

INTRODUCTION

The son of a Spanish conquistador and an Inca princess, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616) was a child of conquest and a member of the first generation of mestizos born in Peru. As the translator of Leon Hebreo's *Dialoghi di Amore* from Italian into Spanish (published in 1590), the historian of Hernando de Soto's failed conquest of the Mississippi region of North America titled *La Florida del Inca* (The Inca's Florida, 1605) and a two-part history of Inca civilization, Spanish conquest, civil wars, and colonial consolidation in Peru called the *Comentarios reales* (*Royal Commentaries*, 1609–1617), Inca Garcilaso is the founding figure of American letters and the first self-identified person of indigenous descent to publish books about the New World in the Old. Over the centuries he has been hailed as a translator, a humanist, a historian, a linguist, an ethnographer, a commentator, an expert prose stylist, a cultural go-between, a proto-novelist, even America's first Neoplatonic philosopher (Flores Quelopano: 2008), and to greater or lesser extents he is all of those things. Nevertheless, Inca Garcilaso is best understood as a political thinker, one of the most well known of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe as well as Peru (see chapter 2 for details), and his masterpiece, the *Royal Commentaries*, is an indispensable work of political thought in the early modern period.

There are complete, highly readable translations of Inca Garcilaso's histories—John Grier Varner's *The Florida of the Inca* (1951) and Harold V. Livermore's *The Royal Commentaries of the Incas and the General History of Peru* (1966)—two informative and reputable biographies (Varner 1968; Castanien 1969), and a handful of seminal, full-length studies and anthologies examining his oeuvre, all in English.¹ Despite the ready availability of his texts as well as enlightening commentaries on them, however, Inca Garcilaso remains almost unknown to students and scholars of political thought in English-speaking college and university departments across North America. This is in part because, as products of and responses to Spanish imperialism and colonialism of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Inca Garcilaso's texts have historically fallen into gaps within the study and teaching of political thought in the United States. In "Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism," Jennifer Pitts states, "political theory has come slowly and late to the study of empire relative to other disciplines" and "for much of the 1980s and 1990s was remarkably untouched by . . . powerful theoretical and thematic developments" in world history, anthropology, colonial, postcolonial, literary, and cultural studies, among others (Pitts 2012: 352, 353 respectively). But as Pitts's own work admirably demonstrates (Tocqueville and Pitts 2001; Pitts 2005, 2012b), students and scholars of political thought have indeed made a more concerted "turn to empire" (her phrase) in the first decades of the twenty-first century, a turn that may finally be creating space for new critical perspectives on the history of political thought as well as the inclusion of traditionally excluded or marginalized figures in a field that has predominantly focused on European writers and thinkers.² As advances in colonial and postcolonial studies have shown us, however, the various forms of European imperialism and colonialism were not simply about what Europeans thought, wrote, or did; they were also, and continue to be, about the complex, constrained, and creative ways those whom Europeans sought to dominate or even vanquish struggled to survive, adapt, resist, and respond, which on its own is a compelling argument in favor of encountering a figure like Inca Garcilaso.

However that stands, the general lack of familiarity with Inca Garcilaso's works in North American political thought (or Guaman Poma de Ayala's or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's, for that matter) is also in part due to the enduring divide between the studies of English colonialism and Spanish colonialism in the Americas. For instance, while researching his sweeping comparative history of the two colonial systems for *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (2006), J. H. Elliott concluded:

There was high-quality literature on both British and Spanish colonial America, but I could not fail to be struck by the degree to which the two literatures were unrelated to each other. Each world seemed to exist in a self-contained compartment, with little or no reference to what was happening simultaneously in the other, although the fact that the two touched hands at certain points had led to the development in the United States of a subfield of history of the Spanish borderlands, which, however, remained relatively isolated from the mainstream of North American history. (Elliott 2012: 85)

In this bifurcated historiography Elliott discerned “a profound belief in the United States and its manifest destiny” as well as “what was assumed to be the innate superiority of Anglo-American to Iberian civilization” that became more “strident” and “acute” in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Elliott 2012: 85–86). While it is beyond the scope of this introduction to interrogate nationalistic and chauvinistic biases within various fields of historical scholarship, it is enough to note that such biases create institutional disincentives and barriers to the study of Central and South American colonial writers in North America, and this has undeniably been the case for Inca Garcilaso and others.

