Transatlantic Translations

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When the last Inca emperor and the conquistador from Extremadura, Spain, met in Cajamarca, Peru, on Saturday, 16 November 1532, a world separated them, but they had one thing in common: neither knew how to read. In Andean popular culture and historical analysis, Atahualpa and Francisco Pizarro remain the protagonists of that formidable collision of worlds, in which the most powerful man of the Tawantinsuyo, the Inca empire, which stretched from Ecuador to northern Argentina, confronted a Spanish adventurer who was seeking an easy fortune, well aware that this encounter was his last and greatest opportunity. Beyond a mnemonic system of colored knots called quipus, which registered population numbers and other types of numerical accounting, the Incas did not know writing. Pizarro was an illegitimate child from a rich family and apparently had been a swineherd as a boy. It has been repeated that despite his illiteracy, he belonged to the "civilization of the sign"; while Atahualpa, despite his power, was condemned for belonging to "the culture of orality." However, according to legend, during his months of prison, out of curiosity the Inca learned some Spanish words and wrote on the fingernail of his thumb the word *Dios* ("God"). It is said that he showed it to Pizarro, asking him what it meant, and found that his rival could not read it. From the prison cell of a condemned man and the site of his punishment, Atahualpa engaged in what might have been the first critical reappropriation of the Castilian language (Garcilaso, *Historia* 98; bk. 1, ch. 33).

To take a Spanish word of the highest order and brandish it against the conquistador is an emblem of cultural resonance that opens the colonial scenario in language. It is probably impossible to distinguish the legendary from the historical in this encounter, but either category, the

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historical or the legendary, represents different interpretive choices and sites of meaning. By the same token, the question of language and reading can be raised as a metaphor for a more complex inquiry about translation.

Translating is the possibility of constructing a scene of mediation that frames interpretation as a dialogic exercise. Thus, it is the first cultural act that places languages and subjects in crisis, unleashing a redefinition of speakers, a debate over protocols, and a struggle over interpretation. Clearly, translation is a new space of accord and discord. The encounter between Atahualpa and Pizarro will be for this reason a memory continually reenacted, in reencounters where again and again the possibility of historical meaning is rehearsed and explored. Other than a few direct testimonies and a series of secondhand versions, we have no documentation of what happened in this encounter. The existing testimonies establish a historical commonplace about the event and about the inexorable unfolding of the logic of conquest. However, less official interpretations resulting from indigenous or mestizo historians or popular oral traditions have demonstrated the ambiguity of the event as well as a different narrative logic and a different cultural strategy.[1] Ironically, rather than faithful retellings of the deaths of the last two native emperors, Mexico's Moctezuma and Peru's Atahualpa, we have tales that resonate like fables. Official history has established that Moctezuma died when he was stoned by his own people and that Atahualpa was judged and condemned as a conspirator and tyrant. However, the indigenous Mexican versions suggest that when Cortés forced Moctezuma out before a hostile mass of Indians, the emperor was already dead and that the stones were thrown not at him but at the spectral simulacrum of their lord; we could say that they threw stones against the Machiavellian manipulation of politics as spectacle. With Atahualpa, another stratagem takes place: the priest hands him a Bible, and when the Inca disrespects the holy book, the Spanish soldiers take the action as a sign to attack and capture him.

Ten months after his capture, Atahualpa was strangled by the garrote. He was conceded that death, instead of execution by burning at the stake, because he had converted to Christianity. A year later, in the chronicle *La conquista del Perú llamada la Nueva Castilla* (1534), Cristóbal de Mena offered the first version of the encounter and also the first sketch of the fable of the sacred book in the hands of the Inca: as in a religious drama, the Dominican missionary Vicente de Valverde confronts the heretic Inca, who raises the book before throwing it down (fig. 1). Mena documents events in a chronological and military report. He observes the Inca squadrons, their arms and conduct, and tells of Spanish movements in great detail. He affirms:

> Y un fraile de la orden de santo Domingo con una cruz en la mano queriéndole decir las cosas de Dios, le fue a hablar: y le dijo, que los cristianos eran sus amigos, y que el señor gobernador le quería mucho y que entrase en su posada a verle. El cacique respondió que él no pasaría más adelante hasta que le volviesen los cristianos todo lo que le habían tomado en toda la tierra. (85)
>
> And a priest of the Santo Domingo order with a cross in his hand went to Atahualpa to tell him about God. And he told him that the Christians were his friends and that the governor loved him and that he, the Inca, should go to him in his lodging. The cacique answered that he would not move until the Christians returned everything that they had taken from him in this land.[2]

This argument is intriguing, not only because it confronts two distinct economies but also because it suggests that the Inca suspected that if these strangers were capable of pillage, they might be messengers of chaos and not emissaries of a superior order. Valverde explains to the Inca the power of God with the holy book in hand; the Inca asks for the book, which he immediately throws down. Mena writes that

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FIG. 1

Title page from Francisco de Xerex, *Verdadera relación de la conquista del Perú*. The central woodcut also appears in Mena's chronicle. Reproduced by courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

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> el padre se lo dio pensando que lo quería besar; y él lo tomó lo echó encima de su gente. Y el muchacho que era la lengua, que allí estaba diciéndole aquellas cosas, fue corriendo luego, y tomó el libro y diólo al padre; y el padre se volvió luego dando voces, diciendo "Salid, salid, cristianos y venid a estos enemigos perros, que no quieren las cosas de Dios; que me ha echado aquel cacique en el suelo el libro de nuestra santa ley." (86)

> the priest gave it to him, thinking that he wanted to kiss it; and he took it and threw it away before his people. And the boy who was the translator there telling him these things rushed and recovered the book and gave it back to the priest; and the priest turned, calling in a high voice, saying, "Come, come, Christians, and confront these enemies, these dogs who do not want God's word; the cacique has thrown to the ground the book of our sacred law."

