Patria*, 252-254.

16 Cañizares, *Cómo escribir la historia*, 359-364, 24, 31; Miruna Achim, "La querella por el temperamento de México. Meteorología, hipocratismo y reformas urbanas a finales del siglo XVIII," in *Saberes locales. Ensayos sobre historia de la ciencia en América Latina*, edited by Frida Gorbach and Carlos López Beltrán (Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2008), 240, 260.

17 Buffon was one of the most widely read authors in Europe. By climate, he and other contemporary naturalists understood a conjunction of factors that included air, temperature, sky and soil conditions, altitude, and humidity. Buffon's *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière*, published throughout a period of forty years (1749-1788), comprised forty-four profusely illustrated volumes and "offered an encyclopedic survey of thousands of animals and plants." Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity. A visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 61. Also see Cañizares, *Cómo escribir la historia*, 92-94. For references to Buffon in the *Mercurio Peruano* see: "Concluye el papel antecedente," *Mercurio Peruano* 6, n.º 191 (November 1, 1792): 143; "Defensa de una noticia que se dió en una tertulia contra uno que la impugnó," *Mercurio Peruano* 6, n.º 207 (December 27, 1792): 281-283; "Disertación sobre el famoso preservativo contra las mordeduras de culebras," *Mercurio Peruano* 9, n.º 282 (September 15, 1793): 31; "Carta remitida a la Sociedad sobre la conjetura de la niña de Cotabambas," *Mercurio Peruano* 9, n.º 311 (December 26, 1793): 268; "Concluye la carta antecedente," *Mercurio Peruano* 9, n.º 312 (December 29, 1793): 275-280.

their own climate in comparison to what they considered less hospitable climates and their adverse effects over the development of *other* civilizations. An “excess of humidity” was the principal characteristic of the American continent, supposedly produced by the longer permanence of the continent under the original waters of creation. This “recentness” and “immaturity” of the *New World* had embedded the species that flourished in it in a state of “natural weakness,” in a “state of infancy,” or perhaps they simply were “degenerate” versions of the European species. Furthermore, the theories of climatic determinism transcended the explanations of the influence climate had on the development of plants and animals, and claimed it had an inevitable influence over the development of the physical, moral, and psychological characteristics of the peoples of the American continent; including the native population and the creoles, who were considered the “lesser” kind when compared to their European counterparts.¹⁸

Widely read and discussed in Europe, the Americas, and Peru, these theories highlighted a negative image of the American continent (and its inhabitants) as inferior to Europe in every possible way. Besides the Comte de Buffon, Cornelius de Pauw, William Robertson, the Abbé Guillaume Raynal, and Benito Jerónimo Feijoo¹⁹ were often cited in the *Mercurio Peruano*.²⁰ The author most cited by the *mercuristas*, the Comte de Buffon, believed that the American fauna was less widespread and smaller in size than that of Europe (except for snakes, lizards and insects) due to the geological youth, moisture and humid climate of the New Continent. Buffon also theorized that the humidity of the continent had affected its inhabitants, making them feminized and beardless.²¹

18 Cañizares, *Cómo escribir la historia*, 89-95, 206; Warren, “Piety and Danger,” 184-194; Nicole Peterson and Kenneth Broad, “Climate and Weather Discourse in Anthropology: From Determinism to Uncertain Futures,” in *Anthropology and Climate Change. From Encounters to Actions*, edited by Susan A. Crate and Mark Nuttall (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2009), 70-72; Antonello Gerbi, *La Disputa del Nuevo Mundo. Historia de una Polémica, 1750-1900* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1960), 3, 69; Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, 58-61; Rodríguez García, *Criollismo y Patria*, 250-251.

19 A Spanish Benedictine monk, essayist and philosopher, Feijoo taught philosophy and theology from 1699 to 1739 at the University of Oviedo. Widely read in the Spanish world, Feijoo dismissed the widely-held belief that climate influenced the precocious intelligence of American-born Spaniards, but also influenced the earlier decay of their intellectual capacities. This belief was one of the most repeated depictions of the creoles. Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, *Teatro Crítico Universal* (Madrid: Joaquín Ibarra, [1728] 1779), vol. 2, disc. 15, item 21; Feijoo, *Teatro Crítico Universal* (Madrid: Blar Morán, [1730] 1775), vol. 4.

