

Note/Nota

Guaman Poma, Castro-Klarén, and Overcoming that Stubborn Coloniality in Peruvian Literature and History

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One of the problems with apprehending the long trajectory of the multifaceted Latin American literary history that begins with Moche fine-line narrative drawing in the first century, and the birth of Zapotec and also pre-Classic Maya logosyllabic writing in the eighth century, or earlier—and is still being produced with the latest essays by Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa—is that only literature codified with writing in Spanish or Portuguese is considered *literature*. At the same time, there is a process of making believe or imagining that there was no such thing as writing before 1492 and a parallel process of consciously omitting oral literary production that has been enunciated for thousands of years and continues to be emitted in our time. Thus non-alphabetic forms of expression are devalued and excluded from literary history, and even worse, from history itself. Enshrining a literary history that includes only “texts” written by the

lettered elite after 1492 creates a grave problem of identity for the Latin American republics, each of which has an identity and literary history that does not necessarily fit it like a glove because of these kinds of omissions which leave subaltern expression and reflection out of the discussion. Several deep thinking Latin American literary critics residing in the United States have addressed this problem. Among these, Walter D. Mignolo, José Rabasa, and Sara Castro-Klarén have been instrumental in developing methodologies to overcome these deficiencies, but I would like to begin here primarily with the latest book written by Castro Klarén to understand ultimately a historical episode later codified in Spanish-language history and literature. Additionally, since each Latin American republic presents its own variety of historical, ideological, and even ethnic variants to its own lettered scaffolding—making the cultural configuration “Latin America” a multicolored contrapuntal and polyrhythmic mosaic—I will focus on only one country here, Peru, itself a heterogeneous construction.

There are many ways to construe Sara Castro-Klarén’s *The Narrow Pass of Our Nerves: Writing, Coloniality and Postcolonial Theory* (2001): as cultural studies, a trans-Atlantic or nativist exegesis of literature, a study of subaltern literary trajectories, cultural theory, colonialism studies, Peruvian studies, and even a method model of nation studies. But here is not the place to explore adequately its relationship with those very ample fields. I will deploy *The Narrow Pass of Our Nerves* as it pertains to cultural analysis, the history of ideas and identity studies and how Castro-Klarén inserts the Peruvian author Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala into them, and explore what that means for the Peruvian context. I will refer to *The Narrow Pass of Our Nerves* as flow, or better yet, the nature of flow of great ideas and historical narratives and the mechanisms that created them and impelled them forward now reworked to include, for example, the chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (1535?-1616?), who had previous to 1908 been excluded from the grand development of Peruvian intellectual trajectories. This is significant because Guaman Poma, who was producing his mammoth epistle at the end of the sixteenth century, was hushed by the great histories—those including events, ideas, culture, and religion—during

the time the representation of the colonial era took shape and after the independent Republic of Peru was declared.

Guaman Poma was muted until 1908, when he was “discovered” by scholar Richard Pietschmann in the Royal Danish Library. It then took twenty-eight years for a facsimile edition of his work to be published (in Paris in 1936 by Paul Richet) and it was not until 1980 that a studied transcription appeared (by Rolena Adorno, John Murra and Jorge Uriote). But to date Guaman Poma has not been folded back into history, or the representations of identity or nationality, or the nation’s time line. This, despite the flurry of positive and penetrating research projects that have appeared since the fifth centenary of the encounter between European and Amerindian civilizations in the milestone year of 1992. Yes, there have been books and monographs relating Guaman Poma to other enunciations, comparing him to Titu Cusi (Chang-Rodríguez, *El discurso disidente*), Santa Cruz Pachacuti (Chang Rodríguez, *La apropiación del signo*), Blas Valera (Cantù), and Inca Garcilaso (Castro-Klarén, Escalante Adaniya), but there has not been a book dedicated to Peruvian intellectual history, or speculating about Peruvian cultural theory, focused on the foundation of Guaman Poma de Ayala, or at least holding him in esteem as part of that intellectual unfolding.

