

# Colonial Becomes Postcolonial

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Now about thirty years along, postcolonial scholarship has been startlingly successful at reorienting our approaches to a range of materials from the early modern period to the present day.<sup>1</sup> If such ways of thinking about literature, culture, and society—in spite of their obvious successes—have any liabilities, one is the implicit relation between the colonial and the postcolonial that attends the field. What should that relation be? *Linearity*? The colonial precedes the postcolonial in history only in the crudest sense, that the establishment of the former is a necessary condition of the latter. One critic has observed that the term *postcolonial* “is haunted by the very figure of linear ‘development’ that it sets out to dismantle. . . . [The term] re-orient[s] the globe once more around a single, binary opposition: colonial/post-colonial.”<sup>2</sup> This opposition says nothing of the possibility that the two terms overlap to a substantial degree, or that they are interdependent, or that from a certain point in the development of a colonial society they might be the same. *Proximity*? Perhaps we can imagine colonial and postcolonial con-

<sup>1</sup> And earlier: see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000); Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren, eds., *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval through Modern* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Deanne Williams and Ananya Kabir, eds., *The Translation of Culture: Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism,’” *Social Text*, nos. 31–32 (1992): 85, rpt. in *Colonial Discourse, Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 254.

ditions existing alongside one another, complementarily or contrapuntally, or the past succeeding the present in a feat of preposterousness. A Bolivian sociologist has written that the Aymara concept of *nayrapacha*, “past-as-future,” signifies not the despair of an unending colonialism but a renovative insight: “a past capable of renewing the future, of reversing the lived situation: is not this aspiration currently shared by many indigenous movements everywhere that postulate the full validity of their ancestors’ culture in the contemporary world?”<sup>3</sup> *Contradiction?* Suppose that the *post* in *postcolonial* is a marker of opposition. A historian of modern India intends the prepositional prefix to mean both “against” and “after”: “Criticism formed as an aftermath acknowledges that it inhabits the structures of Western domination that it seeks to undo.”<sup>4</sup> *Identity?* As I have suggested, we can also imagine a history in which the conceptual borders between colonial and postcolonial have come down, in which these categories actually come together as one. A historian of Latin America has remarked that the present there “seems not so much to replace the past as to superimpose itself on it.”<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps we have learned from the first thirty years of postcolonial studies that we ought to be agnostic about such matters of definition. The present essay explores the question of how we might observe the colonial in the process of becoming the postcolonial: where the boundaries between these conditions are, what is at stake in their shading into each other, and what we can learn about each one from its outcome, its nearness, its opposite, or itself.

First, a statement of assumptions: I accept the premise that postcolonialism begins within colonialism. Political independence cannot mark the start of postcolonial thinking; it is only one of several imag-

<sup>3</sup> Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, “La Raíz: Colonizadores y colonizados,” in *Cultura y política*, vol. 1 of *Violencias encubiertas en Bolivia*, ed. Xavier Albo and Raúl Barrios (La Paz: CIPCA/Aruwiyiri, 1993), 44. I learned of this essay from a quotation in Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 172.

<sup>4</sup> Gyan Prakash, “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,” *American Historical Review* 99 (1994): 1475–76.

<sup>5</sup> Steve J. Stern, “The Tricks of Time: Colonial Legacies and Historical Sensibilities in Latin America,” in *Colonial Legacies: The Problem of Persistence in Latin American History*, ed. Jeremy Adelman (New York: Routledge, 1999), 135.

inable thresholds, including discovery or encounter itself, that precipitate such thinking, which involves a thinking past the conditions of colonial society to consider how they might develop into something else under the pressure of still unrecorded events. This kind of thinking often takes place in colonial writings, especially where an empire is obliged to observe its contradictions, confront its limits, or address its critics. While most agents in a colonial scene remain impervious to postcolonial thinking, many of those who participate in such thinking are colonialists themselves, indispensable to or at least implicated in the apparatus of empire. The establishing gesture of such thinking is the enunciation of both an awareness of the colonial process and a reflection on it, a mode that is often constructional and critical at the same time. In the early Spanish empire in the Americas, the clerics Bartolomé de Las Casas and Vasco de Quiroga are among the figures who enact this gesture, leveraging Catholic doctrine, natural law, and humanist satire into astringent criticisms of colonial practice, contributing to the reconstruction of the empire on a different basis. Likewise many other colonial agents muster their criticisms when social changes put them transitorily on the outside of the enterprise: for instance, the reforms of the *encomienda* system and the establishment of Indian education. Further, some classes of Americans seem more disposed to anticipatory postcolonial thinking than others. Richard M. Morse remarks on the conventional view of mestizos in the colonial period as liminal figures who are wont to comment critically on the institutions that often keep them at a remove: the mestizo's