We do not know if the book was a breviary or a Bible. Francisco de Xerex, secretary of Pizarro, in his officious *Verdadera relación de la conquista del Perú* (also 1534), states that the book was a Bible—in other words, a canonical translation. Valverde says to the Inca, "Lo que yo enseño es lo que Dios nos habló, que está en este libro" (57; "God's word is in this book, and I want to teach it to you"). The book, apparently, had clasps, and the Inca rejected the priest's offer to help him open them. Atahualpa finally opened the book, but then he immediately threw it down. After questioning witnesses, Pedro Cieza de León concludes that the Inca looked at the book repeatedly and threw it down without knowing what it was. This episode about a missionary, an Inca, and a holy book is central to an understanding of the first contact because it is surmised that Valverde had designed the stratagem with Pizarro to provoke the Inca's blasphemy, enabling his capture. According to Cieza, the episode cannot justify the conquest because the Inca never understood the book and therefore did not commit the punishable act of blasphemy.

In 1552 Francisco López de Gómara introduces the legend that the Inca expected to hear the book speak. Valverde announced to him the word of God, and when the Inca did not hear it coming from the book, he threw it down. Gómara also narrates the first interpretive dispute of the encounter: the Inca responds to the attempt at conversion with the argument that he was born free and is content with his gods. Further, Atahualpa observes that Christ died whereas the sun and the moon are imperishable. Soon, however, the official version is imposed: Atahualpa appears as a usurper who has supplanted his brother, Huáscar, whose death he allegedly ordered while in prison. At Atahualpa's trial these accusations of tyranny, heresy, and conspiracy decide his fate.

The debate about the first contact between the Inca and the conquistador continues with a version from another shore, from an indigenous point of view. Martín de Murúa, in his arduous labors as a humanist and as an archivist, furthers the interpretation of a prophecy of the end, according to which an oracle had announced to the Inca that messengers of the divine will were coming; the Inca expected these messengers to be from his god and not from another, to say nothing of also being messengers of an unknown, distant king. For that reason he threw down the book. Thus, the book was the word of a god that was inimical to him and whose silence foreshadowed his own end.

Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, in contrast, assures us that the same Valverde claimed to Atahualpa to be an ambassador and a messenger of a great lord, to be a friend of God. He recommended that Atahualpa adore the Cross and believe in the teachings of that God. Atahualpa replied that he would not adore anything other than the undying sun and his *guacas* (sacred sites) and gods and would follow his own law. The silence of the book was not the Inca's fault, Guamán Poma argues, but the Spaniards', for not knowing how to explain Catholic doctrine properly.[3]

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The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega arrives at the same conclusion. Citing the papers of Blas Valera (papers half burned in the English assault on Cádiz), he states that Atahualpa and Valverde debated not only religious affairs but also claims of Spanish sovereignty in the Tawantinsuyo. Valverde himself let go of the book when the soldiers charged and even tried to prevent the capture of Atahualpa (*Historia* 73; bk.1, ch. 25). For Guamán Poma, in the place of a conquest by arms there is an accord to cede the Indies to Spain. This accord is more than historical; it underlines the change of mythical ages, the end of one and the beginning of another. For Garcilaso, however, the violence can be explained only in terms of error: the soldiers charged because the communication between parties failed. In the encounter the historical drama was a problem of translation. Felipillo was a bad translator, but in addition Valverde was a poor speaker. He used long paragraphs without stopping, while Atahualpa spoke with measure, phrase by phrase. Felipillo had difficulty glossing the priest. Besides communication, the problem here is also one of complementarity (organizing dual sets of information) and mediation (dialogue). Christian learning is a product not of natural reason but of revelation and as such needs to be taught. Atahualpa was ready to receive that revelation, but Valverde went astray in his mission (MacCormack, "Atahualpa" 154). This interpretation is more complex and is characteristic of the Americas and the American experience: it replaces the humanist fable of the autodidactic philosopher (the child or shipwrecked sailor capable of confirming the writing of the divine because he himself is a sacred text) with the more modern lesson of mediation in the face of the other (the evangelical dialogue requiring shared knowledge).

As much for Guamán Poma as for Garcilaso the book represents noncommunicating authority. Writing thus failed in its responsibility to mediate between writing and the voice, on the one hand, and learning and knowledge, on the other. The conclusion is that if the Inca had been taught, he would have learned. The Inca, already indignant because of the pillage of his lands, finally understood that those men had come not to carry out a divine and cosmic dictate but to impose violence. "*Átac!*" ("Oh, grief!") he exclaimed desolately in Quechua (Garcilaso, *Historia* 70; bk. 1, ch. 24).

For both Andean chroniclers, there was not a conquest but, rather, a transference—the Incas surrendered their empire to the new order. The difference between conquest and transference lies in metaphysics and politics. We are speaking of an intellectual legitimation that underscores the cultural strategies of a civilization on the edge of cosmic change. If it had been necessary to accept the notion of conquest (advanced by the heralds of imperial hegemony), these first intellectuals of the Americas would have had to construct themselves as victims or, at best, as displaced and remote products of Spanish expansionism. Such a version would have condemned their culture and peoples to the ostracism of defeat and to the margins of humanist and Christian discourses, where knowledge is always constitutive and redemption only a promise. If there was no conquest (only the error of those led astray, who exercised violence against the imperial and religious will), there must be restitution, since the Indies were ceded to the Christian kings by their native owners. Thus, Guamán Poma and Garcilaso de la Vega write to accelerate the coming of retribution, in the name of their inheritance as sons of princes and as distinguished notables. They consider themselves vindicated by the discourse that sustains the providential and "civilizing" explorations of Columbus as well as the armed advances of Pizarro. For that reason, Guamán Poma endorses a message that harks back to the thought of Bartolomé de Las Casas, while Garcilaso suggests a Neoplatonic and utopian program that was fully realized in the Inca empire before its painful destruction at the hands of the invaders.