20 Pedro Guibovich has demonstrated the circulation of these authors in Lima. “La literatura francesa en el virreinato del Perú: comercio legal y contrabando en el periodo tardío colonial,” *Histórica* 31, n.º 1 (2007): 91-100. Some of them have printing licenses in Spain, like Buffon, some others like Raynal, do not. Archivo Histórico Nacional de España, Consejos, 5533, Exp. 8; 5551, Exp. 59; 5796, Exp. 2; 5547, Exp. 77. For some of the *Mercurio Peruano*’s articles where these authors were cited, see: José Baquijano y Carrillo, “Continuación de la Disertación Histórica y Política sobre el Comercio del Perú,” *Mercurio Peruano* 1, n.º 28 (April 7, 1791): 253-260; Baquijano y Carrillo, “Continuación de la Disertación Histórica y Política sobre el Comercio del Perú,” *Mercurio Peruano* 1, n.º 31 (April 17, 1791): 282-289; Pedro de Ureta y Peralta, “Concluye el papel antecedente,” *Mercurio Peruano* 6, n.º 191 (November 1st, 1792): 138-143; José Rossi y Rubi, “Concluye la introducción al tomo VII,” *Mercurio Peruano* 7, n.º 210 (January 6, 1793): 9-24; “Historia del descubrimiento del Cerro de Potosí,” *Mercurio Peruano* 7, n.º 211 (January 10, 1793): 25-32; “Disertación sobre el famoso preservativo contra las mordeduras de Culebras, nombrado Bejuco del Guaco y sus virtudes admirables,” *Mercurio Peruano* 9, n.º 282 (September 15, 1793): 30-37; “Concluye la disertación sobre el famoso preservativo contra las mordeduras de Culebras,” *Mercurio Peruano* 9, n.º 283 (September 19, 1793): 38-45; “Carta Remitida a la Sociedad sobre la Conjetura de la Niña de Cotabambas,” *Mercurio Peruano* 9, n.º 311 (December 26, 1793): 267-274; “Concluye la carta antecedente,” *Mercurio Peruano* 9, n.º 312 (December 29, 1793): 275-284.

21 Conde de Buffon, *George-Louis Leclerc. Conde de Buffon (1707-1788)*, edited by Antonio Lafuente and Javier Moscoso (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1999); Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, 58-59. For details on the evolution of Buffon’s ideas regarding the feminization of the Native Americans see Cañizares, *Cómo escribir la historia*, 94.

Based on Buffon and the information provided by La Condamine's scientific expedition, Cornelius de Pauw stated that the humidity in the air and the warmer temperatures were the reason why there were different species in America and Europe. Highly influential, de Pauw was considered the major expert on this continent, although he never visited America during his lifetime.²² He argued that the tropics had turned the Native American populations into "degenerate species of humanity," and Europeans born in America into people given to indolence and vice. De Pauw questioned the achievements of the Inca and Aztec civilizations and considered American natives as "degenerate," because they had not built a civilization comparable to those of the Europeans.²³ These derogatory statements against the inhabitants of the American continent granted Cornelius de Pauw the animosity of the *mercuristas*, and of many other creoles across the continent. For instance, in an article in the *Mercurio Peruano*, José Ignacio de Lequanda, Minister of the Royal Exchequer, referred to Cornelius de Pauw as "the one whose hideous name should not be remembered without rancor."²⁴ Twenty years after, in the midst of Peruvian Independence, de Pauw's arguments were still bitterly remembered by the independentist newspaper *Los Andes Libres*. In 1821, the newspaper denounced that Peninsular Spaniards had embraced "the injurious concept manifested about our talents" by the "abominable Paw" as part of Peruvian's oppression.²⁵

America was considered to be of less mature geographical "development" than Europe, and in that sense American cultures were seen as primitive civilizations that, because of the climate, had never attained the development reached by civilizations of the Ancient World.²⁶ In this same line of reasoning, theories of climatic determinism assumed that climate did not allow male American native inhabitants to develop a fully masculine character. Two of the basic characteristics attributed to the Americans were their "eternal stage of infancy" and their "indolence," both of which were also interpreted as related to a non-fully developed sexuality.²⁷ The "indolence," "indifference," or "weakness" described by various European authors as the overriding characteristic of the native American peoples (Buffon, de Pauw, Raynal) permeated all aspects of life, including the sexual interest of men for women, as William Robertson (1721-1793) described in *The History of America* (1777):

"A proof of some feebleness in their frame, and more striking, is the insensibility of the Americans to the charms of beauty, and the power of love. [...] But the Americans are in an amazing

22 Cornelius de Pauw's works include *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains* (1768), *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Grecs* (1788), and *Recherches philosophiques sur les Égyptiens et les Chinois* (1795). For more on de Pauw and the Spanish American debates he stirred see Cañizares, *Cómo escribir la historia*, 58-68, 89-90; José E. Juncosa, "Introducción," in Cornelius de Paw et al., *Europa y Amerindia. El indio americano en textos del siglo XVIII* (Cayambe: Abya-Yala, 1991), xviii-xix; Cornelius de Pauw, *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains*, facsimile edition (Upper Saddle River: The Gregg Press, 1968), 11.