ambivalent station at the threshold between two culture groups, whatever its penalties, evoked a sharp talent for pragmatic accommodation. This was acknowledged in the saying that northern Brazil was "a hell for blacks, a purgatory for whites, and a paradise for mestizos." Eric Wolf calls the mestizo the ancestor of that "multitude of scribes, lawyers, go-betweens, influence peddlers, and undercover agents" who are the *coyotes* of modern Middle America, a term once applied to the mixed blood, now designating the whole tribe of the socially and culturally disinherited who spend their days blinding the eyes of the law.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Richard M. Morse, "The Heritage of Latin America," in *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia*, ed. Louis Hartz (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), 131.

Some assembled by race, others by occupation or status, Wolf's catalog of liminal characters implies the emergence of a paracolonial outlook that will become in some instances the first awakening of postcolonial thinking, the two modes probably indistinguishable from one another in the early colonial period—but all too distinguishable from the official colonial thinking of the conquistadores, the Council of the Indies, and the viceroys. This “thinking alongside” the colonial enterprise is typically overlooked in accounts of postcolonialism's origins; after all, its thinkers are often compromised, its outcroppings are fugitive, and even to entertain such a category is to make turbid the division between colonial and postcolonial. Moreover, as the colonial period—which for present purposes may be broadly defined as continuing well into the seventeenth century, perhaps to the compilation of the Laws of the Indies in 1680—gives way to the more complete institutionalization of Spanish and Portuguese authority in the New World, it becomes evident that there is no stratum or standpoint in society from which such pre-postcolonial thinking comes: as in the independence period, when Spanish American creoles include both reactionaries and postcolonial visionaries such as José Martí, this outlook belongs to extraordinary figures more than to classes or cohorts.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever their status, those colonial agents who think postcolonially *avant la lettre* typically deploy an array of strategies to imagine alternatives to the here and now of empire. The oldest rhetorical trope, irony, is the foundation of one such strategy that proves pervasive across colonial settings: the political scientist James C. Scott has written intriguingly of irony's force in “a zone of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate—not a solid wall.”<sup>8</sup> Scott proposes two key terms, the “public transcript” and the “hidden transcript,” to convey the distance between what subordinated people say to power and what they say away from power, but irony is the principle that binds these formations

<sup>7</sup> Morse offers a concise account of schemes for dividing the early institutional history of Spanish America into periods (139). On the role of the creoles in the independence movements of the early nineteenth century see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 112–15.

<sup>8</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 14.

together. Another such strategy is the “border thinking” about which Walter D. Mignolo has speculated: where opposed societies confront one another across a real or imagined border, a kind of thinking “from both traditions and, at the same time, from neither of them” opens “the possibility of overcoming the limitation of territorial thinking (e.g. the monotopic epistemology of modernity), whose victory was possible because of its power in the subalternization of knowledge located outside the parameters of modern conceptions of reason and rationality” (67). Like strategic irony, such border thinking has always been part of the subordinated world—Mignolo mentions early modern creoles as a model—and can seem, out of its postcolonial context, to be a symptom of the colonial situation rather than an analysis of it.

Still, such strategic gestures are necessarily fugitive until they are assembled into postcolonial thought, for which political independence is probably the relevant threshold. In colonial Latin America from first encounters through independence, there are innumerable observations of the colonial process by administrators as well as creoles, mestizos, and others caught up in the imperial machinery. A typical example is the eighteenth-century Mexican cleric Fray Servando Teresa de Mier’s observation that one cause of the diminishing numbers of Indians is “the imaginary division of the population into castes, the continual levies of men (on one pretext or another) for the Philippines, Havana, Puerto Rico, for the royal fleet, . . . in addition to the general oppression, the lack of free trade, industry and agriculture, and excommunication from the human species in which we live.”<sup>9</sup> After independence, thinkers such as Martí and José Carlos Mariátegui in Spanish America, Aimé Césaire in the West Indies, and Frantz Fanon in Africa gather these disconnected observations into unified arguments that often render colonial practices into explicit anatomies, vocabularies, and narratives. A passage written after independence from an explicitly postcolonial vantage will often seem exactly like the colonial-era analysis, the only difference—an enormous one, after all—being the context in which it is embedded:

<sup>9</sup> *The Memoirs of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier*, ed. Susana Rotker, trans. Helen Lane (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 20.

