

Instead, the film suggests and appears to accept that the project's success is vital for animal rights. Valeti and industry partners rehearse the idea that recreating the essence of life itself—growth—is the surest way to convince meat-hungry people to stop eating animals.

During a gathering of major figures in lab-grown meat featured in the documentary, Josh Tetrick, CEO of Just Inc., a plant-based egg producer and himself a committed vegan, explains that he “couldn’t imagine a world where McDonalds would replace all its hamburgers with a plant-based meat.” Biological equivalence is accepted as the prerequisite for those interested in diverting consumers away from eating conventional meat. Marshall finds this idea at work in industry conversations around production scale and state regulation. For example, while covering the opening round of FDA hearings on cultured meat labeling, she documents how the industry’s supporters blend technical justifications with appeals to ending animal cruelty. Besides productive enterprises, groups like the Animal Wellness Action, Animal Legal Defense Fund, and the Good Food Institute—the “vegan food lobby”—can be found speaking in support of lab-grown meat. According to Good Food founder and CEO Bruce Friedrich, interviewed earlier in the film, “It is just true that the vast majority of people are not going to incorporate ethical considerations into their dietary choices. So, let’s take ethics off the table. And let’s just create products that people want to buy because they are delicious, they are reasonably priced, and they are everywhere.” As Marshall’s film demonstrates, lab-grown meat’s unprecedented potential to recreate the aesthetics of meat stands to relieve animal advocates of having to appeal to individuals’ ethics to dramatically alter their consumption habits. Instead, it builds their ethical vision into the food system from the ground up, irrespective of any commitment on the part of the public.

Marshall does not wrestle much with the merits of solving such political questions through technological means. But she does show that this future, for all its supposed benefits, remains highly uncertain. In its concluding frames, the film shows Valeti and team inching toward success in Memphis Meat’s new facility. While the future looks bright in sunny California, Valeti reveals they have yet to find a suitable replacement for fetal bovine serum, the vital nutrient soup harvested in slaughterhouses from cow fetuses that induces tissue cells to agglomerate in meat-like ways. Doing so is the final step toward ultimately separating meat-making from sentient animals, one that matters as much to the industry’s financial backers as to the animal rights activists who have staked their moral position on its success.

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Gastropolitics and the Specter of Race: Stories of Capital, Culture, and Coloniality in Peru

María Elena García

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Shortly after I arrived in Lima for a visit in July 2022, I attended one of the first dinners two friends had hosted since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The binational couple lightheartedly expressed pride when their young son declared that carapulcra (a stew of pre-Hispanic origin) was his favorite dish—“Like a good Peruvian!” The next day, I tried to be a decent line cook as my roommate prepared a causa limeña using ingredients from a farmers’ market (agroferia campesina) frequented by socially and environmentally conscious consumers. At dinner that evening, when the subject turned to Chile—Peru’s main historical rival—guests made some digs at the country’s comparatively underdeveloped national cuisine.

María Elena García’s *Gastropolitics and the Specter of Race* certainly offers material for thinking about such interactions, but it is much more than an exploration of food and national identity in the Andean country. The book presents a stunning and innovative analysis of the politics of Peru’s recent gastronomic boom, which can be understood as the principal cultural project of the country’s neoliberal era. Images of celebrity chefs, tales of social mobility through culinary-entrepreneurial achievement, and attempts to elevate Peruvian gastronomy’s position within a global culinary order became entwined with representations of the country’s twenty-first-century economic growth and supposed recovery from political violence that officially ended in 2000. The international success of restaurateurs like Gastón Acurio, along with productions such as the Mistura food festival, gave symbolic weight to a sense that “Peru is advancing” (a slogan used by one of the era’s disgraced former presidents). So did the accompanying narratives of culinary revalorization and renewal. (Popular accounts often emphasize chefs’ historical underappreciation of national dishes and ingredients, though as García notes, the promotion of high-end Peruvian cuisine in restaurants can be traced at least to the 1980s.) No

ethnography I am aware of delivers more consistently insightful readings of twenty-first-century Peru's drive toward development.

