

Cities of Hope

*People, Protests, and Progress
in Urbanizing Latin America,
1870–1930*

Edited by
**Ronn Pineo and
James A. Baer**



A Member of the Perseus Books Group

6

Civilizing the City of Kings: Hygiene and Housing in Lima, Peru

David S. Parker

In contrast to Rio de Janeiro or Buenos Aires, Lima did not do a terribly good job of modernizing itself. Try as they might, and try they did, neither mayors nor presidents succeeded in turning South America's former colonial capital into the clean, healthy, ordered, elegant city they wished it could be. One problem, of course, was the eternal shortage of funds for basic services and infrastructure. But Peruvian officials continually complained, decade in and decade out, that the greater obstacle was an "ignorant" and "backward" people, who doggedly refused to change their uncultured and unsanitary habits. Urban reform, therefore, was not just a matter of paving streets and connecting water mains: It also involved educating the masses, "improving the race," and molding behavior to the new demands of a modern, cosmopolitan city.

This chapter looks at the ambiguities of that civilizing project. On the one hand, the public health officials who spearheaded Lima's modernization were genuinely concerned with epidemic disease, infant mortality, and the health of all Peruvians, rich and poor. Their preoccupation with hygiene and sanitation led them to study the abysmal living conditions of the poor, and their recommendations prompted a host of novel initiatives, from public housing to the regulation of industrial working conditions. On the other hand, these so-called *higienistas* were inevitably constrained by the medical and ideological orthodoxies of their time. All too frequently they attributed the unhealthy conditions in which the poor lived to the inherent characteristics of the poor themselves, and they could not imagine reforming one without simultaneously reforming the other. The policies that arose from these assumptions, although rooted in altruism and aimed at promoting social change, were typically authoritarian in practice, frequently tinged with racism, and almost always doomed to failure.

Popular responses to the modernizing project were equally contradictory. It was certainly not too hard to find examples of resistance to a "civilization" defined by others and imposed by force. In thousands of uneventful, everyday ways, poor Peruvians resisted efforts to change their familiar customs and habits, thwarting public health officials in the process. At the same time, however, surprisingly large numbers of artisans and workers did just the opposite: They actively promoted the ideology of progress and devoted their energies not just to ameliorating their own working and living conditions but equally to "improving" themselves and their peers. Labor unions, for example, organized extension classes in personal hygiene and campaigned against alcoholism. Those workers who embraced the civilizing ideal were by no means uncritical of the wealthy and powerful; their idea of "progress" differed from that of the men who governed them and often included radical demands for material well-being and political inclusion. But ultimately the culture of self-improvement and moral reform could not help but distance organized workers, moderate and radical alike, from the many thousands of other Peruvians who did not wish to abandon their traditional lifeways in order to become "civilized." Sharply diverging responses to modernization thus drove a wedge through the heart of Lima's popular classes, reinforcing ethnic conflict and impeding the emergence of a unified working-class alternative.

The Dream of Progress

Lima had been the center of Spain's empire in South America, but independence seemed to bring little but decadence and decline. When *limeños* in the 1860s compared their home to bustling Buenos Aires or Santiago, the contrast was anything but flattering. Trapped inside now-useless defensive walls, the "City of Kings" was not much of a city, nor was it particularly kingly. With a population of barely 100,000 and less than 1 percent annual growth since 1812,¹ Lima appeared to most travelers to be a fading relic of a bygone age, its dusty streets bisected by fetid open sewers, its crumbling adobe walls silently mocking the exquisite wooden balconies that had once been the symbol of the city's colonial splendor.²

Efforts to shake off Lima's "backwardness" began in earnest in the mid-1860s. José Balta, who became president in 1868, engaged U.S. engineer Henry Meiggs to tear down the colonial walls and to replace them with two broad promenades inspired by Georges Haussmann's Paris. The Palace of the Exposition, built by Meiggs in 1872, rivaled any public building on the continent for its combination of Italianate Renaissance beauty and modern Yankee functionality. Peru's engineers and architects drew up a host of other equally ambitious plans for urban reform, impelled not by the press of demographic growth but by the elites' desire to see Lima join the "cultured," "civilized" capitals of the world.³ However, a series of tragedies dashed all hope that this shimmering future might soon become a reality. By the mid-1870s Peru's guano export economy had fallen into visible decline, bankrupting a treasury dependent on customs revenues. Far worse was the disas-

trous loss to Chile in the War of the Pacific. The Chilean occupation from 1879 to 1882 plunged Lima into an unprecedented crisis: Public buildings were looted, the economy was destroyed, and private fortunes were lost virtually overnight. Nor did the city's troubles end with the departure of the foreign invader: Violent civil conflict continued, on and off, until the victory of Nicolás de Piérola, who became president in 1895. The final quarter of the nineteenth century, years of phenomenal growth and change in Buenos Aires, Santiago, and Rio, were thus lost years for Lima, whose population in 1900 was unchanged from 1876 and whose physical extension was scarcely greater than that of 1650.⁴

After 1895, as the economy recovered and political stability was restored, Peru's leaders rediscovered and dusted off those earlier development projects. President Piérola took an especially active interest in the modernization and embellishment of Lima. Between 1895 and 1899, he passed several laws facilitating urban expansion, and upon leaving office he made a career as a real estate developer, building the elegant downtown avenue known as La Colmena. Like others of his generation, Piérola saw a city's architecture as the measure of its culture and explicitly linked urban renewal to national progress. Lima, in his eyes, was thus an embarrassment and a disgrace:

Our buildings, in terms of solidity, hygiene, and of course comfort and beauty, are truly deplorable, giving very sad account of our advancement. No one here, not even the wealthy, strives to build a solid, healthy, and dignified roof under which to live. Even if they tried, they would not find the means to achieve it, creating the often offensive contrast between the luxury of the furniture and the baseness of the building in which it is installed. It is as if we were just passing through, temporary guests in our own land. . . . This has enormous impact on our customs and national character, on the vitality and power of the country, and it urgently demands an effective solution.⁵

As elsewhere in Latin America, the solution called for the demolition of the old Spanish-style adobe homes and their replacement with modern, multistory, French-style palaces of brick and concrete; for the opening of broad avenues and parks in place of the narrow checkerboard streets of the traditional colonial center; for paving stones, streetcars, public lighting, and water mains; and for decisive, immediate action, since Lima had fallen so far behind its neighbors and so desperately hoped to "catch up." Nonetheless, by the first decade of the twentieth century the march of Lima's urban progress was seemingly back on track. New mansions first began to appear along the Paseo Colón west of the Palace of the Exposition and later on La Colmena, whose initial section was opened in 1907. Electric streetcars started running in 1904. Each passing year saw the fanfare-filled inauguration of streets, statues, plazas, parks, and public buildings and the less-publicized construction of water mains, sewers, and homes.⁶

Public works, however, were only one facet of the larger drive to make Lima a modern, dignified, "cultured" capital. Broad avenues might beautify an urban landscape, but as elite critics increasingly lamented, they could not civilize a peo-

ple. Writer and journalist Pedro Dávalos y Lissón, for example, marveled at Lima's recent material progress but despaired of the habits of its populace.

At night, when I cross [the bridge over the Rímac] and see it all illuminated by bright street lamps, animated by the streetcars that majestically pass up and over, I seem to be in a city more populous than Lima, and of superior rank. . . . I look at [the new avenue on the other side of the bridge] and imagine how beautiful this esplanade will be once the trees have grown and the paving and sidewalks are completed, when my nerves are assaulted by an acrid, fetid, intolerable odor of urine. . . . I turn my head and see, with the greatest clarity, in full view of a policeman and of all the people passing by, a man in indecent posture, adding his liquid waste to the thousand and one others that accumulate at all hours of the day in that filthy spot. Do the police authorities have the order to promote this uncultured and uncivil practice, which is not seen even among the savage Indians of the Ucayali? Doesn't the Direction of Public Health know that all the streets of the city have been turned into public urinals? . . . Haven't the women of Lima considered that their decency could be unfavorably judged by the foreigner who for the first time visits the city and watches, stupefied, this indecent custom?

For Dávalos y Lissón and others of like mind, the authorities had a duty to educate the masses in the customs of the civilized world, using the police when necessary to repress public urination and other social ills such as swearing, spitting, smoking, and talking in the theater.⁸ The well-traveled Dávalos was perhaps a bit more fastidious than most, but he was hardly exceptional. Built into the drive to modernize was a constant effort to emulate the more advanced, more "cultured" cities of the Atlantic world, from Paris to London to New York to Buenos Aires. Implicit in that effort was the need to meet European standards of civilization, the need to attract European immigrants, and the need to refashion both public institutions and private habits along European lines.