Both writers are acutely and even eloquently critical of colonial violence, but they seek to diminish and intellectually control its damage with

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an affirmation of what we might call a symbolic redistribution of Christian and legal articulations. Further, they construct the memory of a present that includes the Andean world as a part of a restored future. To be not merely "subaltern" or "displaced," they give a location to their regions (Cuzco, Lucanas) in the map of Christendom, in which the Spanish colonies are diverse and distinctive localities in a singular world of narrative.

Antonio Cornejo Polar has reviewed the testimonies resulting from the first encounter to contrast writing and orality. He concludes that "el libro no dice nada a quien sintetiza en ese momento la experiencia cultural nativa, con lo que él [Atahualpa] y su pueblo quedan sujetos a un nuevo poder, que se plasma en la letra, y marginados de una historia que también se construye con los atributos de la lengua escrita" (163; "the book does not say anything about who in that moment embodies the native cultural experience, and so [Atahualpa] and his people remain subjects of a new power, one that is represented by written language"). But the inscription of history will be a struggle over interpretation, whether it is an oral and a legendary reevaluation of events or a popular, diverse, and fragmentary saga capable of revising the rules of writing. Sabine MacCormack observes, "Indeed, Valverde's book, whatever its content had been, was written in Latin and thus could not have been read by Pizarro and his men. How then could the Inca expect to read it?" ("Atahualpa" 157). More intriguing is the fact that the book was not only an object of reading but also part of a religious cult and the emblem of its doctrine. The first chronicles say that the priest believed that the Inca asked for the book to kiss it. The fable rewrites itself; even the most truthful chronicle is an interpretive translation of events that merge in the memory of crisis. Perhaps that Bible, if it was a Bible, was already a translation, the very law of the archive.

At the end, the encounter illustrates the oppositions between the two worlds and becomes an emblem of conquest. The perspective of the intellectuals of Andean origin, Guamán Poma and Garcilaso de la Vega, suggests that in the discursive reelaboration of colonial experience, other negotiations enter into play to move the encounter to a higher plane, a plane that is inclusive rather than exclusive. It is not only in Garcilaso's historical vision of Atahualpa as a usurper (a prince of Quito who deposes Huáscar, of the house of Cuzco), nor in Guamán Poma's suggestion of radical difference that a mythical substitution takes place in the transfer of power—we are also speaking of an even earlier imperative to situate history inside the complementary discourse of colonial experience (i.e., inside the process of organizing conflict to avoid split). This discourse is not uniquely Western (no matter how much Garcilaso coincides with the Christian rationality of conquest), nor is it only indigenous (despite Guamán Poma's cosmic explanations of alternative orders). Both writers place the profound rupture of the conquest in the colonial negotiations of a narrative that results in the reinscription of the Indies and its inhabitants and speakers as entities capable of constructing and reconstructing the interpretive act as they take possession of it. In short, the Indies become a creative agency as opposed to a subsidiary and marginalized place only to be conquered. This discourse functions as an intellectual hypothesis: it adds the parts to legitimate itself, suturing wounds in a bid to control the violence, translating events to organize their reading, and creating the possibility that separate worlds will be legible to each other. Garcilaso and Guamán Poma go beyond a critical resistance and documented denunciation. Both elaborate models for the processing and projection of the present through history and memory. Their arguments are as much products of chronicles of the present as they are of memory and its engagement with history; each produces a document of negotiation and a project that envisions the good government to come.

Guamán Poma seems to have been more preoccupied with the necessity of organizing

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fluid channels of communication between ethnic and regional voices, state functions and the community, and languages and translation. In contrast, Garcilaso understands that the quality of communication is equal to or more important than the value of truth and information. He warns that Valverde's oratory is not adequate to the situation, because it persists in explaining concepts that do not exist in Quechua (like the enigma of the Trinity) and because his sermon "fue muy seca y áspera, sin ningún jugo de blandura ni otro gusto alguno" (*Historia* 66; bk. 1, ch. 23; "was too dry and harsh, without any flavor of softness or any kind of taste"). These considerations about oratory and eloquence are rhetorical, but they allude to Garcilaso's project of a higher language, a refined dignity in the use of a word that can be generative to speakers of both languages. In this project, the other is constructed in the appellative role of the speaker reaching out.

Guamán Poma's communicative drama explores the issue of when speakers should take their turn in speech; it appeals to the authority of a structuring dialogue. Garcilaso's communicative dilemma attends to the protocols of dialogue and makes its expressions a dignified site of shared meanings. For this reason, Valverde's poor translation appears to him as a historical loss. Even if the content of the messages is not in question, the significance gets lost in the poverty of expression. With better translators, Spanish meaning could have been better conveyed, enabling the inevitable dissemination of the Christian lesson and expressing the formal tonalities of Quechua, which would have commanded the translators to use "sabia y discretamente de las elegancias y maneras de hablar antiguas que los indios discretos y curiosos tenían" (*Historia* 67; bk. 1, ch. 23; "wisely and discretely the elegance and old manners that the discrete and curious Indians used to have").[4]

The Inca Garcilaso's first intellectual product is his translation of the Neoplatonic treatise *Dialoghi di amore* (1535), by the Portuguese Jew Judah Abrabanel, known as Leo Hebraeus or Leone Ebreo. It has been repeated that Garcilaso undertook this labor to prove his dexterity in the most literary language of his time and to assume the authority of a humanist. The parallel between Garcilaso and Abrabanel, both of whom write from the margins, is tempting: they are bilingual writers who turn to Italian as the central source of authorship and authority and, further, to the philosophy and philology of tradition and reputation (Neoplatonism and Petrarchism).[5] Roland Greene has proposed that Garcilaso's translation implies an allegory of its own identity: the discussion about love permits Garcilaso to situate his colonial origins in a more inclusive vision and to define himself as an offspring of knowledge rather than of desire or the appetites. Greene sums it up this way:

> First the medium of this treatise on the principles of love and desire, then the author of an ostensible "similar" account of Hernando de Soto's journey to Florida, and still later the historian of his own country [. . .] the Inca Garcilaso bids to change his station, from illegitimate son to author—and perhaps, father—of a new emotional and intellectual bond between Spain and Peru.
>
> ("'This Praxis'" 237)[6]