This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species.<sup>10</sup>

Written near the end of the colonial era by a creole advocate of Mexican independence, Mier's excursus anticipates Fanon's generalized account of the colonial world. One could find similar analyses of the colonial system going as far back as the sixteenth century.

The deeper history of postcolonial thinking involves the articulation of not only the ideas but the practices for which the ideas stand. The appearance of seemingly postcolonial outlooks in the early colonial period is a given, unremarkable in itself. It becomes worth noting when it contributes to our understanding of the structures of these outlooks, especially how particular observations get built into a context and reflection becomes action: in other words, when we see postcolonial acts in the process of becoming thinkable. In the passage from observation to practice to idea, the matter of how these outlooks obtain names, become associated with positions in society, and are spoken for—this is an unwritten chapter of colonial history. In the rest of this essay I will try to disclose something of the postcolonial in the colonial.<sup>11</sup> My discussion will be organized around a term, *resistance*, that appears in the colonial period as both an idea and a practice and then becomes indispensable to the postcolonial period. The suddenness of its emergence, coincident with the reconquest in Spain and the beginning of the colonial era in the Americas, suggests that resistance shares a historical trajectory with these events, which will be fulfilled when it becomes not only a term but a concept in the thinking and practice of creole and mestizo critics of empire. Almost as early as the Spanish and

<sup>10</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1963), 39–40.

<sup>11</sup> For an interesting project that seeks to identify postcolonial episodes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Spanish America see Mark Thurner and Andrés Guerrero, eds., *After Spanish Rule: Postcolonial Predicaments of the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

the Portuguese invent colonial societies in the Americas, the term *resistance* starts to show up in Peninsular culture, notably in one of the most widely read works of the sixteenth century both in Spain and in the Indies, Fernando de Rojas's *La Celestina*. Before a hundred years passes, the term and the practice of resistance will be in the grain of colonial society, an impetus in turn for postcolonial thinking.

It might be argued that both colonialism in the Americas and resistance as a countervailing concept are symptoms of early modern absolutism, and that when we look at either of these obverses, we are in fact seeing absolute power through its consequences. Moreover, humanism offers an intellectual setting for both colonialism and resistance; its maneuvers enable early modern thinkers to hold both terms in mind at once, in a reciprocal relation, and encourage the thinkings past the colonial that clear a passage for the postcolonial.

Resistance comes to exist only in the presence of, or at a close remove from, absolute power; it is the catchall name given to the struggle against power by the absolutely or comparatively disempowered. In an absolutist climate, empowerment and resistance can trade places in an instant—think of the fates of those who crossed Henry VIII or Elizabeth I of England—or they can do the same in the fall of one absolutism before another: consider the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, the Peruvian mestizo chronicler whose close relations were the former Inca rulers and who witnessed the shift from absolute power to resistance in his own household. His chronicle of Peru before the Spanish conquest of 1532 will come into this essay shortly, as a parable of resistance against the Incas by their own conquered peoples; it is his handling of resistance after 1532 as a historian that anticipates the postcolonial in the colonial, adapting this emergent idea in humanist fashion to a Spanish absolutism within which he occupies an ambivalent position.

The rise of resistance as a term counterposed to absolutism might be said to begin in an unlikely place, the prose fiction *La Celestina*. As critics have amply shown, however, *La Celestina* voices the confusions of the transition to modernity in Spanish society.<sup>12</sup> Near the conclusion of

<sup>12</sup> See José Antonio Maravall, *El mundo social de "La Celestina,"* 2nd ed. (Madrid: Gredos, 1968); and Stephen Gilman, *The Spain of Fernando de Rojas: The Intellectual and Social Landscape of "La Celestina"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

act 1, scene 5, the protagonist Celestina—a procuress and practitioner of sundry arts of simulation and counterfeit, such as the making of perfumes and the mending of maidenheads—is interrogating Pármeno, one of the two servants of the lovesick nobleman Calisto. Celestina has been brought into the play by the other servant, Sempronio, to devise a charm with which Calisto might win the love of the chaste Melibea; and because Celestina accomplishes her illusions in part by exploiting rents in the fabric of society, the differences between Sempronio and Pármeno are germane to her purpose. Sempronio is a *pícaro*, adept at double-talk, and already a steady client of Celestina's brothel when the drama opens; Pármeno is better schooled in books than in experience, despite the fact that his mother was a fellow prostitute of Celestina's, and is invested in the kinds of idealist beliefs that Celestina openly mocks. When Calisto and Sempronio withdraw inside the former's house to get the money with which to pay Celestina, she moves in to neutralize Pármeno as an obstacle, urging him to put friendship with the treacherous Sempronio, and a vague moneymaking scheme, ahead of his loyalty to his master Calisto. Pármeno replies in these words:

PARMENO: Celestina, todo tremo de oírte. No sé qué haga. Perplexo está. Por una parte, téngote por madre. Por otra a Calisto por amo. Riqueza deseo, pero quien torpemente sube a lo alto, más ayña caye que subió. No querría bienes mal ganados.

CELESTINA: Yo sí. A tuerto o a derecho, nuestra casa hasta el techo.

PARMENO: Pues yo con ellos no viviría contento, y tengo por onesta cosa la pobreza alegre. Y aun más te digo: que no los que poco tienen son pobres, mas los que mucho dessean. Y por esto, aunque más digas, no te creo en esta parte. Querría pasar la vida sin embidia, los yermos y aspereza sin temor, el sueño sin sobresalto, las iniurias sin respuesta, las fuerças sin denuesto, las premias con resistencia.

[PARMENO: Celestina, I tremble all over to hear you. I do not know what to do. I'm perplexed. On the one hand, I take you for a mother; on the other, Calisto is my master. I desire riches, but he who rises viciously to the heights falls even faster. I would not want ill-gotten gains.

CELESTINA: Me, I want them! I'm out for myself, by fair means or foul!

PARMENO: In fact, I would not be happy with them; I take happy poverty to be an honest thing. And what is more, it is not those with little who are poor, but those who desire much. Whatever you say, I do not believe you in this matter. I would like to pass my life without envy, deserts and



wildernesses without fear, sleep without disquiet, injuries without answering them, violence without dishonor, oppression with resistance.]<sup>13</sup>

Resistance, it seems, is one of Pármeno's idealist values: the skein of affirmations that carries him from his ethical perplexity to his peroration here—"I would like to pass my life without envy . . ."—leads by intuitive association to the final pairing of *premios* or oppression with *resistencia* or resistance. Pármeno's stock characterization, as a credulous young man on whom the pieties of late medieval society still have a claim, marks him as the only person in the fiction who still believes these things.

Pármeno identifies six conditions, six challenges to the human spirit, and proposes to meet each of them "without" some action or outlook that undercuts a Christian or courtly system of values—"without" envy, fear, disquiet, injuries, dishonor. But the pattern is broken at the sixth challenge, as Pármeno's self-affirmation demands that he act not without a vice or a weakness but "with" something else—and both the change in preposition and the unexpected noun seem to indicate that this is something new, or askew. A traditional portrait of Christian forbearance would entail a system of values such as the following, where each virtue in the "with" column expresses a dimension of ideal conduct:

<i>Without</i>	<i>With</i>
envy	generosity
fear	bravery
disquiet	equanimity
injuries	forgiveness
dishonor	honor
resistance	forbearance

But when the last item comes, Pármeno and Rojas interrupt the developing pattern to present something very different, an oblique view of another template for moral action. The sudden shift from a set of *without*s to a single *with* calls our attention to a corresponding shift in values:

<sup>13</sup> Fernando de Rojas, *La Celestina: Comedia o tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, ed. Peter E. Russell (Madrid: Castalia, 1991), 259.

*Without*  
oppression

*With*  
resistance

What has changed? In shifting from *without* to *with*, Rojas does not complete the pattern of Christian action but elevates a mere practice, resistance, to the position of a virtue. The departure from a set of received medieval values is emphatic: the system cannot be transmitted intact because this modern Pármeno, like everyone else in *La Celestina* the spokesman for an outlook that responds to the stresses and contradictions of the age, will resist where his forerunners would have patiently acquiesced. In this original disposition of Christian selfhood, *La Celestina* registers the emergence of values that are adapted to its own time, not entirely conventional but inflected by a new consciousness of humanism, individualism, and agency.