The idea of civilizing an entire society, no small task anywhere, was perhaps especially quixotic in turn-of-the-century Lima. For one thing, it was difficult to imagine just who was supposed to be doing the civilizing, given the weakness of the Peruvian state and the general fragmentation of authority. Lima's municipal government had long exercised regulatory power over a range of activities but suffered from a constant shortage of funds. The national government, somewhat better off financially, had trouble entering areas of traditional municipal competence. Assistance to the poor remained in the hands of the church and the private Sociedad de Beneficencia Pública. The concentration of power in such traditional institutions rendered the state virtually impotent as a vehicle for behavioral reform. And the idea that the police might serve as a force to repress bad manners was laughable, as Dávalos himself realized, given the institution's low level of professionalism and the scant formal education of its members.

Nor were *limeños* terribly realistic in their hopes of civilizing the city by importing racially "superior" Europeans. At a time when opportunities for immigrants abounded in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, the United States, Canada, and

elsewhere, distant Peru held comparatively little attraction. Indeed, the number of Italians, French, Spanish, English, and Germans living in Lima peaked sometime in the 1860s or 1870s and declined significantly thereafter, no doubt because of the crises of the last quarter century.⁹ Despite the fact that Peru made the same efforts as did other Latin American nations to attract European workers, few came.¹⁰ Instead, the 1908 census classified the majority of Lima's urban working class as either native-born whites, mestizos, blacks, or Indians.¹¹ Within that working class were further divisions: Skilled artisans and factory workers were overwhelmingly mestizo or white, and many saw themselves as respectable members of society, even if the upper class did not always share the same view.¹² Lima's indigenous population, in contrast, remained heavily concentrated in unskilled labor, domestic service, agriculture, and the military. Maligned, patronized, or more typically ignored by other workers, they did not figure significantly in the nascent labor movement. It was not until the 1940s and 1950s that massive migration from the highlands to the capital would begin to change this situation.

Lima also had an important population of Asian immigrants, victims of a hatred far more intense and violent than anything faced by the city's other ethnic groups. Somewhere around 100,000 Chinese indentured laborers arrived between 1849 and 1874, primarily to work on the sugar and cotton plantations of the Peruvian coast. Significant numbers moved to Lima upon completion of their contracts, and by the 1870s a sizable Chinatown had formed in the streets surrounding the Central Market.¹³ A second wave of Chinese and Japanese immigrants, some 30,000 in all, began arriving around the turn of the century.¹⁴ The Asians who made their home in Lima, undercounted at 5,487 in the 1908 census,¹⁵ carved out an important niche in small commerce and certain service occupations yet remained extraordinarily unwelcome. Most other Peruvians saw them as a degraded, inferior race, intrinsic enemies of Lima's "civilization."¹⁶ As we will see, racism against Asians revealed a dark underside to the dream of progress.

Doctors, Epidemics, and the Discovery of the Poor

The hope of Peru's modernizing elite—that their capital and its population might be remade in the image of Europe—was in some ways absurd. Lima was, after all, a tiny white enclave in a vast Andean nation. Yet the drive to develop, to emulate the *países cultos* (cultured nations), to "improve" the race, and to "civilize" the people dominated official thinking and drove public policy for generations. As Europeans themselves were becoming disillusioned with the fruits of modernity, as Argentines questioned the benefits of immigration, Peruvian elites held fast to the idea of importing "civilization" and lamented each setback on the road to progress. The civilizing imperative underlay government action in everything from factory regulation to census taking and played an especially important role in issues of public health and housing.

The key figures in the effort to make Lima a more salubrious and progressive capital were the so-called *higienistas*, physicians trained in the increasingly influential fields of epidemiology and sanitation. As they diligently waged war against epidemic disease, these reform-minded medical experts attacked the unhealthy conditions in which the majority of Lima's population lived. Public health and hygiene provided a powerful rationale for urban reform, and many of the advances of the Balta years had been justified in the name of the fight against yellow fever, typhoid, and other contagious diseases. Indeed, many late-nineteenth-century thinkers argued that health was the key to national progress and that Peru's backwardness, not to mention its recent military defeat, could be attributed primarily to its poor hygiene and high mortality rates. In the words of the radical weekly *Germinal*:

Because of our lack of hygiene, are we not perhaps witnessing our physical decadence? . . . Either stunted, stooped, and feeble, or overflowing with fat, we are rapidly becoming true caricatures of *Homo sapiens*. . . . The conquests of civilization have never been the product of organisms nourished by impure and miserable blood. Our sickness: This is the origin of our ills. It brings lack of character, mediocrity of intelligence, cowardly compromise with evil, inconstancy in our loves and hates, and incurable sloth, which has led to our defeat in every struggle for life.¹⁷

Still, in spite of these arguments, the *higienistas* generally fought a losing battle throughout the nineteenth century. They constantly lacked the resources and authority they needed, in part because of the economic crises of the era and in part because public health fell into the gap between national and municipal jurisdiction. In 1903, however, an outbreak of bubonic plague and the resulting call for a decisive response significantly strengthened their hand. No previous epidemic had set off the kind of panic that came with the bubonic plague: The plague was a new and exotic disease in Peru, the scourge of fourteenth-century Europe, a sickness spread by rats, leading in many cases to a painful, ugly, horrible death. While many Peruvians (including several doctors) initially refused to believe the official diagnosis of plague, others threw themselves into a panicked frenzy, firing servants, denouncing slovenly neighbors, and dousing their walls and floors daily with disinfectant.¹⁸ In the face of a widespread clamor for action, public health officials found that they could finally implement measures that they had advocated fruitlessly for decades. Lima's city council organized a new Institute of Hygiene, and the national government established the Dirección de Salubridad Pública. Together they carried out an ambitious program of inspections, disinfections, and quarantines unprecedented in Peruvian history.

During the peak of the plague, so-called sanitary police went door-to-door inspecting the health conditions of each home, ordering garbage removed, spraying disinfectant, taking household objects away to be sterilized or destroyed, lifting floorboards to search for rats to kill, and ordering rodent holes to be plugged with cement. All the while they recorded exhaustive statistics about the location of each case of disease and of each rat found dead.¹⁹ For a while they published the addresses of infected homes in the papers, and some people complained that they

subjected individuals with suspicious illnesses to the indignity of a medical exam right on the street, in full view of their neighbors.²⁰ Most controversial of all, however, were the mandatory requirements that doctors and family members report all cases of infection to the authorities and that patients be forcibly removed to *lazarettos* (quarantine hospitals) on the outskirts of town.²¹ Over time, public health officials became more selective in their interventions, inspecting homes only when a contagious disease had been positively diagnosed, when a landlord or resident requested disinfection, or when neighbors raised a complaint. But they retained the power to inspect private dwellings when necessary, penetrating even Lima's cloistered monasteries in search of rats and other dangers to public health.²²

This intrusion of government power into the most intimate private sphere marked an extraordinary break with Lima's deep patriarchal tradition, and it did not occur without opposition. The inspectors were authorized to call on the police in order to ensure that people allowed them into their homes.²³ In one case, even a member of the Callao municipal council proved uncooperative when an official insisted upon inspecting not just his sitting room but his interior rooms as well.²⁴ The most common form of resistance, however, was the refusal to report cases of infection in order to avoid the forced relocation of the patient or family members to the *lazareto*. Hospitalized patients would provide an incorrect home address to safeguard their loved ones' freedom. The wealthy and middle class (at times paying a bribe for the service) had their family doctors issue false or vague death certificates. Some poorer patients fled before the authorities arrived, and in one instance residents barricaded a street and threw rocks to keep the municipal health employees out of their neighborhood.²⁵ For a time, public officials were forced to give a reward for each denunciation of plague.²⁶

Ultimately, however, health inspectors were aided by the panic that surrounded the disease. Reward or no reward, many fear-stricken citizens proved more than willing to denounce their local "*focos de infección*" ("centers of infection"). Both the municipality and the newspapers became accustomed to receiving neighbors' complaints about a clandestine garbage heap or guinea pig farm, as each new outbreak rekindled a middle- and upper-class phobia about microbes, dust, and foul smells. With all the fervor of recent converts, the "respectable people" called on the state to instruct the masses in the new religion of hygiene, and critics lashed out at those who continued to throw household garbage onto their roofs or into their back patios.²⁷ At the peak of the epidemic, in April 1904, the clamor reached such a pitch that the exasperated mayor of Lima felt the need to remind people that the municipality was incapable of policing the interior of each and every home. "Soon they will ask me why I don't send a brigade to clean, bathe, and soap everyone who doesn't wash!" he complained.²⁸

As with most crises, the bubonic plague brought out the best and the worst in people. On the one hand, upper- and middle-class fears of contagion fueled a palpable desire to segregate the poor. Newspapers seriously discussed the forced relocation of Chinatown to a site across the Rímac river, and some public officials seemed to care about slum eradication only when those tenements stood uncomfortably

close to the homes of "respectable people."²⁹ On the other hand, the door-to-door campaign against the plague also provided the first sustained opportunity for health-minded government reformers to investigate the actual living conditions of the poor. The experience profoundly marked a generation of young medical students, many of whom had their first up-close view of poverty as volunteers in the sanitary police. The Dirección de Salubridad Pública became a permanent and influential arm of the state, increasingly turning its attention to tuberculosis, typhoid fever, infant mortality, syphilis, alcoholism, and a host of other medical and social problems. Epidemiology and hygiene became the vehicle by which government reformers began to investigate the "social question" and to propose solutions that bypassed the church, the Sociedad de Beneficencia, and the tradition of private charity.