23 Cornelius de Pauw, *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains* (Berlin: Jacques Decker, 1770), vol 2, 162-166.

24 "Paw, cuyo odioso nombre no puede recordarse sin encono". Jose Ignacio de Lequanda, "Discurso sobre el destino que debe darse a la gente vaga que tiene Lima," *Mercurio Peruano* 10, n.º 325 (February 13, 1794): 105.

25 "En la viveza de sentimiento," *Los Andes Libres* 5 (August 21, 1821): 2. The same newspaper in its first issue rejected the idea that the softness of Peruvian climate weakens men's energy. F.D. *Los Andes Libres* 1 (July 24, 1821): 2.

26 Count de Buffon, *Barr's Buffon. Buffon's Natural History* (London: H.D. Symonds, Paternoster-Row, 1797-1807), vol. 4, 332-334.

27 Robertson, *History of America* 2: 19; Cornelius de Paw, "America," in Cornelius de Paw et al., *Europa y Amerindia. El indio americano en textos del siglo XVIII* (Cayambe: Abya-Yala, 1991), 4, 21.

degree, strangers to the force of this first instinct of nature. In every part of the New World the natives treat their women with coldness and indifference.”²⁸

William Robertson spread the ideas of de Pauw and Raynal in his *History of America* and followed Buffon’s opinions on American fauna but believed instead that this was due to the coldness of the New World, where the rigors of frigid zones extended over half of its territory. The notion of a “stage of eternal infancy” was in direct contradiction with the actual capacity of the American peoples for procreation. Robertson, for instance, solved this contradiction by arguing the Americans were less prolific than any other nation, with the result that this continent was the less peopled in the earth.²⁹ For Robertson, “the beardless countenance and smooth skin of the American” seemed to indicate “a defect of vigor, occasioned by some vice in his frame.” For him, the beardless American man was “destitute of one sign of manhood and of strength.”³⁰

Accordingly, the Abbé Raynal claimed that this same lack of interest in women was one of the major lines of evidence for the diminished virility of men born in America,³¹

“[...] nature seems to have strangely neglected the new world. The men have less strength and less courage; no beard and no hair; they are degraded in all the tokens of manhood; and but little susceptible of the lively and powerful sentiment of love. [...] But their indifference for the sex which nature has intrusted them with, for the propagation of their species, implies an imperfection in their organs, a sort of state of childhood in the people of America, as in those of our continent, who are not yet arrived, to the age of puberty. This is a vice implanted by nature in the other hemisphere, the novelty of which is discovered by this kind of impotency.”³²

The lack of facial hair that characterized American men in general, appeared particularly true in the case of Peruvian indigenous men, in the same way that virile virtues seemed more scarce among Spanish men born in Peru. Peruvian creoles were considered *effeminate* due to their lack of courage and their fondness of pleasures, luxury, and idleness, as stated by the Abb Raynal:

“They possess more understanding than courage. All these people, though dissatisfied with [the Spanish] government, are alike submissive to it. Men every where forget their number and their

28 Robertson, *History of America* 1: 61-62; William Robertson, “Estado y carácter de los Americanos,” in Cornelius de Pau et al., *Europa y Amerindia. El indio americano en textos del siglo XVIII* (Cayambe: Abya-Yala, 1991), 130-131; Gerbi, *La disputa del Nuevo Mundo*, 153-154.

29 Robertson, *The History of America* (London: A. Strahan, 1803), vol. 2, 19. To understand the impact in Spanish America of Robertson’s *History*, see Cañizares, *Cómo escribir la historia*, 77-85.

30 Robertson, *History of America*, vol. 1, 60. On the symbolic meaning of beards see: Jaime Bausate y Mesa, ed., “Ponología o historia filosófica sobre las barbas,” *Diario de Lima* (December 28, 1790): 1-4; Jaime Bausate y Mesa, ed., “Ideas que tienen diferentes pueblos sobre la hermosura,” *Diario de Lima* (January 9, 1791): 2-3.

31 Jorge Cañizares has demonstrated the substantial change in Abbé Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements & du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* between its first edition published in 1770 and the subsequent ones. De Pauw’s ideas about New World and its inhabitants were fundamental in this change. Cañizares, *Cómo escribir la historia*, 71-76, 90-91; Gerbi, *La Disputa del Nuevo Mundo*, 44; Juncosa, “Introducción,” xxix; *Sur les pas de l’abbé Raynal*, <<http://www.abbe-raynal.org/>>; Abbé Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans on the Continent of North America* (Dublin: William Halhead and John Exshaw, 1776), vol. 4, 172-174.