In a move characteristic of the new colonial subject, Garcilaso rejects the discourse of victimhood and generates the strategies of a dialogue through his demands and proposals, which include the reconciliation of the paternal with the maternal. It is not an easy or inevitable project. He lives his work as a long-standing historical and biographical project, genealogical and utopian. Archive of itself, this writing is framed by European traditions and animated by the specific drama of recovering origins and giving them a higher register. Yet it is a script that is also channeled by the struggles of the present, which refract history as an exemplary and a persuasive actuality; we are reading a text that is rhetorical in its protocols and urgent in its resolutions. Garcilaso's discourse can articulate multiple worlds,

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texts, projects, and modalities of expression: he handles with ease the chronicles of Peru and the transit between oral memory and the present of the writing act. He gives voice to the disenchantment of the court and to his hope in his forthcoming subject, the mestizos, whom he imagines as brothers and invents as readers.

The humanist translator, with a philological vocation and a taste for narrative prose, knows that his awareness of mestizo difference is sustained through Quechua as much as in the laborious resources of Castilian. Quechua gives him not only authority but also the freedom of a double register in the representations of abundance or lack, inclusion or exclusion. He is more than a bilingual author: he is a translator made from many parts. For this translator, translation is a field of convergence between languages in which the separateness of both is preserved while they work together, providing an emotional or intellectual register for each other, all the while exchanging roles and constituting each other as linguistic sources of a common good. Several times we see that Garcilaso lingers in his passion for detail and storytelling, veering into a space of fabula, entering the currents of fiction. Yet his will to communicate constitutes the last translation act, defined by the imposition of evidentiary elements. In other words, even fiction works toward clarifying certainty in the Inca Garcilaso's writings. More than a mediator or a literal or cultural translator, he is a modern intellectual who produces a subtle and complex reconversion of opposite terms into the new mapping of history as translation. After the vast American literature of wonder and awe, he prefers to dedicate himself to the beautiful hyperbole of Spanish seeds in the Americas, the Renaissance vehemence of rich forms made evident by the grace of the senses. For Garcilaso in the melancholy seventeenth century, the Americas are, in effect, a superior fulfillment of Europe.

If translation implies an interpreter and the authority of a native tongue, Garcilaso struggles to go beyond an act of service (the interpreters or "tongues" were nothing more than lesser servants, with few rights and bad pay).[7] Well versed in the humanist tradition, he understands that his handling of Quechua gives him philological authority as well as the autobiographical voice that makes translators incarnations of the creative capacity of their own language. In Garcilaso's text, the life of this Andalusian Cuzqueño is transformed into a construction of writing; that is, the text projects a subject forged by two languages and by the difference that establishes one inside the other, like the two sides of a freshly minted coin.

Indigenous testimonies of Atahualpa's fate constitute a different negotiation of the past and its relation to the present. For example, the anonymous poem "Apu Inca Atawallpaman" ("To the Great Inca Atahualpa") was recovered in Cuzco and dated as an eighteenth-century text by José María Arguedas, who translated it into Spanish. The poetic voice assumes the immediacy of Atahualpa's death, representing it as a recent memory. In this mythical version of events, the feeling of loss communicated by the poem conveys the collective cataclysm of Atahualpa's death in the cosmic order of the Andes. The notion of a natural disorder resulting from political disorder is inherent in traditional cultures. Instead of simply presenting the tragic destiny of a hero at the mercy of the gods, Quechua documents about Atahualpa express the collective vulnerability of a people suddenly stripped of a destiny:

> Ima k'uychin kay yana k'uychi
> Sayarimun?
> Qósqoj auqánpaj millay wach'i
> Illarimun,
> Túkuy imapi sajra chijchi
> T'akakamun!
>
> Watupakurqan suqollaymi
> Sapa kutin;
> Musqoyniypipas ch'ijmi ch'ijmi
> Uti uti,
> Chirinka phinchatarajmi,
> Aqoy phuti.
>
> Inti tutayan q'elluyaspan
> Uj watuypi;

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Atawallpa ayachaspa
Chay sut'inpi
Wañuynillanta sh'ikaschapa
Uj ch'illmiypi.

Umallantas wit'unkuña
Millay auqa;
Yáwar mayus purisqanña
P'alqa p'alqa.

Q'ejmaj kirus yarphachakunña
Llákiy sallqa.
Titiyanñas Inti ñawillan
Apu Inkaj.

Chiriyanñas jatun sunqollan
Atawállpaj.
Tawantinsuyo waqallasqan
Jik'ispárraj.

Pacha phuyus tiyaykamunña
Tutayaspa.
Mama Killas qanparmananña.

What rainbow is this black rainbow
that stands up?
For the Cuzco's enemy it is
a horrendous arrow, dawning.
Dark hail pounding.

Often my heart foresaw
even in my dreams or
lethargy, assaulting me,
the blue flay that announces death.
Endless pain.

The sun becomes yellow and dark
Mysteriously.
It shrouds Atahualpa, his body
and name.
The dead of the Inca
Reduces time to a blink.

His beloved head
is wrapped by the horrible enemy.
A river of blood starts to walk,
flowing, in two streams.

His gnashing teeth
bite a fierce sorrow.
And his eyes that were a sun
are now leaden.

Atahualpa's great heart
has already frozen.
The crying of Tawantinsuyo
has drowned him.
The clouds in the skies have stopped,
and it is dark; the mother moon,
grieving, her face sick,
shrinks.[8]

The dominant image of the poem—a *wanka*, or funerary elegy—situates the Inca's death in its mythical dimension: it is an event that announces the end of an order. The image is powerful: a black sun dawns. The black rainbow seems to be a cosmic scar, a metaphor of the king's broken neck. The sun's head, like the Inca's, has fallen, while the colors of the rainbow are associated with the flag of Tawantinsuyo. The king's symbolic body, a principle of structural unity, succumbs. Death disperses organs and attributes: blood, teeth, eyes, and heart are here fragments of a mortal agony. Further, death prevails, accelerating time and leaving only tears behind. These tears, flowing from the four symbolic spaces of the empire, fall on the broken axis of the cosmos, the fallen body of Atahualpa. Everything in the poem is disrupted by death: the order of the cosmos, the regime of time, the terms of articulation. The perspective of an oracle links the signs of the fragmentary body with those of a nature off course. The poem clearly communicates the historical temblor of a tragic event as a crossroads of no return, a moment in which subjectivity becomes the site of an abandonment and the present a space of radical uncertainty. In other words, the poem, a dirge, faithfully expresses the subjectivity of the colonial experience.