The historical significance of this official discovery of the poor cannot be stressed enough. For the first time, urban social problems became the focus of systematic, scientific study by an increasingly interventionist central government. The dictates of public health increasingly reigned in the private power of landlords and employers, once nearly absolute. In the process, a genuinely reformist impulse was able to gain a firm foothold within the apparatus of the state, promoting an agenda that would go far beyond hygiene and sanitation to include such issues as workplace accidents, public housing, Sunday rest, and the eight-hour workday. As *higienista* Carlos Enrique Paz Soldán put it:

Because social assistance [is] a work of national solidarity, and no longer just a pious act of charity, . . . its exercise in a democracy should be inspired principally by high ideals of patriotic fraternity and social justice. It is through social reforms, broadly conceived and implemented, that the countries that march in the vanguard of civilization have resolved the essential issue of public assistance: the struggle against misery and pauperism.³⁰

Social reform, in other words, was the keystone of progress and civilization; for Paz Soldán and other public health officials, the struggles against epidemic disease, endemic poverty, and national backwardness were inseparable.

At the same time, however, the *higienistas'* vision of social reform was constrained and distorted by the orthodoxies of the time, including ideas of race that dominated thinking in the scientific community. The perceived connection between race and disease was unshakable in Peru, as it was throughout the Western world in this era of social Darwinism and eugenics.³¹ Despite the lack of conclusive evidence about the origin of the bubonic plague, experts and laymen alike assumed that the epidemic had come from the Far East and that the Asian immigrant was a prime vehicle of its propagation. One newspaper critic wrote:

From the nations of the yellow race, where civilization has not yet penetrated, there comes to spread throughout the world . . . the most devastating plague that has ever afflicted humankind. With the unsuitable mixing of degenerate races that immigration inevitably brings, they carry [from China] the constant threat of the dissemination of plague throughout the rest of the world.³²

Few public health experts doubted that the high mortality of Asians and indigenous peoples was both a function and proof of their inherent racial weakness. This weakness also made them a danger to others, because the epidemic diseases they so easily contracted could then be passed on to the population at large.³³

Interestingly, although most *higienistas* accepted the "scientific" racism of their age, that did not make them any less reformist or any less conscious of the need to improve the living conditions of the majority. Quite the opposite: In fact, eugenics in Peru, as in the rest of Latin America, made little distinction between heredity and environment. As Nancy Stepan has noted, Latin American eugenicists were less influenced by Darwin than by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, the early-nineteenth-century French naturalist who championed the idea that biological characteristics acquired over an organism's lifetime could be passed on to subsequent generations. As a result, Peru's experts believed that the racial stock of their nation could be improved not only by means of biological mixing with "superior" races but also through the amelioration of living conditions, the defense of public health, and the aggressive struggle against the "degenerative" forces of alcoholism and vice. In contrast to northern European social Darwinism, which often viewed any state intervention on behalf of "inferior" races as counterproductive, eugenic ideology in Latin America served the cause of reform, giving scientific support to the civilizing imperative.³⁴ In Peru physicians explicitly employed eugenic ideas to justify the battle against tuberculosis, campaigns against alcoholism, demands for factory legislation, the construction of workers' housing projects, and much more.³⁵

However, because of the neo-Lamarckian tendency to make little distinction between heredity and environment, Peru's public health experts also made little distinction between the conditions in which people of different races found themselves and the intrinsic characteristics of those races. As a result, the crudest stereotypes assumed the guise of scientific knowledge and at times formed the basis for public policy. Asians, for example, appeared even in official reports as inherently filthy, ignorant of hygiene, congenitally addicted to opium, and sexually deviant.³⁶ Indians were unhygienic, indolent, resentful, and prone to alcoholism.³⁷ Both races were alleged to be natural targets of tuberculosis, plague, syphilis, and a host of other diseases, and most health officials could not imagine disaggregating the biological, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that made them so. The experts duly noted that most Indians and Asians were poor but rarely gave special importance to the fact; poverty simply joined the list of characteristics that, along with ignorance, contributed to their high mortality. Even the few writers who downplayed the importance of race argued that cultural level, not income, was the crucial predictor of one's susceptibility to epidemic disease.³⁸ In the end, no attempt to determine cause and effect could escape this neo-Lamarckian circularity: sickly, degenerate races were more likely to contract disease, yet disease itself debilitated its victims and their offspring, thereby weakening the race.³⁹ Indians were allegedly predisposed to alcoholism, yet alcoholism was assumed to be the reason why Indians had become a degraded race in the first place. One

medical student, preparing a hygiene curriculum for use in primary schools, had to wrestle with whether or not to talk about the supposed genetic heritability of alcoholism: On the one hand, students should know the dire consequences of drinking, but on the other hand, the children of alcoholics should not be deprived of hope.⁴⁰ In short, Lima's public health experts were captives of an explanatory paradigm that had the great virtue of turning scientific racism into a rationale for social reform but that at the same time blamed the victims for their plight, or more accurately, saw victim and plight as inseparable, as one and the same thing.

Housing Reform and Social Conflict

The issue of housing provides a unique window onto the contradictions of a reformist project that was both progressive and racist, genuinely concerned with the well-being of the poor yet unwilling to confront poverty itself. Government intervention in housing had begun as an emergency measure during the antibubonic campaign of 1904–1905, when thousands of homes were disinfected and several hundred thousand rats were exterminated.⁴¹ Over time, however, Lima's endemic tuberculosis, rather than the plague, became the primary rationale for housing reform. Drawing on the writings of European authorities, Lima's health care professionals cited insufficient light, lack of ventilation, dust, humidity, filth, and overcrowding as essential factors promoting transmission of the Koch (tubercular) bacillus.⁴² Poor housing was also alleged to contribute indirectly to disease by fomenting alcoholism, immorality, and a sense of fatalism, all of which weakened workers' resistance.⁴³

Beneath the veneer of medical objectivity, the *higienistas* seemed to dwell inordinately on the lurid details of filth and degradation in Lima's tenements, vividly describing the sights and smells with a mixture of disgust and fascination.⁴⁴ Rarely, however, did these Dantesque portraits distinguish in any significant way between miserable buildings and miserable tenants. While official reports and journalistic exposés did criticize the greedy or negligent landlords who refused to invest in the upkeep of their properties, they nevertheless betrayed the assumption that filthy, unsanitary homes were caused primarily by filthy, unsanitary people:

All the preventable diseases, endemic or not, ravage [these tenements] because there they find a favorable environment in which to seethe: subjects debilitated by alcoholism, by misery, by life in an infected environment; individuals in complete physical decadence and no less moral decadence, influenced by stupid prejudices, crass ignorance, and the most complete indolence.⁴⁵

Overcrowding itself was cast in the same ambiguous terms. Public health experts constantly described lower-class housing as a hazard to both health and morality, citing the "promiscuity" with which fathers, mothers, children, and even non-family members shared a single room and sometimes a single bed. But just as often, the reports left the impression that the relaxed morals of the poor predis-

posed them to live that way, or at least made them oblivious to the fact that they were violating every principle of "civilized" life.⁴⁶ Race, as usual, dominated the equation: "Uncivilized" races by definition lacked an understanding of cleanliness and hygiene, so the fact that disproportionate numbers of Indians and Asians lived—and died—in Lima's worst, most unsanitary dwellings confirmed not their oppression but their backwardness. According to one report:

It is an inveterate custom among individuals of the common people [*sujetos del bajo pueblo*], principally among those of the Indian race, to live in shocking promiscuity with all the domestic animals, those who with their excrement dirty the pavement and the furniture and contribute, in no small part, to the unhealthiness of the home. Dogs, cats, pigs, guinea pigs, chickens, etc., are inseparable companions of these individuals of the lowest social class.⁴⁷

Rarely if ever did the *higienistas* voice the possibility that unsanitary habits like raising animals in the home or immoral habits like sleeping many to a bed might be a response to economic necessity.⁴⁸ And once again prejudice was most apparent against the Chinese. This is how the popular weekly *Varietades* described the Callejón Otaiza, a tenement in the heart of Lima's Chinatown:

With a motley full-time population of nearly 500 vice-ridden and abject Chinese, and a transient population no less in number, with its dark and asphyxiating opium dens, clandestine motel rooms, abominable dives, gambling dens—all working together to produce the greatest possible degradation and filth—that *callejón* was an affront to Lima and a school of immorality and corruption for the social dregs.⁴⁹

Demographers gave scientific support to this caricature, establishing (with a statistical rigor matched solely by their lack of imagination) that members of the yellow race lived too closely together and too many to a room.⁵⁰ The only question left was whether this proven tendency toward overcrowding was a cause or a product of Asians' alleged moral degeneration.⁵¹

A modern reader may see the early-twentieth-century *higienistas'* ideas as hopelessly confused and therefore assume that the *higienistas* were incapable of formulating a coherent program to confront the problem of unsanitary housing. Actually, quite the opposite was true. Housing policy simply had to satisfy two different objectives at the same time: On the one hand, it had to provide the poor with clean, spacious, well-ventilated buildings that would resist the incubation of microbes; on the other hand, it had to educate the poor in cleanliness, hygiene, childrearing methods, savings, and temperance. In the eyes of Lima's *higienistas*, these goals were not only harmonious but mutually dependent: Low-income housing that did not also serve a civilizing purpose was a waste of time. The chosen solution, following precedents in England and France, was to attempt to turn workers into the owners of their own single-family homes, encouraging them to invest their wages in mortgage payments instead of rent.⁵² Elite reformers considered self-evident the benefits of turning workers into proprietors: Not only would

workers live in sanitary homes and no longer be at the mercy of landlords, but they would also develop the habit of saving (rather than spending their paychecks on drink) and by becoming homeowners would supposedly learn the joys and responsibilities of domestic life.⁵³ The worker-proprietor model had other advantages as well. For one thing, private entrepreneurs could build houses and provide credit at little cost to government, which needed only to cede the land and provide loan guarantees.

Alongside plans to civilize workers by turning them into homeowners, government officials enacted a range of other measures designed to teach sanitary habits, control threats to public health, and elevate the "cultural level" of the masses. Courses in hygiene were brought up to date and taught more aggressively in elementary schools. Adults were targeted with a blitz of instructive flyers on the symptoms, prevention, and treatment of such diseases as plague, tuberculosis, and syphilis. Doctors and medical students taught extension courses on personal cleanliness and the evils of alcohol. Around 1912 the government established a School of Domestic Education designed to teach poor girls the art and science of home economics, cooking, cleaning, sewing, and hygiene. "Experience shows us," wrote President Guillermo Billinghurst (1912–1914), "that domestic education, when it penetrates the [lower] social classes, is the best defense against tuberculosis and alcoholism, the great plagues that afflict the human species."⁵⁴ In 1916 antialcohol education was made compulsory in elementary and middle schools, and a year later the government banned the sale of alcohol on Saturdays and Sundays.⁵⁵ Prostitution also came under closer scrutiny by health officials. In addition, concern with public health (and defense of the race) contributed significantly to Peruvians' early efforts to regulate labor conditions, including a 1911 law on workplace accidents and 1918 laws on Sunday closing and the limitation of child and female labor.⁵⁶ Although each of these measures arose in its own unique circumstances, they all owed a common debt to the civilizing imperative, to the elites' desire to improve the poor, to promote public health, and to foster national progress by adopting the advanced legislation of the world's "civilized countries."⁵⁷

Scores of laws were written during these years to regulate the construction and renovation of rental properties in an attempt to rid the city of its old tenements and prevent the building of new ones. A string of measures passed in 1911 prohibited the construction of large rental units without prior approval of their building plans, mandated a sanitary inspection before every change of tenants, and banned the use of clay in the construction of rental housing, among other things.⁵⁸ Tenants' behavior was also regulated more and more closely: One ordinance, for example, prohibited the raising of domestic animals inside the home, while another made it illegal to hang washing from balconies that overlooked the street.⁵⁹

These measures, designed to improve public health, reduce mortality rates, and bring Lima into the "modern" world, failed on virtually every count. To begin with, the few workers' housing projects that got beyond the planning stage did little to lessen, much less solve, the problem of unsanitary dwellings. Much of the

difficulty could be traced back to the effort to use housing policy to "civilize" the masses. Despite the experts' attempt to study what a worker could afford, the homes built to their meticulous specifications proved entirely beyond the reach of the truly poor.⁶⁰ More important than sheer cost was the difference between payment of rent and commitment to a mortgage. Rents in most of Lima's tenements were paid weekly rather than monthly, and the process of collection was highly informal and ad hoc. This was a necessary response to the situation of a huge segment of Lima's poor, who lacked permanent jobs and steady incomes but who could still manage to scrape up a bit of money here and there when they needed to. If circumstances turned so dire that they could no longer keep the landlord at bay, relocation to another place was not the end of the world, and in most cases of delinquency, eviction was the exception rather than the rule. Worker-proprietor plans, in contrast, demanded that potential homeowners sign contracts, provide letters of reference, take out life insurance policies, and make large regular monthly payments.⁶¹ Limits on the number of people allowed to occupy each home prevented owners from realizing the economies that went with sharing a dwelling. These inconveniences compounded the basic problem that private developers did not see workers' housing as a safe investment and government plans were always woefully underfunded.⁶² Ultimately, instead of becoming the magic formula for housing, instructing, and civilizing the poor, the few "workers' houses" actually built ended up in the hands of well-off artisans and white-collar employees, people who already enjoyed stable, comfortable incomes and a degree of social respectability.⁶³

Not only did the fantasy of workers' housing fail to materialize in a significant way, but public officials also continued to confront ever-greater numbers of overcrowded slum dwellings in horrible states of repair and worse states of hygiene. Builders and owners routinely disregarded the flood of codes and regulations, and municipal officials were frequently unable or unwilling to enforce the law. More often than not, inspectors reported the unsanitary conditions in this or that building, made radical recommendations for demolition or remodeling, and then waited years for action. When faced with owners' refusal to comply, the municipal council took the path of least resistance, allowing the landlords of condemned buildings to renovate instead, permitting superficial disinfections instead of structural improvements, and charging fines they knew would never be paid.⁶⁴

The poor also resisted efforts to reform their behavior, despite the fact that public health officials could be extraordinarily coercive in their dealings with social "inferiors." During the 1904 plague epidemic, for example, the sanitary police virtually invaded Chinatown's Callejón Otaiza, tore down the partitions that subdivided the building's hundred or so rooms into hundreds more, ordered the number of tenants limited to about 300, and hired a night watchman to control who entered. Most tenants did not look favorably upon this new discipline, imposed ostensibly for their own good. The watchman became the target of enormous hostility, died within the year, and was not replaced. In 1908 inhabitants of

the *callejón* even refused to cooperate with census takers, who achieved their objective only by bringing in police to surround the building in a surprise nighttime raid.⁶⁵ Distrust of authority was endemic in Lima and was by no means restricted to the Chinese: Census officials reported that renters refused to disclose how much they paid, fearing that providing the information would cause their rents to go up.⁶⁶ Nor were poor tenants necessarily pleased even when landlords sought to make their lodgings more habitable. One owner went to the sanitary authorities and complained that his tenants refused to let him install kitchens in their apartments. He asked for the city's help to evict them temporarily until the work was done.⁶⁷ The *higienistas* generally attributed such behavior to the ignorance and indolence of the poor, failing to comprehend people's legitimate fears that their rents would rise, that they would be compelled to follow new and onerous rules, or that they would be evicted. Tenant resistance often played into the hands of unscrupulous landlords who refused to keep up their properties, but popular opposition to slum eradication was understandable all the same. No bylaws or education campaigns could stop the majority of poor *limeños* from sleeping several to a bed, raising animals in their rooms, hanging laundry out over the street, or urinating in public as long as the alternatives remained costly and impractical or carried no visible benefit. Given the distance between the reformers and the masses they hoped to reform, given the eugenic assumptions of health experts, and given the official disregard for basic questions of poverty, any other lower-class response should surprise us even more.

Workers and the Civilizing Imperative

Nevertheless, a significant segment of Lima's lower classes did in fact respond differently, embracing rather than rejecting the elite reformers' discourse of health, hygiene, and progress. Indeed, what is so surprising in the Peruvian case is the fact that opponents of the civilizing impulse appear so *infrequently* in the public record. Their resistance, as we have seen, is revealed in the complaints of elite reformers, but the people's own voice is rarely heard. Instead, even in the so-called working-class press, the advocates of progress dominate entirely. Almost without exception, Lima's mutual aid societies and nascent labor unions took great pains to promote the "culture" and "moral improvement" of their members. They established libraries, promoted workers' theater and poetry, invited university students to teach extension courses in their meeting halls, and denounced the evils of alcoholism and vice in their newspapers. And although this ideology of culture and self-improvement was typical of the politically moderate workers who dominated Lima's major mutual aid societies prior to 1919, it was hardly theirs alone. Anarchists were even more aggressive civilizers, arguing that education of the worker was the key to winning his emancipation from clerical indoctrination and superstition. "Civilization," wrote the anarchist newspaper *Los Parias* in 1905, "is not just material progress; civilization is also illustration, truth, justice; civiliza-

tion is patriotism, abnegation, truth; civilization is nobility of spirit and sentiment."⁶⁸ As late as the 1920s, pro-APRA⁶⁹ and even communist unions repeated the same rhetoric. Nearly all labor organizations, be they anarchist, syndicalist, or conservative, joined the fight against alcohol, gambling, and other vices; the more radical the organization, the louder its criticism of the government's failure to act more aggressively.