32 Abbé Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History*, vol 4, 174.

strength. [...] This timidity in a Peruvian is the cause or the effect of his effeminacy. He lives among courtézans, or amuses himself at home in drinking the herb of Paraguay.”³³

In reaction, the authors of the *Mercurio Peruano* discussed and refuted these European theories and descriptions of the American climate and its influence on society and nature, along with their arguments on the virility of American men. In the same way that Jorge Cañizares has demonstrated the emergence in New Spain of a “patriotic epistemology” in response to European negative representations of the nature and peoples of the *New World*, the *mercuristas* produced extensive knowledge on Peru’s climate, in this case, with an emphasis in asserting the benefits of the land for Peruvian manhood.³⁴

3. Contesting the Influence of Climate

The theories about the influence of climate on virility in the Americas had a particular resonance in Lima, the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru. This scientific debate was part of a more extended discussion on the sources of effeminacy and feebleness of *Limeño* men in Enlightenment newspapers, pamphlets, travel writings, and criminal records at the end of the colonial period (1790-1820). Two causes were often cited: maternal leniency in male child-rearing and the influence of climate over the masculinity of the American peoples.³⁵

The Enlightenment press in Lima attributed an effeminizing effect to the indulgence in idleness and luxury which, according to them, characterized *Limeño* motherhood. This process has been studied by Claudia Rosas and Margarita Zegarra, among others, to demonstrate that the *Mercurio Peruano*, the *Semanario Crítico*, and the *Diario de Lima* were instrumental in asserting the duty of women in male child-rearing and the development of a domestic femininity centered on its maternal role.³⁶ While this discussion is beyond the scope of this research, I suggest that Lima’s Enlightenment press also contributed to forming a new idea of masculinity focused on the authority of father over wife, children, and household.³⁷

One of the more significant examples of the *Mercurio Peruano*’s concern with identifying the source of effeminacy and feebleness among *Limeño* men is the “Letter addressed to Society” by the priest Tomás de Méndez y Lachica in response to the satirical “Letter on the *Maricones*.” In his

33 Abbé Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History*, vol. 2, 551. Buffon also refers to *effeminacy* in the sense of idleness. Buffon, *Natural History*, 466.

34 Cañizares Esguerra, *Cómo escribir la historia*, 361-368.

35 Alegre Henderson, “Androginopolis: Dissident Masculinities,” chapter 2.

36 Rosas, “Madre sólo hay una,” 103-106; Margarita Zegarra, “La construcción de la madre y de la familia sentimental. Una visión del tema a través del *Mercurio Peruano*,” *Histórica* 25, n.º 1 (2001): 182, 197-198; Mariselle Meléndez, “Inconstancia en la mujer: espacio y cuerpo femenino en el *Mercurio Peruano*, 1791-1794,” *Revista Iberoamericana* 67, n.º 194-195 (2001): 79-88; Marcel Velázquez, “La intimidad destapada: la representación de la mujer en el *Mercurio Peruano* (1791-1795),” *Mujer, Cultura y Sociedad en América Latina*, edited by Luis Bravo Jáuregui and Gregorio Zambrano, vol. 3 (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2001).

37 Mónica Bolufer has focused on the construction of femininity and showed the role Spanish Enlightenment press had in the construction of a new femininity, one that was centered on motherhood and family care. Mónica Bolufer, *Mujeres e ilustración: la construcción de la feminidad en la ilustración española* (Valencia: Institución Alfons el Magnanim, 1998), 17-19; Zegarra, “Olavarrieta, la familia ilustrada.”

reply, Méndez y Lachica identified this acrimonious satire about the city of *Androginopolis* with Lima, pointing out that these “vile debasers of their noble sex” were a “phenomenon” common to Lima as to any other part of the world. Méndez y Lachica diminished the “uniqueness” of Peruvian effeminates arguing that effeminate men were not exclusive to the Americas or Peru. Then, he reflected on the origins of the “phenomenon,” considering climate as a possible explanation for male effeminacy: “Is it perhaps an anomaly of Nature? Perhaps a flaw of climate? Perhaps a vice generated by education?” At the end of the article, Méndez y Lachica finally blamed Peruvian mothers for their excessive delicacy, leniency, and luxury they showed when raising their children, as the real cause for the presence of effeminate men. In so doing, cleric Méndez y Lachica revealed a profound political concern declaring that it was: “The abundance of luxury, and no other reason, what is causing a state of decadence in men’s political strength, debilitating them as well in their physical and moral strength.”³⁸

The critique Méndez y Lachica raised against the abundance of luxury was directed at the upper crust of Lima’s society. It was also part of a European tradition that considered expenditure in luxury items as clashing with the enrichment of nations. Inspired by the Enlightenment belief in the transformative power of education, Méndez y Lachica was certainly proposing a reform of mores in order to raise virile men, capable of fulfilling their political duties as loyal subjects of the Spanish King.³⁹ But most importantly, by blaming the effeminacy of Peruvian men on luxury and the excess of maternal care, Méndez y Lachica argued against the European theories of climatic determinism.