"Race and sex haunt Peru's gastronomic revolution," García asserts (p. 7). This seemingly straightforward claim is the starting point for a rigorous, multilayered analysis of colonial and postcolonial power relations amid the nation's food revival. Although the culinary boom's messaging typically combines patriotic elements with a neoliberal, entrepreneurship-for-all ethos, its most visible beneficiaries tend to be male chefs from relatively privileged backgrounds. As García demonstrates, the trajectories and practices of figures like Acurio (the focus of chapter 1) and Virgilio Martínez (profiled in chapter 2) often evoke histories of racial subjugation. In the case of Martínez—the creative force behind the internationally ranked restaurant Central—the chef positions his work in a way that García fairly characterizes as "unapologetically elitist" (p. 63), sometimes speaking of his culinary project as that of "discovering" and curating "unknown" ingredients. These colonial-explorer idioms connect to a tradition of non-Indigenous intellectuals and elites in Peru packaging knowledge and cultural forms for national consumption while furthering Indigenous erasure. Acurio's approach, on the other hand, is undeniably more socially minded. But García convincingly illustrates how the ascendance of the charismatic chef—who owns dozens of restaurants in Peru and abroad and has repeatedly resisted calls to enter the political arena—has been closely tied to a recirculated *mestizaje* (racial and cultural mixing) discourse that celebrates and markets diversity while masking inequalities. Acurio's status and comportment also lead him to be viewed as a kind of *buen patrón* (good landlord) among small-scale producers and other lower-tier workers, an association communicating both benevolence and domineering male authority.

An intervention that has stayed with me long after reading *Gastropolitics and the Specter of Race* relates to García's attention to how forms of elite nostalgia for the country's pre-agrarian reform (pre-1969) social order permeate discourses and interactions surrounding the boom. The gastronomic revolution is variously described by chefs and other promoters as a "nice" revolution that "does not take from anyone" or "make demands" (p. 48), words that implicitly contrast it with perceived aims and characteristics of the revolutionary government of Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968–1975), under which the sweeping agrarian reform was implemented. There is also a marked tendency for restaurants to make use of pre-reform hacienda imagery, and sometimes even hacienda buildings themselves. Although the ghost of a small girl who frightens workers at one hacienda

house-turned-restaurant offers a strikingly direct example (p. 57), García's analysis pushes readers to consider how attempts to aestheticize and excise from histories of violence and servitude inevitably produce forms of haunting.

As the above examples suggest, the intersection of gender and race is a central concern throughout the book. This is especially evident in the ethnographic scenes García presents. Such scenes are drawn from observations and interviews at a variety of well-chosen sites, including restaurants in Lima and Cusco, *cuy* (guinea pig) festivals, and agro-ecological workshops. At Mistura, the massive food festival hosted in Lima, García skillfully tracks the deployment of "hygiene brigades" and secret evaluators by the sponsoring entity (APEGA) that frequently targeted female vendors. While organizers berated women for acting like "street vendor[s]" (p. 97), they tended to exalt the masculinized "producer" as a figure who "bridges the feudal hacienda past and the neoliberal market future" (p. 102). Chapters 5 and 6 critically examine transformations tied to the growing commercialization of *cuy* meat, once a rare delicacy in Andean communities that urban elites often disparaged. In addition to highlighting the social implications of *cuy* production's shift from being largely a household affair managed by rural women to one that is increasingly dominated by farms run by upstart (mostly male) entrepreneurs, García centers the experience of guinea pigs themselves through empathic reflections that are in dialogue with contemporary scholarship in feminist and multispecies ethnography. A Peruvian woman of Quechua ancestry, García productively engages with complex feelings of complicity and investment in the "revolution" she analyzes. The author shares moments when aspects of her investigation (e.g., the distress she experienced at the sight of a female guinea pig dying after childbirth) were met with strong reactions from relatives who, like many Peruvians, were more inclined to celebrate the food movement's "progressive" dimensions than grapple with its relationship to violence and coloniality (p. 192). At the same time, despite offering needed cultural analysis, García's voice and perspective is never that of a detached critic. Her brother runs a Peruvian restaurant in Virginia, for instance, and she wants him to succeed.

Although there have been signs that enthusiasm for the gastronomic boom is declining to some degree, the movement's importance for understanding contemporary Peru can hardly be overstated. García's book is at the forefront of scholarly discussions on the topic and deserves a wide readership among anthropologists and food studies scholars working on food, race, and nationalism in a range of geographic settings.

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