A passage such as this one might be treated as though it opened a window onto a concept—resistance in the face of oppression—and a discourse, that of the resister; it is tempting to think of the crack opened in this passage as revealing a world of thoughts and feelings, and perhaps it does. I believe that the term *resistance* comes into the European vernaculars at about this time because it enables a taking stock that is both demanded by early modern humanism and openly critical of it; in a colonial setting this emergence represents the possibility of the postcolonial perspective within the colonial. The term signals what is becoming thinkable, and in turn it regenerates the practice of resistance by placing it in a worldview or ethical system, as in *La Celestina*, and converting it in effect into an idea. By the middle of the sixteenth century resistance to absolute authority is a more-than-respectable idea, and social critics such as the English clergyman John Ponet, the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez, John Calvin's aide Theodore Beza, and the author of the anonymous *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* speculate on the conceivable terms of resistance against an absolute monarch.<sup>14</sup>

I would now like to consider a colonial history that evidences a

<sup>14</sup> See Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580," and J. H. M. Salmon, "Catholic Resistance Theory, Ultramontanism, and the Royalist Response, 1580–1620," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 193–253.

postcolonial consciousness in terms of the emergence of resistance. My object is the *Comentarios reales de los Incas* of Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, the Peruvian mestizo chronicler whose work retells the conquest of Peru by Spain in the light of the centuries-long series of conquests that preceded it, of adjacent societies by the imperialist Incas. The Inca Garcilaso's history, composed toward the end of the sixteenth century and published in two installments in 1609 and 1617, foregrounds the problems of differentiating colonial from postcolonial conditions, in that he writes as a citizen of a conquered society who has been acculturated by the conditions of conquest itself: he tells preconquest history from secondhand knowledge, and postconquest history from direct experience, and in the *Comentarios reales* the two historical dimensions are played against one another for contrast. Moreover, the Inca Garcilaso is one of the first chroniclers of the Peruvian conquest to recapitulate the views of earlier (and invariably Spanish) observers and historians while counterposing them to his own: a typical gesture is his disquisition on the origins of the name Peru, where he observes that "the older historians such as Pedro de Cieza de León and the treasurer Agustín de Zárate, and Francisco López de Gómara, and Diego Fernández de Palencia, and also the Reverend Father Jerónimo Román, though more modern, all write *Peru* and not *Piru*."<sup>15</sup> Thus when he relates a stratiform history of conquest—in which one empire, the Tahuantinsuyu (lit. four united regions) of the Incas, supplants another Indian society and is in turn overthrown by the Spanish empire—and collates multiple sources representing different generations and outlooks for each stratum of the history, the Inca Garcilaso applies to colonial history a measure of retrospection, critical distance, and self-consciousness that will become the principal elements of a postcolonial outlook.<sup>16</sup> The doubling of colo-

<sup>15</sup> Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios reales de los Incas*, ed. Aurelio Miró Quesada, 2 vols. (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1985), 1:16; Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru, Part One*, trans. Harold V. Livermore (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 16. Henceforth I quote only Livermore's translation, as here, but cite both the original and the translation parenthetically.

<sup>16</sup> On Tahuantinsuyu see María Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*, trans. Harry B. Iceland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), x. The notion that the Inca realm was an empire in anything like the European sense is highly debatable, but because the Inca Garcilaso treats it as such, I am more concerned with his representations than with the historical reality.

nial histories ensures a mutual criticism: almost everything the Incas did to conquer the societies they absorbed into their empire reflects on the corresponding actions of the Spaniards, resulting in an estrangement of Spanish colonial practice through narrative that carries out the functions of abstraction and evaluation common to postcolonial writings.<sup>17</sup> The value of the Inca Garcilaso as a precursor is that he invites us to see a postcolonial stance within a colonial one, and anticipates the political and rhetorical hypostases of resistance and ambivalence that have characterized a postcolonial outlook in the twentieth century.

Resistance, as envisioned by Rojas's Pármeno and developed into an early modern idea during the sixteenth century, figures notably in the *Comentarios reales*; it is a principal theme of the first volume of 1609, where the Inca Garcilaso tells of the pattern of conquest that established the Inca empire, no small part of which was the struggle to anticipate and quell the resistance of Indian tribes.<sup>18</sup> Many of the colonial procedures of the Incas seem to have been elaborated in view of resistance, real and expected, resulting in a depiction of conquest and resistance as correlative, inevitable elements of imperialism. This account of the custom called *mítmac* is typical:

Whenever some warlike province had been conquered which was distant from Cuzco and peopled with fierce and restless inhabitants and might therefore prove disloyal or unwilling to serve the Inca peacefully, part of the population was moved away from the area—and often the whole of it—and sent to some more docile region, where the newcomers would find themselves surrounded by loyal and peaceable vassals and thus learn to be loyal themselves, bowing their necks under the yoke they could no longer throw off. In making these exchanges of