In response to these theories, Father Méndez y Lachica and other *mercuristas* replied that the key factor was not climate but education, and that maternal care had to be reformed in order to raise virile Peruvian boys.⁴⁰ In this sense, Méndez y Lachica followed the newspaper trend that opposed European theories that posited the influence climate had in *effeminizing* Peruvian men:

“[...] would he not be an effeminate if he did not leave the lap of a tender mother to occupy himself with the delicacies of courtly life? [...] Let us therefore not look elsewhere for the cause of effeminacy. True, a noxious and humid air weakens the springs of our body [...], the weakness of food, and other partial causes of this sort must influence the less robust ones, or effeminacy under this or another sky. But how [...] is it that we can find, in one same country and at the same time, men of a delicate temperament and such robust colored people—how can it be in the Northern regions?”⁴¹

“Effeminacy” in this context meant something other than sexual preference. The writings of Méndez y Lachica and the Abbé Raynal exemplify how the term “effeminate” was used to refer to a physical and spiritual weakness due to a man’s overexposure to luxury and pleasures instead

38 Méndez y Lachica, “Carta remitida a la Sociedad,” 118-121.

39 According to Premo, in the late eighteenth century, creole literati like friar Méndez y Lachica produced Enlightenment theories on child rearing practices that were much more than a debate over how children should be raised, questioning instead the colonial order itself by facing the possibility that creoles had become more like the (non-white) women who nursed them than the paternal (Spanish) king who ruled them. Bianca Premo, “‘Misunderstood Love’: Children and Wet Nurses, creoles and Kings in Lima’s Enlightenment,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 14, n.º 2, 234. Both articles about *maricones* published on the *Mercurio Peruano* are also analyzed by Premo in “‘Misunderstood Love,’” 239.

40 Rosas, “Madre sólo hay una,” 103-106; Zegarra, “La construcción de la madre,” 182, 197-198.

41 Méndez y Lachica, “Carta remitida a la Sociedad,” 120.

of exercising his will with temperance and sobriety.⁴² Effeminacy also was understood as a lack of virile vigor. This was especially so in the case of the climatic theories that equated American men with children, thus positing an attributed pre-pubescent state to American men and their subsequent lack of sexual interest in women.

Climatic determinism was not limited to scientific theories, but permeated official documents, travel writing, and other discursive terrains. Medical doctors supported the request of colonial officials to be transferred to better climates to avoid the maladies, sickness, and degeneration of the body that came with cold and humid climates.⁴³ Also, Alonso Carrió de la Vandra, who did not argue that the lack of virile vigor was due to the influence of climate, suggested instead that the coldness of the Peruvian Andes made Indian women slightly less fertile, in the same way that the pastures and animals of the Puna (highlands) were not too fertile. Around 1775 Carrió, a Spanish merchant, *corregidor*, and inspector for the Postal Service, published the picaresque novel *El lazarillo de ciegos caminantes* under the pseudonym of Concolorcorvo ('colored like a crow'). Based on his experience as a merchant and visitor of the muleteer route that went from Buenos Aires to Lima, the *Lazarillo* takes the form of a dialogue between the *Visitador* Alonso, a Spanish postal inspector, and an Indian called Calixto Bustamante Inca. The Indian, who bore the name of Concolorcorvo, served as guide and companion to the *Visitador* throughout his journey. Concolorcorvo is presented in the narrative as the presumed author of the *Lazarillo*. Carrió de la Vandra used Concolorcorvo to defend the Spanish conquest. Arguing that he descended from a noble Inca family, Concolorcorvo defended the civilization and religion brought to the Andes by the conquistadors and thanked them for freeing the Indians from sodomy and other abominations.⁴⁴

Unlike *El lazarillo*, which blamed low population growth on the low fertility of Indian women, the *Mercurio Peruano* was full of examples of long-lived Peruvian men who fathered numerous children. Such was the case of the "Letter written to the Society on the Longevity of some Peruvians," which supposedly showed how healthy the weather was in those lands.⁴⁵ The article described several men over a hundred years of age who were actively pursuing marriage with younger (and fertile) women, and who fathered children. Like some other articles in the *Mercurio*, the longevity and virile vigor of these men were used as an example to disqualify the presumed negative influence of the Peruvian climate. They also served to praise the benefits of leading a frugal life,

42 Another author in the *Mercurio* concurred in the effeminizing power luxury and pleasures had in "the enervation of our youth in Lima, and the premature and sudden deaths of those in the Sierra." Chiros-atychio Presbyógrapho (pseud.), "Carta escrita a la Sociedad sobre la Longevidad de algunos Peruanos," *Mercurio Peruano* 5, n.º 159 (July 12, 1792): 165. Also, for the fondness Limeños had for sensuous pleasures, see: Tadeo Haenke, *Descripción del Perú* (Lima: El Lucero, 1901), 24-25.