The title of Sara Castro-Klarén’s book does not announce this reworking and amelioration of the thickly woven cultural fabric, but there he is, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, in the first six chapters, in sequence to the Taqui Onkoy. He appears as a counterpoint to Viceroy Toledo’s efforts to tamper with Incan history, as a kind of disciple to Bartolomé de las Casas, as a theoretician of the confessional, and as a subaltern buddy to Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. With the foundation established in those first six chapters we can then absorb the meaning of the rest of Castro-Klarén’s de-colonial enterprise with Guaman Poma in the back of our minds and at the forefront of our quests to see how the positionality of Guaman Poma allows us to see further than most Spanish-language writing did, and then take

what we learn to move on even further than he did in his far-reaching sixteenth-century analysis of Peruvian civilization.¹

The dark result of the silencing of Guaman Poma, and of the silence about silencing Guaman Poma, is that the identities of Andean people have been misrecognized. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor proposes a thesis that holds the following:

identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *misrecognition* of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion if the people or society around them mirror to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves (25).

This *misrecognition* operates, in part, because, as Sara Castro-Klarén puts it referring to Guaman Poma and Inca Garcilaso, they are “estranged from themselves by the otherness projected onto them” (196). This estrangement can be noted, for instance, in the established historiography of Raúl Porras Barrenechea, where Guaman Poma is portrayed as a man who wants to “re-live remote ages” [revivir épocas remotas], but not speak to the present and certainly not the future. Porras Barrenechea continues with this line of reasoning characterizing Guaman Pomas’ epistle as written in arrested style, a result of “his muddy and confused ideas and reports and because of the disorder and barbarity of his style and syntax, pure mental primitivism” [la confusión y el embrollo de sus ideas y noticias, y por el desorden y barbarie del estilo y de la sintaxis, pura behetría mental] (*El cronista indio*, 7). Such disdainful assertions have a chilling effect on the reader. The hushing for three centuries of one of the few authentic voices from the Peruvian countryside (the Huarochiri manuscript is another) or bashing him in the next century, excluded Guaman Poma from our appreciation of the development and synthesis of the wide tapestry of Peruvian discourse. Such exclusion distorts Andean people who appear in that discourse because they lack their context, and it also misrecognizes them, as they pass through successive moments in time—as *they* flow, they are *misrecognized*

¹ Walter Mignolo explains that post-colonial is a term that comes from South Asian theorists and that it gives form to Anglo-American cultural paradigms, while de-colonial comes from thinkers in the “Latin” tradition such as Frantz Fanon. He proposes the use of de-colonial for the Latin American cultural studies (*The Darker Side of Modernity*, xxiii-xxxi).

and misrepresented. *The Narrow Pass of Our Nerves* not only studies Guaman Poma, it bravely places him in his social and intellectual milieu, puts color back into the fluids of flow that drive the identity of the Andean people, who coincidentally had been described as a hydraulic society before they mixed and evolved with trans-Atlantic invaders.

In fact, Sara Castro-Klarén integrates Guaman Poma not only into Peru's colonial cultural and intellectual trajectory, but also provides a hemispheric context by also considering New Spain, its pedagogical Jesuits, and the intellectual giants of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. She looks at humanism in its Mexican variant and also in its Italian and Spanish renderings. To be sure, in the chapter on "Pedagogies Baroque," she defends the 1990 Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz's monumental work on Sor Juana against critics who charge that it "foregrounds the period at the expense of Sor Juana" (236). Castro-Klarén champions Paz and his socio-cultural apparatus as she argues the following: "Without understanding what we mean by the Baroque we cannot hope to have a serious understanding of the appearance of writing such as Sor Juana's" (237). Castro-Klarén's stance on the Mexican feminist, as well as the baroque intellectual, cultural and political environment that produced her, is not surprising because the first half of her 525-page volume does the same thing for Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. The text reinscribes him back into Peru, and then into the Western Hemisphere and its intellectual history and meaning, only to prepare the way to then, in the latter half of the book, for the study of his work in the context of the liberating critical theory of our time.