In the area of housing, Lima's mutual aid societies were strong proponents of the worker-proprietor model and agreed wholeheartedly with the idea that housing policy should contribute to the moral improvement of the worker. A few mutual aid societies actually worked to implement home finance and construction plans of their own, responding to members' sincere aspirations to home ownership. And significantly, as they called for more extensive government intervention in the building of workers' housing, some artisans went so far as to echo the ideas of elites like Piérola and Dávalos y Lissón, arguing that Peru's pride as a nation was undermined by its failure to provide decent housing for all. *La Verdad*, the organ of the Confederación de Artesanos Unión Universal, wrote in 1917:

The date of our Centennial approaches, and it would be a national embarrassment if we offered for the contemplation of the foreigners who will visit us at that time—the housing of the working classes of Peru—infected pigsties, some of which are not even fit for the lowest beings on the zoological scale. This is a disgrace. . . . it is something that diminishes our standing as a civilized people.⁷⁰

This is not to say, however, that artisans and other organized workers sought "progress" and "civilization" on exactly the same terms as elites did. Within the boundaries of consensus on general principle, the devil was always in the details, and conflict could be intense. In 1917, for example, the government offered to sell private developers an expanse of public land on the Avenida Grau for the purpose of building workers' housing. Debating the project, one senator opposed its location, arguing that the Avenida, being the continuation of the Paseo Colón, "has a brilliant future and should be the location of public buildings of greater importance."⁷¹ As an alternative, he proposed building the homes on the other side of the Rímac, between a centuries-old slum and a recently reclaimed garbage dump. Incensed, *La Verdad* attacked the senator in an article dripping with sarcasm: "Our attention is drawn to the low estimation [the senator] seems to have for those poor men, whom he must suppose are not on the same social plane as he, given that he would banish them to some suburb or other zone outside the city limits, just as they do with gypsies and other vagabonds, whose contact is noxious to the rest of mankind."⁷² At issue here, clearly, was not just a matter of location but, rather, a far more basic question: whether or not workers themselves were to be treated as full and equal members of society. In essence, Lima's literate organized workers were appropriating the reformers' discourse of progress, civilization, and respectability in order to assert their basic rights as Peruvian citizens, rights that many conservative elites were unwilling to grant them.

The radicalism of that claim is undeniable, but it did not come without a price. In a deeply stratified, caste-bound society like that of turn-of-the-century Lima, it was perhaps impossible for artisans and organized workers to successfully claim their rightful place in society without inevitably distancing themselves from the illiterate majority. As they criticized liquor, games of chance, cockfighting, and other traditional diversions of the poor; as they established libraries and theaters for workers; and as they published newspapers and held public assemblies, they were in effect telling elites that they deserved consideration as equal human beings.⁷³ But in embracing self-improvement and temperance as the means to a better life, organized workers could not help but accept the gulf that separated them from the thousands of other poor Peruvians who drank, who gambled, and who did not share their ideals. Evidence of this gulf can be seen, for example, in organized workers' insistence upon calling themselves *obreros* (workers), in order to emphasize their special skills and to distinguish themselves from the common *peón* (peon) or *jornalero* (day laborer).⁷⁴ Evidence can also be seen in the support that organized workers gave to housing plans designed to transform workers into respectable property owners. On the one hand, the dream of home ownership was both sincere and powerful. But on the other hand, as we have already seen, worker-proprietor plans were extraordinarily ill-suited to the needs of the truly poor. In fighting for the worker-proprietor model, organized workers closed off other options—the subsidized construction of large rental units, for example—that might otherwise have been considered.

The ideology of hygiene, cleanliness, and public health, including its undercurrent of “scientific” racism, cropped up frequently in the writings and speeches of Lima’s artisans and organized workers. Working-class papers were no less diligent than their middle- and upper-class counterparts in denouncing those unseemly and unhealthy tenements that threatened the health of Lima’s residents. On the one hand, the workers’ press was far more likely than the elite press to denounce the owners of those buildings, to complain about high rents, and to support tenants’ interests, even to the point of advocating rent strikes in 1914 and 1919.⁷⁵ But on the other hand, working-class papers were not entirely immune from the confused causal thinking that attributed unsanitary dwellings to the ignorance and poor hygiene of their tenants.⁷⁶ And like the upper and middle classes, artisans and organized workers were most likely to blame the victim for unsanitary housing when that victim was Asian. “We knew very well,” wrote *La Verdad*, “that the rooms of the Chinese were true rabbits’ dens, filthy and ramshackle, inside of which one encountered only misery and putrefaction, no matter what the economic conditions of the occupants, who were generally many to a room.”⁷⁷ The same paper went on to describe the dwellings of Asians as “nauseating sewers” and “centers of filth,” while elsewhere it denounced Asians themselves as “these yellow microbes, incubators of all the physical and moral ills that destroy the vitality of peoples.”⁷⁸

Fear of contagion was not the only, or even the primary, cause of racism against Asians in Lima. Workers in unstable precarious jobs justifiably believed that im-

migrants would flood the labor market and drive down wages. Artisans in particular had long complained of being undercut by lower-cost goods from Chinese and Japanese competitors.⁷⁹ Consumers criticized a host of alleged abuses by Asian shopkeepers. But time and time again, these economic arguments were conflated with a discourse that emphasized Asians’ alleged sickliness, filth, moral turpitude, and racial degeneration. The phrase “*inmundo chino*” (“filthy Chinaman”) was so often repeated that one word didn’t seem complete without the other.⁸⁰ Racism has been expressed throughout history in a language of cleanliness versus filth, or “purity and danger,” as Mary Douglas famously put it,⁸¹ but it is still worthwhile to emphasize the extent to which the campaigns of Peru’s public health experts legitimated and shaped working-class race hatred. Asian merchants, it was argued, were able to undersell native artisans because of their racial predisposition to live and work in unsanitary conditions that would offend the dignity of even the humblest Peruvian. “Modest native-born ice-cream sellers,” argued *El Obrero Textil*, “are being replaced by nauseating Japanese *raspadilleros* of cadaverous complexions and slanty eyes, with black fingernails, swarming with flies.”⁸² In addition, Asians supposedly thwarted the efforts of honest native workers to improve themselves because they owned the bars and gambling houses that preyed upon human weakness.⁸³ The ideology of progress and civilization underpinned each and every criticism of the Asian worker, adding weight to the arguments against their importation.

In addition, some of the acts of hostility that Asians suffered at the hands of other poor Peruvians seem almost bizarre unless we look for their explanation somewhere other than the labor market. Why, for example, did people in 1909–1910 pelt Chinese street sweepers with rocks, often with such violence that the sweepers were forced out of their neighborhoods?⁸⁴ Competition for miserable sanitation jobs was not at issue, according to contemporary observers.⁸⁵ Instead, it appears that the rock throwers were motivated by the belief that the street sweepers, instead of contributing to urban hygiene, were making things worse. Many public health experts had long criticized garbage-removal methods in Lima, arguing that sweeping with dry brooms actually contributed to typhoid and tuberculosis by raising microbe-laden particles into the air.⁸⁶ Although attributing motives is a game of speculation, it is not unreasonable to believe that even the poor identified the street sweepers as agents not of sanitation but of infection, especially at a moment when the re-emergence of bubonic plague had raised fear of contagion to near-panic levels. Marching through the streets in a cloud of foul-smelling dust, themselves covered with the filth they were charged with removing, the Chinese laborers symbolized contagion, disease, and death.