43 In 1803, two physicians certified in a letter to the viceroy of Peru, that the cold and humid atmosphere of the high mountains caused tumors, favored venereal diseases, and caused other dreadful symptoms among those with ill-health. Archivo General de Indias (AGI, en adelante), Lima, 728, n. 63, f. 734v-738v. Similar claims in: Lima, 653, n. 80; Lima, 654, n.126; Lima, 691, n. 133, Lima, 687, n. 19.

44 Alonso Carrió de la Vandra (pseud. Concolorcorvo), *El lazarillo de ciegos caminantes* (Barcelona: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1985), chapter XVI, 150-151; chapter XX, 178-179. For an analysis of sodomy in the *Lazarillo de ciegos caminantes*, see: Mariselle Meléndez, *Raza, Género e Hibridez en El Lazarillo de Ciegos Caminantes* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999), 67-78.

45 Chiros atychio Presbyógrapho (pseud.), "Carta escrita a la Sociedad sobre la Longevidad de algunos Peruanos, que se relaciona en prueba de la salubridad del temperamento de estos países," *Mercurio Peruano* 5, n.º 159 (July 12, 1792): 164-171.

dedicated to vigorous and productive labor in the countryside, far removed from the pleasures and excess of the city.⁴⁶

The *Mercurio Peruano* went as far as to feature the leading figure in Peru against the European theories of climatic determinism as one of its main authors. Hipólito Unanue, a former student of the erudite cosmographer Cosme Bueno, was already a renowned physician and naturalist when he joined the *Sociedad de Amantes del País*. An advisor of the Viceroy Francisco Gil de Taboada y Lemos, Unanue had the favor of the Lima court thanks to his outspoken character as public health reformer. Unanue also had the sponsorship of Mariana Belzunce, a progressive and rich widow who hosted one of the most notable literary circles of her time, also attended by other *mercuristas*. Unanue founded the Anatomic Amphitheater, modernized the teaching of medicine in Peru, and had medicine recognized as a science—while also promoting his own professional image. In 1810 he was named director of the San Fernando medicine school by Viceroy Abascal. Unanue later joined the patriot cause, embraced San Martín's short-lived monarchical project, and became a congressman in the new Republic. An Age-of-Enlightenment physician, naturalist, meteorologist, and politician, Unanue maintained an abundant correspondence with scientific societies in Europe and America.⁴⁷

His *Observations regarding the climate of Lima and its influence over organized beings, especially Man* summarizes his thoughts on the European theories of climatic determinism. Published in 1806 and in Spain in 1815, the book circulated extensively among academic circles in America and Europe.⁴⁸ Although his ideas had not been fully developed by the time he joined the *Mercurio Peruano*, Unanue then began to develop his rebuttal of the theories developed by Buffon, de Pauw, Robertson, and others. As secretary of the *Sociedad de Amantes del País*, Hipólito Unanue wrote in the introduction to volume VI of the *Mercurio*, that one of the main objectives of this publication was to show “that the generous Spanish spirits transplanted to this joyful soil, haven't lost honor nor virtue. “A statement renewed in his “Dissertation about the coca leaf,” where he asserted: “the Indians are not irrationals, nor is degraded the part of the human race transplanted from Europe to America.” The same opposition to the European theories of climatic determinism is evident in the apparently casual news of the existence of an American born and raised a giant, Pedro Cano, whose “prodigious height” demonstrated the errors of European naturalists as Buffon.⁴⁹

The *Mercurio Peruano* also published his inaugural speech as director of the Anatomic Amphitheater, a ceremony that was attended by Viceroy Gil de Taboada. Here, Unanue praised natural history but also “the noble qualities of the [Peruvian] climate” (*las nobles cualidades del clima*),

46 “Ancianidad notable,” *Mercurio Peruano* 1, n.º 12 (February 10, 1791): 15; “Noticia curiosa comunicada a la Sociedad por un vecino del Partido de Chachapoyas,” *Mercurio Peruano* 5, n.º 149 (June 7, 1792): 85; “Apéndice de la Sociedad a la noticia antecedente,” *Mercurio Peruano* 5, n.º 149 (June 7, 1792): 85-87.