The poem also rewrites history through its mythical interpretation of the event, the only way to understand the image of a decapitated Inca. Although historically imprecise, this interpretation is common to indigenous cultures and prevails in the anonymous poems of the Atahualpa cycle, a vast production of popular plays that are still staged in some villages of the

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Peruvian Andes.[9] Everything indicates that this popular version of the death of the last Inca has replaced historical testimony, even as far back as the seventeenth century.

Guamán Poma, though well informed of events and sources, chooses to believe this popular Andean version. He explicitly reinscribes it in one of the drawings in his *Nueva corónica*, in which the Inca seems to be performing as an actor in his own death (fig. 2). In the narrative and syncretic scheme of this allegorical rendition, Guamán Poma establishes a commonplace among the indigenous peoples of the Andes: the Inca's death occurs here for the first time, but it will be repeated until it is stripped of drama. The drawing has the character of a referential scheme: it pretends not to reproduce the event but only to evoke it, almost as if the event were a refraction of popular memory. Thus, the drawing is relieved of history but also stripped of myth. Nevertheless, the choice of this image of death and not another makes explicit the mythical rationality and range of truths that are superior to historical veracity. We are speaking not of an error or even of a metaphor but of the elaboration of a cultural order. In effect, the image is a mechanism for preserving information (one that classifies events to give them meaning), here a properly indigenous explanation for the Inca's death and the end of the order of the world. If it were a historical representation, there would not be much to work with. But as a mythical representation of the end of an age, an event seen and foreseen as well as repeated, this version of Atahualpa's death suggests recurrence: his death begins again. Consequently, it is internalized each time as a cycle, both as a final act and as an inauguration, and in that logic of cyclical time, in the spiral that it traces, blending yesterday into today, it becomes an instrument as well as knowledge. Atahualpa's death, occurring in indigenous terms, is recovered by a mythical system of thought where restitution can take place: it recovers the fallen body, tells of its dispersed and lost parts, rushes to reengage with cosmic disorder, and verifies the unity in nature of thought and language that rests on myth.

The cycle of theatrical representations dedicated to Atahualpa's death allows us to ask a cautionary question: why would a people perpetuate a story of defeat as its originary narrative? The answer can be given only in terms of the messianic thought of the Andes. The end is the new beginning. A new age is initiated; the world is turned inside out. Memory acts on the present, accelerating time in reverse. The painful event is full of redemptive promise. Popular song and theater produce and advance the cyclical process, giving us a role in the unfolding of history.[10]

The most elaborate version of the cycle is *Atau Wallpaj p'ucguckakuyninpa wankan*, transcribed from the Quechua and translated by Jesús Lara. Although Lara believes that the piece harks back to the mid–sixteenth century, the only chronological evidence we have is the date of the manuscript, 25 March 1871. In the first place, the experience of uncertainty is expressed through dream: the Inca orders his priest to sleep and dream so that he can interpret the intentions of the bearded men. Even if the scene of a subjectivity stripped of agency may be a posteriori, it communicates the uneasiness and the disenchantment that precede the imminent violence of change. In the second place, the play subtly takes advantage of the narrative mechanisms of folklore: a question passes from person to person, underscoring the lack of answers and therefore the lack of a resolution. This type of tale, in which an object or a question includes a linking of characters, illustrates the paradoxical historicity of the piece because events are as much in the past as in the present of the story. The theme of Atahualpa's decapitated head is here repeated with a new twist: Pizarro, at the end, stands before Spain (which is the name of a king and not of the country) and shows him the Inca's head, but the king reprimands the man from Extremadura for his impudence and condemns him, on the spot, to die at the stake. The symmetry of the cycle is realized: Pizarro dies at the stake, guilty of regicide.