Guillermo Billinghurst, as mayor of Lima in 1909–1910, certainly perceived a connection between the ideology of health and hygiene and working-class violence against Asians. In May 1909, a political demonstration by the artisan-led *Partido Obrero* (Worker’s party) degenerated into the worst anti-Asian riot seen in Lima to that date. Yelling “death to the Chinese,” an enraged mob smashed the

windows of Asian-owned stores and workshops, sacked and destroyed merchandise, and tried to set at least one establishment on fire. Asians who were unlucky enough to be on the street were assaulted and several were seriously injured, though no one was reported killed.⁸⁷ What was Billinghamurst's response to the riot? Two days later he issued an order to demolish the Callejón Otaiza, the tenement in Lima's Chinatown that had long been denounced by health officials as a source of contagion.⁸⁸ Disregarding the protests of the building's Italian landlord, Billinghamurst sent a crew of workers to carry out the destruction, which was completed in a matter of hours. *Variedades* described the scene with undisguised satisfaction:

Once the *callejón* was taken, as if by assault, there began a veritable exodus of Chinks [*macacos*]; swarming like ants, they emerged like frightened rabbits, leaving fearfully in single file, hugging the wall, rapidly filling the street like mice whose nest had been flooded. . . . The job continued amidst all this, and minutes later Mr. Billinghamurst, like a new Columbus, could cry "land!" upon seeing the adjoining street through the now-perforated *callejón*. There, where the filthy tenement once stood, a clean and decent street worthy of bearing the mayor's name will be opened up.⁸⁹

By all accounts, workers witnessing the demolition shared the reporter's enthusiasm and cheered Billinghamurst.⁹⁰ No one cared about the unfortunates who, as ironic recompense for their earlier victimization by rioters, were thrown into the street with two days' notice and no place to go.⁹¹

The demolition of the Callejón Otaiza speaks volumes for the two-edged nature of urban reformism in Peru. Of all the important politicians in early-twentieth-century Lima, few were more dedicated than Billinghamurst to the cause of workers. As president in 1912–1914, he threw the full resources of the government behind a plan for workers' housing, supported regulation of the price of basic necessities, and granted the eight-hour day to stevedores. Some historians have thus considered Billinghamurst a "populist precursor" and an enemy of the traditional elite, which in many ways he was.⁹² But on closer inspection the question arises: What distinguished Billinghamurst's reformism, rooted in considerations of public health, hygiene, and the improvement of the working class, from the civilizing imperative of aristocratic figures like Dávalos y Lissón? Billinghamurst's housing plan, for example, explicitly followed the worker-proprietor model, and had it ever been completed, it would have done nothing for the truly poor. His aggressive attack on tenements owed primarily to the desire to eliminate alleged centers of contagion. In the end, nothing in Billinghamurst's rhetoric or behavior indicates that his ideas differed in any significant way from those of the *higienistas*, with their eugenic fear of racial degeneration and their inherent failure to address the issue of poverty itself. Yet Billinghamurst was undeniably a man of the people with a genuine working-class base.

How can this paradox be explained? First of all, we cannot escape the fact that workers, like all other Peruvians, were deeply divided by race and racism. The

scapegoating of Asians was an ugly but comprehensible reaction to unstable employment, intense competition, and—perhaps most important—the omnipresent fear of disease in a notoriously unhealthy urban environment. Second, the literate, organized workers who spearheaded Lima's early labor movement and dominated the workers' press were in some ways victims of their own discursive strategies. As we have already seen, these workers embraced the ideology of hygiene and civilization as a way to stake a claim to respectability and hence a radical claim to citizenship. Just as important, by echoing the *higienistas*' assertion that Peru's "progress" as a nation depended upon raising the cultural, moral, and material level of the average worker, they mounted a powerful and convincing argument for higher wages, shorter hours, better working conditions, improved housing, and a host of other genuine economic gains. In so doing, however, it became extraordinarily difficult for those workers to also maintain an effective solidarity with the many other poor Peruvians who showed little interest in becoming more like the "respectable people."

Finally, it is essential to remember that there *were* fundamental differences between the ideology of hygiene, race, and progress as understood by elites and the formulation of those same ideas in the minds of Lima's organized workers. What is fascinating about working-class ideology in Lima is the extent to which the civilizing imperative and even anti-Asian hatred fueled a coherent and quite radical critique of the Peruvian elite itself. "If gambling and alcoholism exist here," wrote *El Obrero Textil*,

it is because the very people charged with enforcing these laws violate them and allow them to be violated. The workers in general . . . petitioned authorities for a complete ban on the elaboration of alcoholic beverages in the country, and if these requests have been ignored, it is because it serves the interests of capitalism and the bourgeoisie to have the masses living in a state of lethargy, made dull and stupid for their eternal exploitation.⁹³

We have seen that workers' organizations campaigned against vice, but they differed from most *higienistas* in that they never lost sight of the elites who either profited from that vice or, at any rate, showed scant interest in its repression.⁹⁴

Workers similarly enlisted the racial ideas of public health reformers in a biting critique of Peru's most powerful landowning families. "Everywhere else the Chinese are thrown out," complained the militantly antigovernment and anticlerical paper *Fray K. Bezón* in 1907, "but they are brought to Peru, because otherwise, the haciendas of Messrs. Pardo and Leguía would suffer greatly. What does it matter to Messrs. Leguía and Pardo that the Chinese deform and destroy the race of our people?"⁹⁵ Workers, in other words, excoriated elites for putting their personal interest in securing a low-wage workforce above the general interest in "improving" the nation's racial stock. This argument was extremely radical in some ways, describing Peru's leaders as lackeys of an egoistic and utterly antinational landholding elite. It resonated deeply with an emerging popular nationalism that accused

Peruvian landowners (and their Chinese workers) of collaborating with Chile in the War of the Pacific. But in denouncing elite self-interest and hypocrisy, workers tacitly embraced the very beliefs that those elites professed but allegedly ignored, including the idea that Peru's national progress depended upon its racial improvement and that Europeans were in fact superior.⁹⁶

Reform, Discipline, and Failure: Final Reflections

By 1930 Peru's leaders had made great strides in the "hygienization" of Lima, but much remained unaccomplished. Between 1919 and 1930 President Augusto B. Leguía dedicated substantial resources to the city's improvement, bringing in U.S. technology to satisfy the need for pavement, sewers, and potable water in the urban center. Brick and cement finally began to replace adobe as the building material of choice. Bubonic plague ceased to appear in the city, although tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and other diseases persisted. The most significant change in the 1920s was the increasing conversion of the downtown core into a strictly commercial center and the exodus of the elite and middle class to suburban neighborhoods such as Santa Beatriz, Jesús María, and later San Isidro. Much more slowly, the poor, too, began to leave the city center, but for them the change was not always for the better. Lower-class suburbs like La Victoria were settled without the provision of basic services, as the municipality and developers fought for years over who should pay. Tenements sprang up even in new neighborhoods, reproducing all the health and hygiene problems of the traditional urban core. And around 1930 Lima saw the emergence of its first shantytowns, foreshadowing what would eventually become the typical residence of the city's poor majority.

In 1945 an urban planner named Luis Ortiz de Zavallos continued to voice a familiar lament: "If we *limeños* have something to be ashamed of, it is the unhealthy housing of our city. Few places in the civilized world are marked by such an ignominious blemish, which belies Lima's cultured and humanitarian tradition."⁹⁷ Apparently little had changed in the fifty years since Nicolás de Piérola had written virtually identical words. Indeed, Ortiz de Zavallos, like the *higienistas* of a generation earlier, pointed to Lima's unsanitary housing as the main source of tuberculosis, "radiating centers of the white plague, from whence the terrible illness spreads to more comfortable and luxurious residences."⁹⁸ While Ortiz de Zavallos differed from the *higienistas* of the early 1900s in his appreciation of the importance of poverty, he nonetheless continued to emphasize that reform could not succeed without the education of the masses, or in his words, "trying to make Lima's less advanced social groups enter into our Western way of life."⁹⁹ On the one hand, Ortiz de Zavallos was talking specifically about recent indigenous rural migrants, not about the lower classes as a whole. This was a significant change from the situation at the beginning of the century. But on the other hand, his perception that Lima's urban problems could only be solved by giving the masses a good dose of Western culture demonstrated both the persistence of the civilizing

imperative and the perception that past efforts had been in vain. Despite the strides made in hygiene education, Lima remained a city where every vacant lot soon became a garbage dump, where street vendors prepared food with wastewater, where all kinds of domestic animals ran free in the patios and interiors of homes, where men urinated in the street in plain view of police and passers-by. The modernizing elites' efforts to educate, discipline, and change the habits of the poor had largely failed.

What do we make of that failure? It is not unreasonable to argue that urban reformism in fin-de-siècle Lima was, among other things, an authoritarian effort to sanitize the poor in order to protect "respectable people" from contagion and give them the illusion of residence in a cultured, civilized capital. It is easy to see the blindness and racism of a reformist project that blamed poor housing on the tenant, "solved" overcrowding simply by ordering people to live fewer to a room, and tore down slums without making provisions for relocation. If this is our view, then the failure of reform in Lima is a triumph of popular resistance. Poor people refused to change their way of life, escaped eviction far more often than not, and retained the freedom to drink, gamble, have sex, spit, and urinate as they pleased. But it is just as reasonable to argue that urban reform, despite the limitations of its advocates, was a humanitarian effort to prevent children from dying before their first birthday, to prevent adults from living inhuman lives in inhuman surroundings. It is impossible to ignore the enthusiasm with which so many organized workers embraced the ideology of progress, temperance, and hygiene in an effort both to improve the quality of their lives and to claim their place as equal citizens in a society that called itself democratic. If this is our view, then no one can claim victory in Lima's frustrated struggle for civilization.