47 “Concluye la materia antecedente,” *Mercurio Peruano* 10, no. 331 (March 6, 1794): 151; “Concluye la materia antecedente,” *Mercurio Peruano* 10, n.º 332 (March 9, 1794): 162; García Cáceres, *La magia de Unanue*, 63-73; Warren, “Piety and Danger,” 195.

48 Unanue's *Observations regarding the climate of Lima* was sent by the viceroy Jos Abascal to the *Consejo de Indias* to be part of the *Library of the Chair of Medicine and Climate* in Spain. AGI, *Estado*, 73, n. 5. Hipólito Unanue, *Observaciones sobre el clima de Lima y sus influencias en los seres organizados, en especial el hombre*, in *Obras Científicas y Literarias del Doctor D. J. Hipólito Unanue*, edited by Eugenio Larrabure y Unanue, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Tipografía La Académica, 1914).

49 Hipólito Unanue, “Introducción al Tomo VI del *Mercurio Peruano*,” *Mercurio Peruano* 6, n.º 174 (September 2, 1792): 2; Sandro A. Patrucco, “Hipólito Unanue, estudioso de los gigantes,” *Histórica* 20, n.º 1 (1996); Hipólito Unanue, *Disertación sobre la Coca, continúa*, *Mercurio Peruano* 11, n.º 375 (August 7, 1794): 232.

against which a thousand of foreign maladies had assaulted and contaminated the air, the land, and living beings. Lacking proper health policies, these maladies brought about by commerce, luxury, and miscegenation during the conquest had depopulated the country. These were the real causes of the low fertility that European theories attributed to American-born people. This inaugural speech was published in its entirety in five issues of the *Mercurio*, and it represented the seminal ideas behind Unanue's *Observations about the climate*.⁵⁰

Unanue's ideas regarding the influence climate had over living beings were fully developed a decade after the publication of the last issue of the *Mercurio*. He rejected European theories that claimed the coldness and humidity of the Americas produced smaller and degenerate species, including the creole population. Following the path of the *Mercurio Peruano*, his description of the climate of Lima, its flora and fauna, posited that the climatic conditions in Peru were less harmful than those in Spain. His *Observations on the Climate of Lima* were disseminated among the scientific societies of Madrid, Paris, and London and earned him compliments and invitations to join the institutions as honorary member.

Hipólito Unanue did not deny the influence the climate had on the changes undergone by plants, animals, and men, but he believed their effects were not severe or permanent. During the era of the *Mercurio*, friar Méndez y Lachica had argued that the lenient life in the city, "the refinement of the food, the abandonment to the passions, and an atmosphere full of the most corrupt and compressed vapours" made the city dwellers twice more likely to suffer death than those living in small towns.⁵¹ Unanue incorporated hygiene to this argument and proposed that the maladies that city life engendered amongst the *Limeños* were caused by careless health practices rather than by the climate. These maladies could therefore be successfully avoided through education and a reformation of mores. In so doing, Unanue clashed with, de Pauw, and other European authors whose descriptions "portrayed these fortunate regions as an ungrateful soil that has been denied heaven's blessings, and an ill-fated shelter of serpents, crocodiles and other poisonous monsters."⁵²

Unanue claimed that although climate influenced people's character, there were other factors at work—moral ones—that could counterbalance and even defeat the burden of nature, and thus promote the development of nations. In so saying, even Unanue admitted the influence that the humid and temperate climate of Lima had over Limeño men, "lacking the air and virile features, that should be strong and somehow rough."⁵³ Likewise, he believed that the humid and temperate climate of Lima predisposed men to indolence and to indulge in pleasures:

"In a country located at the center of the hot zone, but with a climate reduced to a benign temperature due to the superabundance of humidity in the atmosphere, those who live there must

50 Hipólito Unanue, "Decadencia y restauración del Per. Continuacion del discurso inaugural para la abertura y estrena del Anfiteatro Anatómico," *Mercurio Peruano* 7, n.º 218 (February 3, 1793): 93-94. Also: issues n.º 219-222; Rodríguez García, *Criollismo y Patria*, 236.

51 Tomás de Méndez y Lachica, "Apéndice de la Sociedad a la noticia antecedente," *Mercurio Peruano* 5, n.º 149 (June 7, 1792): 87.

52 Unanue, *Obras Científicas y Literarias*, 1: 54, 14, 55; Warren, "Piety and Danger," 204, 196; García Cáceres, *La magia de Unanue*, 131-133; Robertson, *The History of America*, vol. 2, 64. For a careful analysis of Unanue's theories on disease, climate and the body see, Warren, "Piety and Danger," 196-205.