I have only briefly touched on these initial obstacles here because they pertain to the context in which this investigation was produced and to which it in part responds. But it must also be said that such obstacles are by no means insurmountable. Rather, if we attend to the moments at which English and Spanish (or French, Dutch, or Portuguese) colonial histories “touch hands,” in Elliott’s words, no matter how unlikely a particular conjunction or intersection may seem, we may nonetheless find fertile ground for research and publication. Such has been my experience with Inca Garcilaso, whom I encountered while reading John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* (1691), during preparation for my general exams as a graduate student in the mid-1990s. At the time I knew next to nothing about Inca Garcilaso save a couple of intriguing notions I’d heard at a lecture the previous fall, and yet there he was in §14 of the *Second Treatise*, there he had *always* been, in fact, in one of the foundational texts of early modern liberalism, a book I must have read ten or twelve times at that point without ever having noticed or registered “Garcilasso De la vega, in his *History of Peru*.”

Despite Locke referring to Inca Garcilaso with regard to the state of nature (a central but notoriously slippery concept in Lockean political thought) the secondary literature on Locke was just as baffled about his use of Inca Gar-

cilaso as I was. No one had analyzed the passage in the *Royal Commentaries* to which Locke had alluded, on the one hand, and it likewise seemed (as if exemplifying the obstacles mentioned above) that many commentators did not know who Inca Garcilaso was, on the other. The omissions nevertheless gave me encouragement to explore the matter further, in the hopes of perhaps writing an article on Locke's engagement with the mestizo historian through the lens of a shared context and area of concern. For as I had already begun to learn, Locke had been actively involved in a number of English overseas ventures, not least of which was serving as secretary to the Lords Proprietors for Carolina (1668–1675). In this position he oversaw correspondence for the Carolina colony and drafted its charter, the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* (1669), activities that comprised a sphere of practical and intellectual interest for Locke located in the very region about which Inca Garcilaso had already written a history, *La Florida del Inca*, more than a half-century earlier. Although the precise connections between the two thinkers were still unclear, it was increasingly apparent that their shared area of concern could broadly be construed as “American.”

While reorienting both figures toward an American context helped to elucidate stark differences in their conceptions of the New World (see Fuerst 2016), it also made me aware of the need for a full-length work dedicated solely to Inca Garcilaso. There were precious few monographs devoted to him in English, and beyond that there were none in any language that treated the *Royal Commentaries* first and foremost as a work of political thought, the kind of treatment that would enable students and scholars to situate Inca Garcilaso's work more readily in relation to other thinkers in the canon. English-speaking readers would especially benefit, I thought, from a historically sensitive treatment of the *Royal Commentaries* that interpreted it against multiple contexts while attempting to keep track of the social and political interests that grounded and informed Inca Garcilaso's mestizo perspective.

Having already read José Antonio Mazzotti's *Coros mestizos del Inca Garcilaso: Resonancias andinas* (1996a), which opened new possibilities for unearthing potential Andean subtexts in the *Royal Commentaries*, I realized that attempting to historicize Inca Garcilaso's *mestizaje* would bring with it additional challenges and risks. As for the challenges, exploring possible Andean meanings in Inca Garcilaso's work necessarily meant engaging indigenous Andean culture and civilization, quite literally an “other” conceptual universe with which I had no previous experience and upon which I would be starting from scratch. As for the risks, if political thought at the time tended

to neglect examinations of empire and there was also something of a dialogical chasm between the study of English and Spanish colonialism, then delving into the subaltern realms of Andean contexts in the sixteenth-century viceroyalty of Peru threatened to push my research off the map of political thought altogether.