Notes

Research for this chapter was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, administered through the Advisory Research Council of Queen's University. I also wish to thank Aldo Panfichi, the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Eduardo Zimmermann, and especially Marcos Cueto, who knows more about this topic than anyone else.

1. Juan Bromley and José Barbagelata, *Evolución urbana de Lima* (Lima: Ed. Lumen, 1945), 79, 90.
2. See, for example, Manuel A. Fuentes, *Estadística general de Lima*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Paris: Ad. Lainé et J. Havard, 1866), esp. 57–59.
3. Julio Llosa Málaga, "Estructura económica, clases sociales y producción arquitectónica: Lima 1900–1930" (B.A. thesis, Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, 1979), 9.
4. Juan Günther Doering and Guillermo Lohmann Villena, *Lima* (Madrid: Editorial Mapfre, 1992), 227.
5. *Boletín de "La Colmena," sociedad anónima de construcciones y ahorros* 1, no. 1 (July 2, 1900): 5 (Nicolás de Piérola Archive, Biblioteca Nacional, Sala de Investigaciones, Lima).

6. *El siglo XX en el Perú a través de "El Comercio,"* vol. 1 (1901–1910) (Lima: Empresa Editora "El Comercio," 1991), 53–58, 88–91; Bromley and Barbagelata, *Evolución urbana de Lima*, 93–101; Günther and Lohmann, *Lima*, 227–245.
7. Pedro Dávalos y Lissón, *Lima en 1907* (Lima: Lib. e Imp. Gil, 1908), 51–52.
8. Dávalos y Lissón, *Lima en 1907*, 81–84.
9. Giovanni Bonfiglio, "Los Italianos en Lima," in *Mundos interiores: Lima 1850–1950*, ed. Aldo Panfichi and Felipe Portocarrero (Lima: Universidad del Pacífico, 1995), 44–45; Bromley and Barbagelata, *Evolución urbana de Lima*, 90–92, 99.
10. Carlos Contreras, *Sobre los orígenes de la explosión demográfica en el Perú: 1876–1940* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, Documento de Trabajo #61, 1994), esp. 13–17; Mario del Río, *La inmigración y su desarrollo en el Perú* (Lima: Sanmartí, 1929); Peru, Ministerio de Fomento, *Memoria presentada por el Director de Fomento Dr. Carlos Larrabure i Correa, 1907–1908*, vol. 2 (Lima: La Opinión Nacional, 1908), cxli–cli.
11. Peru, Ministerio de Fomento, Dirección de Salud Pública, *Censo de la Provincia de Lima (26 de junio de 1908)*, vol. 1 (Lima: Imp. de "La Opinión Nacional," 1915), 90–95, 910–927. Racial categories were notoriously vague and subjective, reflecting a combination of self-identification, physical appearance, socioeconomic position, and cultural patterns.
12. Cynthia Sanborn, "Los obreros textiles de Lima: Redes sociales y organización laboral, 1900–1930," in Panfichi and Portocarrero, *Mundos interiores*, esp. 188–193.
13. Humberto Rodríguez Pastor, *Hijos del celeste imperio en el Perú (1850–1900)* (Lima: Instituto de Apoyo Agrario, 1989), 221.
14. Peter Blanchard, "Asian Immigrants in Peru," *North/South: Canadian Journal of Latin American Studies* 4, no. 7 (1979): 61.
15. Peru, *Censo de 1908*, 95. The total population for the Province of Lima in 1908 was 140,884.
16. Blanchard, "Asian Immigrants," esp. 66–67.
17. "Regeneración por la higiene," *Germinal* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1899).
18. Juan B. Agnoli, "Inspección de higiene: Memoria del Inspector," in *Memoria de la Municipalidad de Lima 1904* (Lima: Lib. e Imp. Gil, 1905), v–vii. On the climate of panic, see *El Comercio*, May 21, 1903 (m.); May 25, 1903 (m.); April 2, 1904 (m.). (On Mondays through Saturdays, *El Comercio* came out in two editions, morning [m.] and afternoon [a].)
19. Marcos Cueto, "La ciudad y las ratas: La peste bubónica en Lima y en la costa peruana a comienzos del siglo veinte," *Histórica* 15, no. 1 (July 1991): 5–10; Juan B. Agnoli, "Informe que eleva a la Presidencia de la Junta Directiva de la campaña contra la peste bubónica en la Provincia de Lima," *Boletín del Ministerio de Fomento, Dirección de Salubridad Pública* (hereafter cited as *BMF/DSP*) 2, no. 2 (February 28, 1906): 20–56; Agnoli, "Inspección de higiene," xii–xxxvi, l–lvi.
20. *El Comercio*, April 4, 1904 (m.); April 15, 1904 (m.); April 13, 1904 (a.).
21. Cueto, "La ciudad y las ratas," 14–16.
22. Carlos B. Cisneros, *Provincia de Lima: Monografía del Departamento de Lima* (Lima: Lit. Tip. Carlos Fabbri, 1911), 190.
23. *El Comercio*, May 15, 1903 (m.).
24. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1903 (a.).
25. Cueto, "La ciudad y las ratas," 10–14. For the case of an alleged bribe for a false death certificate, Archivo Histórico del Consejo Provincial de Lima (hereafter AHCPL), Ramo Higiene 1909–1913, Expediente #890–297–1–1911, September 1, 1911. On the rocks and barricades, *El Siglo XX*, vol. 1, 70.

26. Agnoli, "Inspección de higiene," viii–x.
27. Jorge Spero, "Reflexiones higiénicas," *El Comercio*, May 4, 1903 (m.).
28. "Con el Alcalde de Lima," *El Comercio*, April 2, 1904 (m.).
29. See especially the campaign to demolish the Callejón de Petateros, a narrow passage of cheap bars and shops that bordered Lima's central plaza; *Varietades* 4, no. 2 (March 14, 1908): 65–68; 4, no. 3 (March 21, 1908): 97–100; *Prisma* 2, no. 17 (July 1, 1906): 27.
30. Carlos Enrique Paz Soldán, *La asistencia social en el Perú: Tesis para el doctorado* (Lima: Imp. del Centro Editorial, 1914), 38.
31. Nancy Leys Stepan, "The Hour of Eugenics": *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Eduardo A. Zimmermann, "Racial Ideas and Social Reform: Argentina, 1890–1916," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 1 (February 1992): 23–46.
32. "La peste bubónica," *El Comercio*, May 10, 1903.
33. *Germinal* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1899).
34. Stepan, "Hour of Eugenics," chap. 3; Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
35. A few examples of many: J. Antonio Escarena, "La tuberculosis bajo su aspecto médico-social" (B.A. thesis, Universidad Mayor de San Marcos, 1914); Germán Flores, "Higiene en la mujer en cinta" (B.A. thesis, Universidad Mayor de San Marcos, 1913); Carlos Enrique Paz Soldán, *La medicina social: ensayo de sistematización* (Lima: Imprenta SS.CC., 1916).
36. Cisneros, *Provincia de Lima*, esp. 263–265. See also Enrique León García, *La razas en Lima: Estudio demográfico* (Doctoral thesis, Facultad de Medicina, Universidad Mayor de San Marcos, 1909), esp. 61, 63.
37. These arguments persisted even into the 1950s; Carlos Enrique Paz Soldán, *Lima y sus suburbios* (Lima: Instituto de Medicina Social, 1957), 60–61, 251.
38. Abel S. Olaechea, "Estado actual de los conocimientos relativos a la tuberculosis," *BMF/DSP* 4, no. 6–7 (June 30, 1908): 129–131.
39. Escarena, "La tuberculosis," 10; Olaechea, "Estado actual," 134–135.
40. Carlos A. Campos, "Informaciones sobre la higiene escolar en Lima," *Anales de la Universidad Mayor de San Marcos de Lima* (Lima) 30 (Año escolar de 1902): 98.
41. Agnoli, "Informe que eleva," 49–56; "Desinfectorio Municipal de Lima: Resumen de las desinfecciones practicadas durante el segundo semestre de 1904," *BMF/DSP* 1, no. 1 (July 31, 1905): unpaginated.
42. Olaechea, "Estado actual," esp. 100, 114–124. AHCPL, Ramo Higiene 1909–1913, Informe del Inspector de Higiene y Vacuna al Alcalde de Lima, December 31, 1910.
43. Enrique León García, "Alojamientos para la clase obrera en el Perú," *BMF/DSP* 2, no. 1 (January 31, 1906): 57–58; Carlos Enrique Paz Soldán, *La medicina social (ensayo de sistematización)* (Lima: Imp. SS.CC., 1916), chaps. 9–10. See also Diego A. Arnus, "La tuberculosis en el discurso libertario argentino," in *Salud, cultura y sociedad en América Latina: Nuevas perspectivas históricas*, ed. Marcos Cueto (Lima: IEP, Organización Panamericana de la Salud, 1996); and David S. Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
44. Juan Antonio Portella, "La higiene en las casas de vecindad; necesidad de construir casas higiénicas para obreros" (B.A. thesis, Universidad Mayor de San Marcos, 1903), 15–19; Santiago Basurco and Leonidas Avendaño, "Higiene de la habitación: Informe emitido por la

comisión nombrada por el gobierno para estudiar las condiciones sanitarias de las casas de vecindad de Lima," *BMF/DSP* 3, no. 4 (April 30, 1907): esp. 108–112. Two newspaper articles of this genre are reproduced in *El Siglo XX*, vol. 1, 63–66. On French reformers' preoccupation with the foul odors of the poor, see Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the French Social Imagination* (London: Macmillan/Picador, 1994), chap. 9.