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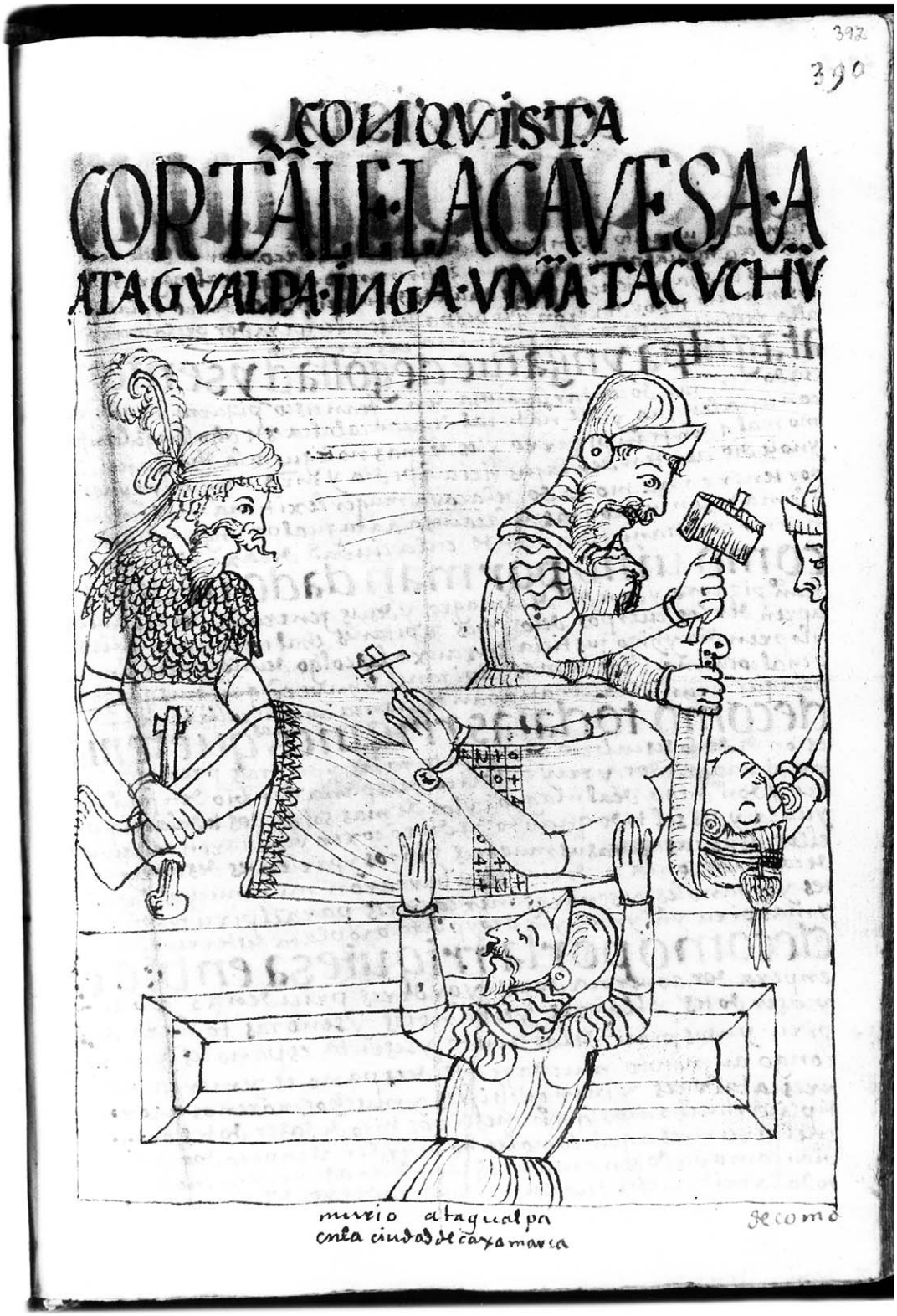


FIG. 2

"Cortanle la cavesa a Atagualpa Inga" ("They cut Atahualpa's head"). Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (390). Courtesy of the Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

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This rereading of the end of Atahualpa could also be mediated by the decapitation of Túpac Amaru in the plaza of Cuzco by order of the viceroy, Francisco de Toledo, in 1572. In the words of the Inca Garcilaso, the sentence was "un hecho ajeno de la humanidad y clemencia que con un príncipe desheredado de un Imperio tal y tan grande se devía tener y usar" (*Historia* 248; bk. 8, ch. 18; "against all the humanity and clemency with which a prince of such an empire should be treated"). Guamán Poma draws Túpac Amaru as an adolescent overwhelmed by the mechanics of death (fig. 3). When Toledo returns to Spain, the king reproaches him for having executed the rebellious Inca and condemns him to ostracism—to death according to these native versions. Guamán Poma's illustrations of the executions are symmetrical, except for the public character of Túpac Amaru's death, which surely suggests its historical nature.

A more decisive mediation seen in the theatrical works about Atahualpa's death may have been the execution of the last descendant of the Incas, José Gabriel Condorcanqui, a reader of the Inca Garcilaso, who takes on the name of Túpac Amaru II and leads the most important indigenous rebellion in the history of the Peruvian viceroyalty. After failing in his enterprise, Túpac Amaru II is condemned to be drawn and quartered by horses in the plaza of Cuzco in 1781. This manner of death, probably rooted in the execution of his ancestor the first Túpac Amaru, is recovered in the works of the Atahualpa cycle as the other term of a sequence that begins with the capture of the last Inca emperor. Túpac Amaru II is not only a historical personage but also the incarnation of a lineage, a complementary figure that repeats and restages the tragedy of Atahualpa. Between one death and the other, time comes full circle and the world is remade. Probably *Atau Wallpaj p'ucguckakuyninpa wankan* combines these two Incas into one personage, Atahualpa, who is no longer historical, an allegory that represents the universe as a principle of order, as a cycle in which one order succumbs so that a new one can begin. It could be said that the sacrifice of Túpac Amaru II assimilates the death of Atahualpa and turns it into an emblem that finds its signifying force in the renewal of the cycle instead of in the tragedy of origins. Thus, culture heals the wounds of the symbolic, aboriginal body, restores the lost order, and constructs a forceful and exemplary memory. Death works for life; culture functions as a reservoir of strategies to negotiate violence.

Fragmentation (of the body, of the Inca inheritance, of the interrogated characters, and of language) takes place not only as dispersion and loss but also as signs of a new context and a different, articulated identity.[11] Consider the fragmentation of language and writing. The Spaniards do not speak Quechua in the piece; they only move their lips while Felipillo translates for them. In that role, the translator is an intermediary capable of creating the processes that favor meaning. A central moment of this mediation occurs when the conquistador Almagro gives the priest Waylla Wisa a message to take to Atahualpa. Waylla Wisa calls the sheet of paper *chala*, a Quechua term that refers to the wrappings of maize. These wrappings are similar to a piece of paper or parchment. The priest contemplates the letter and says:

> Imaninchus ari kaypiqa,
> mana sina jáyk'aj pachapas
> ñuqa yachayta atisajchu.
> Kay waj chirunmanta qhawasqa
> wa'twaj sisiman rijch'akun.
> Kay waj chirunmanta qhawasqa
> chay mayu pata ch'aranpi
> phichiukúnaj chakinpa
> unanchasqan kikillan. (78)

> Who knows what this *chala* says? It is possible that I will never learn. From this side it is a wave of ants. But if I look at it from the other side, it seems to be prints that birds have left on the river's shore.