<sup>17</sup> Margarita Zamora offers an authoritative reading of the multiple layers of narrative and the challenges they present to Spanish historiography. Zamora tends to situate the *Comentarios reales* in Continental Renaissance traditions (*Language, Authority, and Indigenous History in the "Comentarios reales de los Incas"* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988]). Her counterpart, who locates the history in Andean contexts, is José Antonio Mazzotti, *Coros mestizos del Inca Garcilaso: Resonancias andinas* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> His version of this theme is much disputed by modern historians. On the matter of royal genealogy, Catherine Julien gives a useful overview of these disputes in *Reading Inca History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 3–22. Rostworowski synthesizes many sources into an account of the domestic and imperial practice of the Incas in *History of the Inca Realm*.

Indians, they always used the Incas by privilege of the first king, Manco Cápac, sending them forth to govern and teach the rest. All others who went with these Incas were honored with the same title, so as to be the more respected by their neighbors, and all such Indians thus transplanted were called *mítmac*, whether immigrants or emigrants: the word means equally “settlers” or “emigrants.” (2:86–87; 402–3)

Even the prospect of resistance incites this movement of conquered peoples to new settlements, where they become colonists, enacting the office of colonialism within imperialism. Real or anticipated, resistance is important enough as a factor to motivate what the Inca Garcilaso depicts here as the cycle of imperialism,

conquest → [resistance] → colonialism,

generating the custom of *mítmac* and displacing some numbers of Indians from one standpoint to another, conquered to colonist. For the society of the Incas as Garcilaso describes it, this cycle establishes empire as a manifestation of sheer power that, scarcely threatened by displays of resistance, accommodates them to its own unfolding. There are two vantages here that might be provisionally compared to the postcolonial, namely, that of the Indians in the Inca Garcilaso’s account who change positions and become contented settlers, and that of the Spaniards and Europeans who read his account and see narrated a colonial practice that offers a critical insight into their own. The narrative implicitly addresses two types that will become something like stock characters in postcolonial analysis—the acquiescent colonial factor and the complacent metropolitan observer—and puts them into relation with one another through the fabric of historical narrative. In effect, this alternative colonial history mimics beforehand the import of a postcolonial synthesis, clearing the way for standpoints that will be fully developed by later historians and polemicists.

The matter of resistance occasions some of the climactic events of the chronicle’s first part, which concludes with the civil war between the rival kings, Huascar and Atahualpa, that fatally weakened the empire shortly before the arrival of the Spanish conquerors. Chapter 11 of book 9 finally makes explicit what the Inca Garcilaso believes to be the proleptic significance of the theme of resistance. Huaina Cápac, the reigning king and the twelfth in succession to the founder of the realm

Manco Cápac, hears that the conquered province of Caranque, at the edge of the kingdom of Quito, has risen up against the Inca empire out of a desire to maintain its barbarism. The Caranques

could no longer bear the Inca's [Huaina Cápac's] yoke, especially in regard to the law that forbade them to eat human flesh, and had risen in revolt together with other provinces which shared their customs and also feared the empire of the Incas. The latter indeed now extended to their very gates and threatened to impose the same prohibitions on them as on their neighbors, particularly in regard to the things they cherished most for their beastly practices and pleasures. For this reason they were easily drawn into the plot and with great secrecy prepared a large force to slay the Inca's governors and officials and the garrison forces residing among them. Until the time they had fixed for the execution of their treacherous attack they served the Incas with the greatest submission and every possible display of feigned affection, so as to be able to take them unawares and kill them without risk to themselves. The day arrived, and the natives butchered them with the greatest cruelty, offering their heads, hearts, and blood to their own gods in gratitude for having freed them from the Inca's sway and restored their ancient customs. They ate the flesh of all their victims with great voracity and relish, swallowing it unchewed as a result of having been forbidden to touch it for so long under pain of punishment if they did so. They committed every possible kind of outrage and insult. (2:229; 565–66)