45. León García, *Las razas en Lima*, 35. For similar arguments, see Mariano Pagador Blondet, "Contribución al estudio de la fiebre tifoidea en Lima," *BMF/DSP* (2nd trimester 1917): 82; Luis A. Chaves Velando, *Higiene de la habitación* (Arequipa: Tip. Medina, 1909), 3–4.

46. *Memoria que presenta al Supremo Gobierno Juan E. Ríos, Prefecto del Departamento de Lima, 1904–1906* (Lima: Imp. La Industria, 1906), 38. Also see Paz Soldán, *La medicina social*, chap. 9.

47. Basurco and Avendaño, "Higiene de la habitación," p. 110.

48. Cueto, "La ciudad y las ratas," 9; Peru, *Censo de 1908*, 178.

49. "El callejón de Otaiza," *Varietades* 5, no. 63 (May 15, 1909).

50. Peru, *Censo de 1908*, 177 n.; León García, *Las razas en Lima*, 35.

51. Cisneros, *Provincia de Lima*, 263.

52. See esp. Ann-Louise Shapiro, *Housing the Poor of Paris, 1850–1902* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 90–95.

53. Peru, Senado, *Diario de los debates, Congreso Ordinario de 1917*, 289–290, 306, 325. Cisneros, *Provincia de Lima*, 197–200.

54. Guillermo Billinghurst, *El Presidente Billinghurst a la nación: Primera parte* (Santiago, Chile: Lima Imprenta Diener, 1915), 56.

55. Daniel E. Laverería, *Prontuario de legislación sanitaria del Perú*, vol. 1, 1870–1920 (Lima: La Equitativa, 1928), 243, 341, 394.

56. Laverería, *Prontuario*, vol. 1, 203–214, 436–441, 444–446.

57. David S. Parker, "Peruvian Politics and the Eight-Hour Day: Rethinking the 1919 General Strike," *Canadian Journal of History/Annales canadiennes d'histoire* 30, no. 3 (December 1995): 422–426.

58. Laverería, *Prontuario*, vol. 1, 243–254.

59. AHCPL, Ramo Higiene 1909–1913; see the many "expedientes de multas"; Laverería, *Prontuario*, vol. 1, 48.

60. Alberto Alexander Rosenthal, "Los problemas urbanas de Lima y su futuro" (Part 3), *Ciudad y Campo y Caminos* (December 1927), 5; Mariagrazia Huaman Bello and Manuel Ruiz Blanco, "Las casas de obreros de la Sociedad de Beneficencia Pública de Lima, obra de Rafael Marquina" (B.A. thesis, Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, 1990), 1.

61. *Ley Regional #319: Reglamentación, bases, y cuadros demostrativos de la construcción de casas para empleados y obreros del Callao* (Callao: Tip. Mundial, 1924), esp. 12–16; *Boletín Municipal* 10, no. 476 (February 12, 1910): 3729; Cisneros, *Provincia de Lima*, 199.

62. Peru, Senado, *Diario de los debates, Congreso Ordinario de 1917*, 334–335; Alberto Alexander Rosenthal, *Estudio sobre la crisis de la habitación en Lima* (Lima: Torres Aguirre, 1922), 54.

63. Peru, Senado, *Diario de los debates, Congreso Ordinario de 1917*, 309, 323–324. The same thing happened in France; Shapiro, *Housing the Poor of Paris*, 99–104.

64. A few of many examples: Agnoli, "Informe que eleva," 44; *Boletín Municipal* 10, no. 471 (January 8, 1910): 3690–3691; *Varietades* 4, no. 2 (March 14, 1908): 2; AHCPL, Ramo Higiene 1909–1913, "Informe sobre la casa llamada 'del Pescante,'" August 31, 1911; Julio Pflücker de la Fuente, #770 fol. 257 ser 1 1911.

65. Peru, *Censo de 1908*, 177 n.

66. *Ibid.*, 169.

67. AHCPL, Ramo Higiene 1909–1913, letter from Pascual Castagnola, October 29, 1928.

68. "Ecos," *Los Parias* 2, no. 16 (August 1905).

69. APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana) was the populist, reformist, and ostensibly anti-imperialist movement founded in 1924 by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. APRA had enormous influence within Peru's labor movement between the 1920s and 1960s.

70. "El techo obrero," *La Verdad* 2, no. 94 (October 20, 1917).

71. Peru, Senado, *Diario de los debates, Congreso Ordinario de 1917*, 33–34.

72. "Casas para obreros," *La Verdad* 2, no. 84 (August 11, 1917).

73. See, for example, the printed circular from the secretary of the Asamblea de Sociedades Unidas, March 1, 1906, in Federación de Obreros Panaderos, "Estrella del Perú," Correspondence Received Folder 5, pp. 156–157; Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Departamento de Ciencias Sociales, Centro de Documentación.

74. "Aclaremos," *La Verdad* 2, no. 67 (April 14, 1917): 527; *El Obrero Textil* 1, no. 10 (May 15, 1920): 2.

75. "Vida obrera," *El Comercio*, August 1, 1919 (m.).

76. See, for example, "Querer es poder," *La Verdad* 3, no. 121 (April 27, 1918).

77. "Pobre Lima," *La Verdad* 2, no. 64 (March 24, 1917): 505.

78. "La inmigración," *La Verdad* 2, no. 94 (October 20, 1917): 743.

79. Augusto Ruíz Zevallos, "La multitud y el mercado de trabajo: Modernización y conflicto en Lima de 1890 a 1920" (M.A. thesis, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1993), esp. 134.

80. Ruíz, "La multitud y el mercado de trabajo," 106.

81. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

82. "El peligro amarillo," *El Obrero Textil* 1, no. 2 (December 6, 1919), 4. (*Raspadilleros* were vendors of a sweet frozen snack similar to a snow cone.)

83. Oscar F. Arrús, *Las razas china e india en el Perú* (Callao: Imp. de "El Callao," 1906), 22–23.

84. *Boletín Municipal* 10, no. 482 (March 26, 1910).

85. Arrús, *Razas china e india*, 15.

86. *Germinal* 1, no. 4 (January 21, 1899): 27; "De higiene," *La Crónica Médica* 27, no. 524 (October 31, 1910): 249; Cisneros, *Provincia de Lima*, 291–292.

87. Ruíz, "La multitud y el mercado de trabajo," 105–110.

88. *Boletín Municipal* 9:439 (29 May 1909), p. 3432. Humberto Rodríguez P., "La Calle del Capón, el Callejón Otaiza y el barrio chino," in Panfichi and Portocarrero, *Mundos interiores*, pp. 420–426.

89. "El Callejón de Otaiza," *Varietades* 5:63 (15 May 1909).

90. Ruíz, "La multitud y el mercado de trabajo," 111.

91. Rodríguez, "La Calle del Capón," 425.

92. Peter Blanchard, "A Populist Precursor: Guillermo Billinghurst," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 9, no. 2:251–273.

93. "Peligro amarillo," *El Obrero Textil* 1, no. 4 (January 13, 1920): 4.

94. See also "Ecos," *Los Parias* 2, no. 16 (August 1905).

95. *Fray K. Bezón* 2 (February 2, 1907): 5. José Pardo y Barreda was president of Peru from 1904 to 1908 and from 1915 to 1919. Augusto B. Leguía was president from 1908 to 1912 and from 1919 to 1930.

96. Letter from "Amigo del Pueblo," in Federación de Obreros Panaderos, "Estrella del Perú," Correspondence received, Folder 5, pp. 83–84.

97. Luis Ortiz de Zevallos, "Consideraciones sobre el problema de la vivienda insalubre en Lima," *Historia* 3, no. 10 (April-June 1945): 252.

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*, 257.