To which Atahualpa replies:

> [K]ay chhallachata ápay ari
> chay Sairi Túpaj Inka

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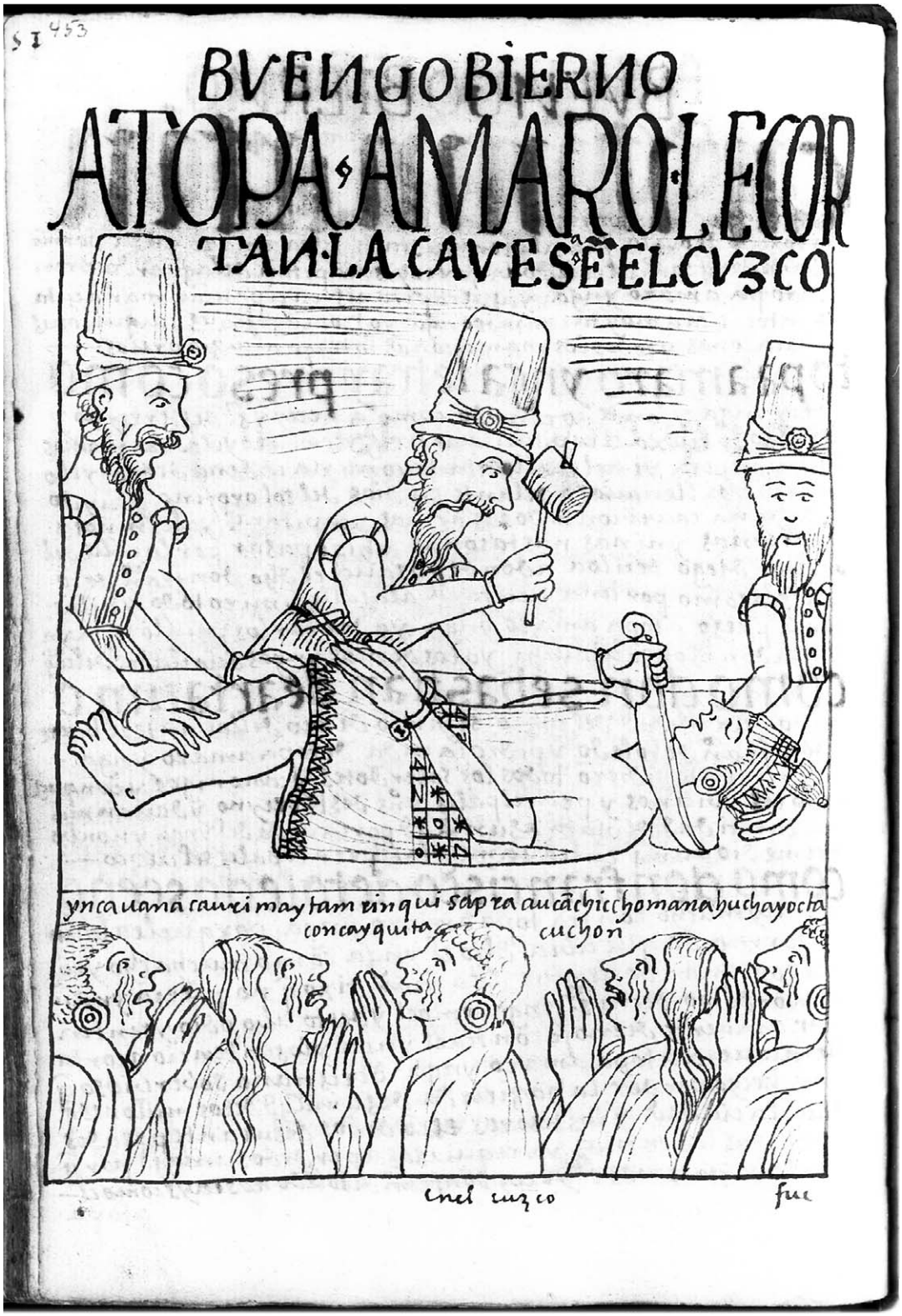


FIG. 3

"A Topa Amaro le cortan la cavesa en el Cuzco" ("They cut Túpac Amaru's head in Cuzco"). Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (451). Courtesy of the Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen.

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sispa wauqechanchijman.
Payta tapúriy imatachus
kay chhallacha willan chayta. (80)

Go and give this *chala* to Inca Sairi Túpaj, our first cousin. Ask him, perhaps he knows what this *chala* announces.

Thus begins a series of interrogations, which in the end confirm the premonitory dreams and auguries revealing that the bearded men have come to replace the Incas, a decision of the Sun. The mysterious writing on paper coincides with the foreshadowed tragedy: neither can be controlled and both confirm the impotence of the defeated. Likening written script to firearms, Sairi Túpaj says:

Atau Wallpa Inkallay,
manan watuyta atinichu
auqa sunk'aj rimayninta.
Chay qi íllay warak'ankúnaj
surunp'inta manchachikuni. (100, 102)

It is impossible for me to decipher the language of the enemy. The gleam of his sling of iron gives me fear.

The exposition of events and the confrontation of unequal forces reaffirm the logic of substitution: one order is replaced by another, and in this replacement, writing is a weapon as decisive as a firearm. This exposition betrays the didactic character of the piece, an aspect that is perhaps its least indigenous and its most national.[12] The fable of writing interrogated by men without writing, who compare letters to elements of the natural world, underscores the candor with which men of letters, more than indigenous people, illustrate the lessons of first contact. This document is one of the few about the encounter that propose an appropriation of writing to embody the certainty of events and the uncertainty of their meanings.