When the Inca Huaina Cápac characteristically proposes to bring the Caranques under his power again "if they [will] beg for mercy and bow to the will of their king," the rebels refuse and threaten the messengers from Cuzco. Finally, the Inca resolves to win at any cost: "He ordered his followers to make war with blood and fire, and many thousands were killed on both sides, for the enemy fought stubbornly like rebels. . . . But as there was no possible resistance to the Inca's power, the enemy shortly weakened. They no longer gave open battle, but made sudden attacks in prepared ambushes, defending the difficult passes, the mountaintops and strong places" (2:229; 566). The disposition of the conflict is swift: the rebels and "their allies who had not previously been conquered" were "visited with an exemplary and rigorous punishment: they were to be beheaded in a great lake that lies on the borders of the districts of the Caranques and the rest, and so that its name should preserve the memory of their guilt and chastisement it was called Yahuar-

cocha, 'lake or sea of blood,' for the lake was turned into blood on account of the quantity that was spilt" (2:230; 566–67). Conversely to the institution of *mítmac*, this approach to resistance both denies it ("a la potencia del Inca no hubiese resistencia" [to the power of the Inca there could be no resistance] is the narrator's seemingly counterfactual observation) and memorializes it in the landscape. Yahuarcocha is one of many monuments mentioned by the Inca Garcilaso and other chroniclers as tokens of past rebellions; in this perhaps fabulous telling, the Incaic landscape is a record of conquests that often proves, on reflection, to be a record of attempts to wrest power from the conquering Incas. This is resistance as a motivating force in establishing the terms on which conquest remembers itself:

conquest → [resistance] → colonial landscape

In both *mítmac* and this kind of fable, resistance achieves the character of an ideal that must be either anticipated or attempted for conquest to declare itself in full. Accordingly, the investments of the Inca Garcilaso's narrative discreetly shift over the run of the first volume: from conquest and how it was realized to resistance and whether, when, and how it was attempted. This swing toward resistance depends on something like a postcolonial outlook, which looks to a colonialism past and weighs the forces that both established and vitiated it. In this valuation, written in the Inca Garcilaso's case from both inside and outside the Inca regime, it is resistance that is never fully realized but always deferred, thwarted, and finally monumentalized. In its failure that is also a success, the term acquires a luminosity that rivals that of conquest. In fact, one notices in retrospect that in the *Comentarios reales* the Inca Garcilaso reserves the term *resistencia* for the exact opposite of conquest, namely, its complete overthrow—an anticonquest that never takes place. He uses terms such as *rebeldía* and *rebelión* for the local, contingent acts that would lead to an achieved resistance. This is a postcolonial thinking as well, for resistance has a hierarchy of effects that corresponds to that of conquest, and the narrative approach is not triumphalist in the manner of López de Gómara and Bernabé Cobo but analytic in the fashion of Fanon, Césaire, and the Tunisian sociologist Albert Memmi.

This valuation of resistance against conquest produces a history

that puts its contemporaneous readers in a stance that many modern readers have remarked—that of looking at conquest from the outside—and therefore invites the Inca Garcilaso's Spanish readers to see their conquest of Peru the same way. To put it another way, he writes what a Spanish readership considers a preconquest history and what an Incaic audience, if one existed for this book, would consider a post-conquest account; for the emerging class of mestizos like himself and perhaps other readers, the narrative maintains two eras of conquest, that of the Incas over their neighboring Indians and that of the Spanish over the Incas, as its points of reference, both of which are at least implicit at every turn. Thus the *Comentarios reales*, while nominally complicit with the Spanish conquest, invokes a postcolonial outlook on the material of Incaic history, and in doing so it makes it impossible not to see the Spanish conquest in similar terms, as a conversation between power and resistance whose outcome will become certain only in a distant future.

Many episodes in the history, like that of the Caranques, foreground the questions that become urgent in such a climate of the post-colonial within the colonial; it might even be said that the impetus for the Inca Garcilaso's emphatic rewriting of López de Gómara, Fernández de Oviedo, and the other established historians of the conquest is to install such an outlook in the narrative, rendering it polyvalent instead of monologic, anachronistic rather than presentist. Strategic anachronism might be the term for the Inca Garcilaso's characteristic mode in the *Comentarios reales*, corresponding to the irony and "border thinking" that emerge across colonial situations throughout this period. I will conclude by concentrating on one episode of strategic anachronism, in part 1, book 9, chapter 15, in which the Inca Garcilaso retells the end of the reign of Huaina Cápac. It seems that the Inca king felt a chill after bathing in a lake and saw in his illness the fulfillment of a prophecy about the end of not only his reign but the state itself. As the Inca Garcilaso tells it, Huaina Cápac announces his imminent death to the elite of Inca society and puts his son Atahualpa in his place as king:

After making this speech to his sons and relatives, he bade the other captains and curacas who were not of the royal blood to be called, and urged on them loyalty and good service to their king, concluding:



"Many years ago it was revealed to us by our father the Sun that after twelve of his sons had reigned, a new race would come, unknown in these parts, and would gain and subdue all our kingdoms and many others to their empire. I suspect that these must be those we have heard of off our coasts. They will be a brave people who will overcome us in everything. We also know that in my reign the number of twelve Incas is completed. I assure you that a few years after I have gone away from you, these new people will come and fulfil what our father the Sun has foretold, and will gain our empire and become masters of it. I bid you obey them and serve them as men who will be completely victorious, for their law will be better than ours and their arms more powerful and invincible than ours. Remain in peace, for I am going to rest with my father the Sun, who is calling me." (2:239; 577)

The Inca Garcilaso then collates the accounts of several Spanish historians who provide versions of the same anecdote, which has resistance (or the lack of it) as its subtext: how did an empire that exercised absolute power over others, and thwarted resistance to itself, exhibit so little force against the conquering Spanish? In this polyvalent outlook the question must be asked from two sides. What made the Spanish conquest possible? What made the Inca resistance impossible? The Inca Garcilaso's narrative to this point is careful to give the Incaic perspective via Huaina Cápac's prophecy, then the Spanish point of view (or better, several Spanish points of view in the competing historians of the conquest period, such as Cieza de León and López de Gómara) of the same matter. Finally, the chapter concludes with this supplement:

I remember how one day, when the old Inca was speaking in the presence of my mother and relating these things and the arrival of the Spaniards and how they won Peru, I said to him: "Inca, how is it that as this land is naturally so rough and rocky, and you were so numerous and warlike, and powerful enough to gain and conquer so many other provinces and kingdoms, you should so quickly have lost your empire and surrendered to so few Spaniards?" In order to answer this he repeated the prophecy about the Spaniards which he had told us some days before, and explained how their Inca had bidden them obey and serve the Spaniards since they would prove superior to them in everything.

Having said this, he turned to me with some display of anger that I should have criticized them as mean-spirited and cowardly, and answered my question by saying: "These words, which were the last our Inca uttered, were more effective in overcoming us and depriving us of

our empire than the arms your father and his companions brought to this country." The Incas said this so as to show how much they honored whatever their kings bade them do, and in especial the dying words of Huaina Cápac, the most beloved of their elders. (2:239–40; 578)

If the Inca Garcilaso himself embodies something like a postcolonial outlook, I think it is significant that in his own history he casts himself, the wise child, in the role of the one who speaks the subtext of much of the *Comentarios reales*: namely, that conquest and resistance are correlative to and dependent on one another, in that one can succeed only where the other fails, or else they become fixed in a stalemate where no imperial destinies will be resolved. In narrating a history of conquest, both anticipated and achieved, one also tells a history of resistance, both successful and failed; resistance is part of the fabric of conquest.

This is an insight of a different quality than what appears in most of the colonial writings about Peru and the Spanish empire in the Americas before the *Comentarios reales*, even those histories that devote substantial narrative attention to Indian resistance. For one thing, in relation to the Spanish enterprise, with its strong narrative and subjective purchase for a Continental readership, the Inca Garcilaso treats resistance not as an obstacle or effect but as a countervailing enterprise itself, having its own subjective purposes, a kind of history, and a hierarchy of results from mutiny and rebellion to a fully realized resistance—the latter, strictly hypothetical in this history. The interdependence of the concepts of conquest and resistance—not to mention the sheer attention concentrated on resistance throughout the history—compels some questions: Is conquest ever more than hypothetical in this history? How might we understand a conquest that in its narrative details continually takes on the aspect of resistance? What is the nature of a conquest made from resistance? Moreover, like any postcolonial account, the *Comentarios reales* makes it feasible to observe in stratiform fashion what the agents of empire and resistance themselves, caught up in their purposes, are unable to see: that they are enacting a historical process larger than those purposes in which the nature of power, more than any particular application of it, is at issue and on display. Telling of colonial practices that are fully assimilated only through irony and anachronism, counterposing empires against one another, and treating conquest as made from resistance and vice versa, the *Comentarios reales*

is an anatomy of colonial Peru that anticipates many of the properties of a postcolonial analysis. The Inca Garcilaso becomes the Pármeno of this work: the inquisitor of a resistance to absolute power that exists less perfectly in fact than in discourse but that has become thinkable, and sayable, in the interval since the start of the colonial period. This achievement, while far from making the *Comentarios reales* literally a postcolonial history, might suggest that we accept it as the rough marker of the end of the first long era of colonial American history and the start of something more searching and reflective.

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