And yet, it seemed to me that these were analogous to the kinds of challenges and risks that Inca Garcilaso wanted his readers to take. Time and again he faulted Spanish imperial historians and religious and colonial administrators for their lack of facility with indigenous languages, and then for using their faulty understandings to misconstrue indigenous religions, cultures, and peoples as inferior to Spaniards and Europeans, thereby providing justifications for their own political and economic designs. By comparison, he was also at pains to note that Andean oral traditions had proven insufficient repositories of the indigenous past in light of the cultural devastation wrought by foreign conquest and rule. Whereas Inca Garcilaso's criticisms encourage Spaniards and Europeans to meet indigenous Andeans (and Amerindians writ large) on the level of the latter's own self-understandings in the service of mutual comprehension, they also simultaneously exhort indigenous Andeans to preserve their languages and traditions and to restore their former status in the face of a dominant and hostile culture by appropriating that culture's most advantageous tools, such as Christianity, literacy, and writing. As such, political reconciliation and social justice in Peru and across the New World depended for Inca Garcilaso on both natives and newcomers crossing camps, as it were, and becoming *cultural mestizos*. This kind of mutual engagement and interchange, which lies at the very heart of Inca Garcilaso's moral and political project, necessarily entails wagering some amount of faith in the "other" and taking risks.

Just as importantly, if there were in fact Andean meanings embedded within the *Royal Commentaries*, then they could potentially hold profound implications for how the text was understood. For example, the scholarly consensus on Inca Garcilaso then was that he had been steeped in Renaissance humanism and Neoplatonic philology and philosophy, as evidenced by his translation of Hebreo's Neoplatonic *Dialoghi di Amore*, and his histories, falling squarely within the rhetorical tradition of historiography as theorized by Cicero, were intended solely for European audiences, in order to challenge and correct their distorted and disparaging views of Incas, Peruvians, Floridians, and multitudinous other Amerindians throughout the New World. In this light, the *Royal Commentaries* spoke about the origins, growth, and

flourishing of the Inca empire, its former rulers, political structures, religion, language, and culture without speaking *to* its indigenous or mestizo descendants at the turn of the seventeenth century. But the discovery or reconstruction of Andean meanings within the *Royal Commentaries* at the very least implied an audience (whether actual or projected) capable of understanding those meanings, which in turn suggested that the *Royal Commentaries* might not simply contain one book, but rather two: a primary Spanish text intended for and open to Hispano-European audiences, and a purloined Andean text, which, for those without access to indigenous language and culture, would be hidden in plain view.

Sara Castro-Klarén has recently characterized the textual structure of the *Royal Commentaries* as “double-stranded” for its interweaving of Hispano-European and Inca-Andean cultural codes and she is careful to remind us that “when reading Garcilaso, it is always important not to neglect the possible Andean source of his concepts or solutions (Castro-Klarén 2016b: 4, 15 respectively). These statements demonstrate the extent to which reading the *Royal Commentaries* through dual cultural lenses has gained both acceptance and currency not only in the secondary literature on Inca Garcilaso but also in broader theoretical debates on Latin American coloniality and postcoloniality (see Castro-Klarén 1994 and Moraña 2010 as two important examples), although such was far from the case when the first version of this work was completed in 2000. In the intervening years, however, several scholars have investigated Andean sources, motifs, and concepts at work in the *Royal Commentaries*, some of the most notable being Christian Fernández’s examination of the *Royal Commentaries*’ paratexts (2004), Mazzotti’s enumeration of the resonances between elements within Andean cosmology and the Neoplatonic theories of nature espoused by Hebreo in the *Dialoghi di Amore* (2006), Elena Romiti’s analysis of the *Royal Commentaries*’ *quipu* (cords of knotted beads used for record keeping) structure (2009), and the text’s interplay of *tinku* (complementarity) and *ayni* (reciprocity) explicated by Mercedes López-Baralt (2011: 195–221), among others. I mention these at the outset because, from different fields, specializations, and perspectives, a number of commentators have come independently to conclusions similar to ones drawn here, a circumstance in part due to the many years it has taken to find this work a publisher. Nevertheless, I consider those and other studies to be rich and congenial perspectives, ones from whose various insights I have benefitted and learned much and have integrated in what follows. I am delighted to have my own research be in conversation with them.