Another version of the cycle (recovered in 1942) is from Oruro, Bolivia, and was represented as a part of the procession toward the Chapel of the Virgin of Socavón (*Conquista*). What is notable about this version is its syncretic character, the fluid hybridism with which it integrates distinct discourses and disparate forms of documentation. First, it is noteworthy for its religious function, since it was represented as a part of the carnival in honor of the Virgin. The Ñusta cries out, "Señor eterno, al Joven Poderoso Inca, ven sí, hazlo resucitar" (100; "Eternal Lord, allow the resurrection of the Powerful Young Inca"), combining Christian hierarchy to native messianism but also implying an intimate parallelism between the death of the Inca and the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. Pizarro noted in his chronicle that "muerto el Inca Atahualpa había hecho a entender a sus hermanas y mujeres que si no lo quemaban volvería al mundo" (54; "while dying, the Inca Atahualpa assured his sisters and women that if he was not burned at the stake, he would come back to this world"). The piece is performed as an epiphany play and concludes in the resurrection and triumph of Atahualpa. Less evident is the rebelliousness of the performance. A 1939 program, according to Clemente Hernando Balmori, called for a "guerra general" for the second day of the representation (17; "general war")—perhaps "guerra" was understood as another staging of the cycle. Written in modern Bolivian Quechua, the version combines archaisms and anachronism; it is an archive of the past and an inclusive memory of the present. The Inca appears dressed extravagantly; it is carnival, after all. The "Spanish" soldiers wear sixteenth-century-style armor and helmets with current uniforms of the police, while lining up in the formation of cavalry troops of the nineteenth century. In various Andean representations, the conquistadores are dressed like the national police. Men wear dark sunglasses and women wear colored glasses.

Almagro here appears as a messenger and a captain but also lets loose a schoolteacher's harangue explaining the discovery of America and the beginnings of the conquest of Peru. Suddenly he behaves like a contemporary soldier: "Soldados al hombro al . . . paso regular . . . de frente

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mar . . . soldados, alto" (95; "Soldiers, present . . . arms! March . . . ahead, march . . . Stop, soldiers!"). In a combination of times and tongues, Atahualpa is called "Rey Inca" ("Inca King"). The episode of the *chala* here has some variation. The Inca cousin listens to the paper and comments, "Ay ima challacha, manaraj Rey Inca, sinche atiyniyoj caspa unanchayta atinchu, noca imaynata unanchasaj imaynata guatusaj? [. . . I]ma yana yacuguan chaschuquipascachus cay challacha mana guatuy atina nionanchay atina" (73; "What *chala* is this? It doesn't belong to the Inca King. If he, in his great power, can't find a solution, how can I understand it? What can I do? On this side, it looks like a cock's foot split in three . . . on this side, like many black ants; what kind of black water was sprinkled on this *chala*, which is impossible to understand?"). On receiving it, Apu Inca exclaims, "[C]ay ladomanta caguarisca cataraj chupan jina lincurisca, cay uj ladomanta caguarisca jurucutas macanacuscajman rijchacun [. . .]" (74; "On this side, it looks like a viper's tail; on this, like little birds fighting among themselves [. . .]"). But the most contemporary trait is that General Pizarro orders the death of the Inca by firing squad: Almagro announces that "como reo de lesa majestad, y como hereje, el Inca ha sido afusilado a la vista del ejército español" (101; "as a regicide and an infidel, the Inca prisoner has been shot by the Spanish army").[13] Later, as if returning to origins, Pizarro decapitates the Inca. But in the final words of the piece, the same death is announced for Pizarro.

These deliberate anachronisms do not correct history with myth but rather rewrite the stories learned in school, performing a political reading of events that is only superficially naive. Despite its crudity and candor, this representation puts into play the indigenous cultural system, no longer as a mediation between two worlds and as the explanation of the dominant in terms of the defeated but as a negotiation with existing powers, Catholicism, the army or the police, basic education and the regulating national state. The work is now entirely contemporary, and Atahualpa, shown to be part of an ethnic myth about native knowledge, embodies the experience of an Andean or a Quechua identity that is continually being tested and reshaped once and again within the powers in play. The translation of one world to another, from one language to another, has now become the intersection of codes, transposed and superimposed; the plot itself is a critical exercise in interpretation, a struggle for the location—and alocation—of the subject.

The day after the conquest, the postcolonial world began in the scripts of translation. In partial versions and overlaid readings of events, the New World subject who had learned to speak and read in the language of the Old World was already an interpreter, and from that moment onward translation would define this modern subject of the Americas.

Translated by Christopher Conway

Notes

[1] Cornejo Polar has reviewed the Spanish and native versions in detail. See also the illuminating reading of MacCormack, "Atahualpa." Seed discusses translation.

[2] The English translations of Spanish and Quechua quotations throughout were prepared for this essay. The English translations from Quechua were made from the Spanish renderings in the cited editions.

[3] MacCormack observes, "According to Guamán Poma [. . .] the silence of the book was a product not of the Inca's ignorance, but of the Spaniard's failure to communicate in an appropriate fashion" ("Atahualpa" 153).

[4] Garcés has elaborated on this point. Hernández demonstrates that Garcilaso projects himself to the scene of Cajamarca (206–07).

[5] Garcilaso explains that "ecelencia, discreción, ingenio y sabiduría" are Abrabanel's virtues (*Diálogos* 8; "excellence, discretion, wit, and wisdom"). These virtues are those of Erasmus's Christian gentleman.

[6] Greene has expanded on his early views on love and empire in his *Conquests*.

[7] Pizarro's expedition included two translators, Felipillo and Martinillo, later known as Don Martin. Their tragic history is presented by Lockhart (448–53).

[8] I have translated this fragment of the poem from the Spanish versions of Farfán and of Arguedas. The Quechua

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original was collected at the start of the twentieth century in Pisac, Cuzco. These are the first seven of seventeen stanzas.

[9] Millones has documented the contemporary manifestations of the Atahualpa cycle of popular plays (*Actores*).

[10] On Andean millenarian and mythical thought, see Ossio; Wachtel; MacCormack, *Religion*.

[11] In one of the final sections, the Inca leaves to his faithful one of his emblems of gold and diamond. His inheritance is thus distributed as his body.

[12] The future, the Inca announces, is the rebellion against the invaders and their expulsion. The memory of the Inca will be the conscience of the lost country, to be recovered later.

[13] The play twice uses the word "afusilado," a Quechua form of the Spanish "fusilado." Millones discusses a more contemporary version of Atahualpa's history ("Atahualpa").

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