53 Unanue, *Obras Científicas y Literarias*, vol. 1, 68.

have a feeble body. [...] Idleness is hence an inherent vice of those who dwell in these climates. The enervated body / only longs for repose and for pleasures.”⁵⁴

Although he recognized the influence climate had over men’s physiognomy, Unanue denied that the differences in features found in European and American men could be interpreted as a lack of capacity or talents. Just like in many articles in the *Mercurio Peruano*, the emphasis here was in dismissing the physiognomic rationale, praising instead education and virtue as the means with which to overcome nature. In Unanue’s own words:

“The difference in features cannot thus be used to argue for the diversity in talents, and whenever this indeed is so, Europe has nothing to pride itself of, because, if there are well-formed nations in her [Europe], these can also be found in other parts of the earth. And if Africa, in the midst of her fires, gives men who appear to be entities midway between the rational and the brute, the same holds for the icy countries of Northern Europe. Herein lies the consequence that the rational spirit is evenly distributed throughout all parts of the earth. In all of them, man is capable of doing everything—if he is helped by education and example.”⁵⁵

Unanue, just like other *mercurista* authors, partially accepted the European theories of climatic determinism. Nonetheless, he disregarded the idea that climate was the sole essential factor in determining the features and character of Peruvian men. Following Enlightenment principles, Unanue praised the virtues of education, as the factor that compensated the influence of climate. Unanue claimed that education was the major means with which to defeat the influence of climate, which had brought about the delicate condition and feeble nature of Peruvian-born Spaniards. In the same fashion, the priest Mendez y Lachica argued that in the efforts to avoid effeminacy amongst Peruvian Creole men, what was in need of reform were education and maternal care, and not the climate.

Conclusion

Opposing the determinism proposed by European climatic theories, that blame climate for a degenerating effect on the flora and fauna of the Americas, but also on American inhabitants, the *mercuristas* produced scientific knowledge to refute the misconceptions of celebrated European naturalists. These theories represented Peruvian men as feeble and effeminate, lacking courage and virile features, less talented than their European counterparts, and fond of pleasures, luxury and idleness. Against this, the *mercuristas* emphasized the beneficial effect of Peruvian climate, offering as demonstration examples of longevity, physical health, and superior intelligence among those born and raised in this land.

The newspaper was directed towards powerful groups within the colonial elite (merchants, landowners, aristocrats, and colonial authorities), but because of public readings and the circulation of the press, the influence of *Mercurio Peruano* in shaping new types of masculinities extended beyond the colonial elite. The Peruvian intellectual elite opposed the determinism proposed by European climatic theories and argued that the root of effeminacy was education; i.e., the indulgence in idleness, pleasures, and above all luxury promoted by maternal care. These causes could

54 Unanue, *Obras Científicas y Literarias*, vol. 1, 67-68.

55 Unanue, *Obras Científicas y Literarias*, vol. 1, 76.

certainly be addressed through education and by applying Reason to the reformation of mores. The *Mercurio Peruano* therefore addressed elite mothers regarding the proper education of children, the consequences of using wet-nurses for breast-feeding, and the defiance shown by wet nurses to the father's authority.⁵⁶

The *Mercurio Peruano's* interest in dismissing European misrepresentations that claimed Peruvian men lacked virile features, led to the development of an extensive knowledge of the Peruvian climate. In so doing, the *mercuristas* made the defense of Peruvian masculinity the very core of the Enlightenment in Peru, thus promoting education and Reason as the means with which to transform these subordinate effeminate masculinities and achieve the emergence of a new hegemonic masculinity centered on the industrious family man.

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Magally Alegre Henderson

Deputy Director of the UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality at Higher Education Institutions at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Per (PUCP), where she is also Coordinator of the Doctoral Programme in History and Professor of History at the Humanities Department. She holds a doctoral and master's degree in History from Stony Brook University (USA) and a B.A. from the PUCP. Researcher specialized in History of Sexuality, Women and Gender Studies, she is a member of GÉNERO PUCP-Research Group on Gender Studies at the PUCP. Her research and teaching interests focus on dissident masculinities, women in history, and gender equality in Higher Education. Her most recent publications include: "La incorporación de la perspectiva de género en los planes de estudio de la PUCP," *Entorno* 66 (2018): 10-17, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5377/entorno.v0i66.6722>, and "'Hombres de temperamento delicado': Determinismo climático, moda masculina y cuidados maternos en la prensa ilustrada." In *Género y mujeres en la historia del Perú*, edited por Claudia Rosas (Lima: PUCP, 2019) [in press]. malegreh@pucp.pe