Regarding what lies ahead, first, as mentioned above, I argue that Inca Garcilaso is best characterized as a political thinker. Second, an inextricable corollary of the first, in order to fully appreciate Inca Garcilaso's contributions to Spanish, European, and American political thought, his work must be read in light of Andean as well as European contexts. Before jumping in to the argument proper, however, chapter 1, "Becoming an Inca," offers a sketch of Inca Garcilaso's life, written with a view toward highlighting the political events that contributed to his adoption and acceptance of his mestizo persona and perspective. For "the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega" was not born so, but became so by making a conscious choice to change his given name; both the privileges and burdens of his self-naming echo throughout his work.

Chapters 2 and 3 both deal with Inca Garcilaso's conception of history, but from different angles, and both are guided by formal textual characteristics more usually associated with literary criticism than political science. In "Mestizo Rhetoric," I focus on the style of the *Royal Commentaries*, for it was through style that rhetorical historiographers of the Renaissance directed their narratives and arguments toward the conventional understandings of those they intended to reach with their works. This chapter also represents the crux of all that follows in that it attempts to demonstrate Inca Garcilaso indeed intended the *Royal Commentaries* to be read by a diverse Peruvian audience, and that the very *European* concepts available at the time encouraged him to include Andean meanings within his texts in order to fulfill his moral duty as a mestizo historian. This chapter also polemically challenges the predilection for reading Inca Garcilaso solely in light of European contexts by not simply beginning with those contexts, but also by showing how they insufficiently account for the way he presents his authorial personae in the *Royal Commentaries*. Instead, I argue that Inca Garcilaso's mestizo rhetoric inaugurates a dual and heterogeneous form of colonial discourse while easing readers into Andean subtexts by showing this mestizo rhetoric in action through a close reading of select passages. Where chapter 2 focuses on style, chapter 3, "The Many Faces of Viracocha and the Turning of the World," analyzes the structure and, more specifically, the allegorical meaning of the dual historical framework winding through the first and second parts of the *Royal Commentaries*. This is a second and different approach to Inca Garcilaso's conception of history that concentrates on his labyrinthine deployment of symbols, historical alterations, and his expansive notion of "Inca" in order to create an implicit dynastic link between Incas and Spaniards, and to transform a tale of tragic devastation into a parable of possible rebirth and renewal. The

analysis relies heavily on Andean contexts and meanings, but in both chapters 2 and 3 pains are taken to demonstrate the precise social and political interests informing both the style and structure and, therefore, the entirety of the *Royal Commentaries*.

Having laid out the cyclical indigenous structure of the *Royal Commentaries*, which is punctuated by recurring moments of upheaval and cataclysm, or *pachacuti*, I turn to detailed examinations of three such moments in chapters 4 through 6. In chapter 4, “*Auca*,” I explore Inca Garcilaso’s account of the initial moments of the Spanish conquest and Francisco Pizarro’s execution of Atahualpa. Shuttling between Inca and Hispano-European perspectives and politics, Inca Garcilaso both justifies and criticizes the Spanish invasion by portraying Atahualpa as a tyrant and by appealing to the doctrine of tyrannicide to prepare the ground for a potential political alliance between Francisco Pizarro and the “legitimate” heirs to the Inca throne, represented by Inca Garcilaso’s own *panaca* (royal kinship unit). Surprisingly, at stake in his version of the conquest are not the rights of the Spanish monarchy to control over Peru, but rather explaining how what should have been a legitimate and peaceful transfer of power between implicit brothers resulted in ruin. Chapter 5, “Die a King,” looks at how Inca Garcilaso initiates an insurrectionary and potentially revolutionary ideology in the service of an independent, Peruvian mestizo polity against the abuses of the Spanish monarchy and viceregal government. Of particular note in this chapter are Inca Garcilaso’s family connections to and use of arguments from the *comunero* movement (1520–1521) both to justify and defend the neo-Inca’s, i.e., Gonzalo Pizarro’s, armed rebellion against the New Laws in Peru. The last moment in this cycle, the present of Peru at the turn of the seventeenth century when the *Royal Commentaries* was written, is also a return of the first, the chaotic First Age of Andean prehistory before the advent of the Incas. And in chapter 6, “Jesuit Amautas,” the question of Inca Garcilaso’s views on and suggestions for political reform in the colonial Peruvian society of his day is posed. Insofar as I argue throughout that Inca Garcilaso is in fact a political thinker, this hypothesis is put to the test of practical politics and specific policy recommendations to be found in the *Royal Commentaries*; a test, moreover, almost never put to Inca Garcilaso’s work in any systematic way. It was a productive experiment, however, for Inca Garcilaso has much to say both to and about Jesuit evangelical and educational practices in Peru, and even a way of expressing this to potential Indian, mestizo, and Creole readers.

In preparing this work for publication, I have updated the research to reflect relevant developments across a number of fields, especially the raft of essays and articles on Inca Garcilaso occasioned by the series of quadricentennials celebrated in the early part of this century: the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of *La Florida del Inca* (1605/2005), of the publication of the First Part of the *Royal Commentaries* (1609/2009), of Inca Garcilaso's death (April 23, 1616/April 23, 2016), and of the publication of the Second Part of the *Royal Commentaries, the General History of Peru* (1617/2017). In anticipation of this last, I have added a translation of the Prologue to the Second Part of the *Royal Commentaries* in the Appendix, which Inca Garcilaso dedicated to the *Indios, mestizos y criollos* of Peru. The Prologue represents a key moment in Inca Garcilaso's overall opus as well as his political thought; this is the first translation of it to appear in English.

As a final note, Inca Garcilaso has been involved in the discourses of early modern Europe and the Americas right from the beginning in ways that are both tied to and transcend particular Andean, Spanish, Peruvian, and Latin American contexts, and he continues to be read, relevant, and influential today. For instance, Peruvian author and essayist Miguel Gutiérrez's 1995 novel *Poderes secretos* (Secret Powers), which imaginatively explores Inca Garcilaso's relationship to the Jesuits and especially the mestizo Jesuit Blas Valera, one of his favorite sources on Peru, was so popular that it went through a reedition in 2010, and the future Nobel prize-winning author Mario Vargas Llosa penned an encomium to the patriarch of Peruvian and American letters in 2006 titled "El Inca Garcilaso y la lengua de todos" (El Inca Garcilaso and the Language of All) for a conference commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of *La Florida del Inca*. A bit closer to the United States, Junot Díaz's 2007 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* features a character named La Inca, the "mother aunt" of the formerly orphaned Beli, who is in turn the mother of eponymous Oscar. La Inca, proprietress of a bakery in middle-class Baní in the 1950s, is the very incarnation of propriety and respectability, of "suffocating solicitude" and endless reminders of the "inescapable fact of her Family's Glorious Golden Past," yet who is unfazed by the blackness of daughter-niece's skin and is above all concerned to provide her with a proper education (88, 81). "Your father was a doctor, La Inca repeated, unperturbed. Your mother was a nurse. They owned the biggest house in La Vega" (82). La Inca from La Vega with the Glorious Golden Past is assuredly a modern-day parody and caricature of El Inca Garcilaso de la

Vega of the *Royal Commentaries*. The portrait of El Inca himself may be a bit thin, but in fiction that matters little, and the allusion is still properly viewed as an homage, an acknowledgment and implicit thanks by a writer who was born in the Dominican Republic, raised in New Jersey, and plies his craft in English to the native Cuzcan whose first language was Quechua, who lived his adult life in Spain, and plied his craft in Spanish. Perhaps there is something peculiarly “American” about the specificities and multiplicities that Inca Garcilaso’s mestizo rhetoric forces or even inspires us to consider, but there can be no doubt that it continues to speak to our world in the present.