Perhaps not fortuitously, Castro-Klarén puts Guaman Poma and Inca Garcilaso back into a pre-Hispanic, colonial, Renaissance, Catholic, Baroque, humanistic, postcolonial and postmodern context with all of its constitutive elements operating simultaneously. The waves of time recur just as they do in the Florentine Codex and in the *Popol Wuj* so that all periods become one temporally-reduced line of meaning. Just as Sor Juana "salvages the distance... encompassed between the Renaissance rediscovery of the Greek and Roman Classics and Mexico" (237), so too does Guaman Poma "salvage the distance" between the pre-Inca past (the past described

by Garcilaso as barbarian), the Incan past, and the colonial-Christian world, all fused into a Spanish, Quechua, Aymara, and Latin blend of proto-postcolonial liberation thinking (see p. 152, for example).

This flow is an important one since Andeans have been written out of history and time, even though Guaman Poma, like his intellectual cousin Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and his distant Mexican intellectual third cousin Fernando de Alva Ixtilxochitl, made a distinct effort to insert this variety of American civilization into Western notions of time that have been imposed on the world. In the same way Sara Castro-Klarén's book reinscribes Guaman Poma into the white water of Peruvian intellectual history.

The simple brilliance of her maneuver is to go back to Guaman Poma and let him speak. She does not feel the need to ponder if the subaltern can actually speak, as did one notable scholar during the late-twentieth century after becoming weary with Western intellectual elites' inability to listen (200). Castro-Klarén simply goes back in time and listens to the voice emerging from the inter-Andean valleys. She recognizes that both the Inca Garcilaso and the Curaca Guaman Poma, despite being "subaltern subjects," do "manage to speak" (211). All we have to do is listen to what they have to say. Not only does Castro-Klarén re-introduce Guaman Poma (and Las Casas!) into the matrix of Peruvian cultural theory and into the flow of Peruvian discourse, she realizes that the Andean chronicler himself inserted himself into the flow of Western Civilization. She elucidates:

It is clear that most of his ideas for good government came from his own summary of Inca governance. However, it is equally indisputable that some of these tenets of governance converged with established Christian ideals for good governance. Guaman Poma, the Inca Garcilaso, and some of the Jesuit missionaries did not hesitate to point out such coincidences. (36-37)

In fact, Guaman Poma is essential to that period and to subsequent ones because he reframes a number of social concerns, including good government, Christian ideals, dynamic histories, the extirpation of idols campaigns, and others. But we do not necessarily understand his age well, or the pre-contact age before his historical period, or even the post-independence period. To make improvements to our appreciation of his

time by filling in those “gaps and empty spaces” (238), Castro-Klarén recognizes the role archaeology has played and continues to play. In the chapter on archaeology and the nation, she helps us to move beyond the sidetracking errors that have dominated our field since Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities” became all the rage. She explains how Anderson viewed the idea of cultural artifacts as arising during the eighteenth century when they “became modular, capable of being transplanted with various degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains” (qtd. in Castro-Klarén 260). Castro-Klarén rejects this idea of cultural mobility—not in its entirety—as a primary nation-forming force, and she hints at ways we can get beyond a limiting view of portable artifacts and how nations can move toward an intellectual decolonizing process.² The de-colonial solution she proposes is very much immovable, but not exactly literary (although it can be). The solution can be found in archaeology, which emerged during the nineteenth century. In the same chapter, she writes “[f]or the (modern) postcolonial nation, archeology—sites in place—spatializes on the surface of a re-reconnoitered and rationalized territory, clearly demarcated by linguistic and immemorial boundaries, the place of the communal past and present” (269). These “immemorial boundaries” demarcate the sites of the nation not so much in a geographical setting, but, we can conclude, in temporal vectors representing the trajectory that ranges from birth of Peruvian literature—the fine-lined Moche drawing language—to the literary consciousness at present-day bookstores and book presentations. Why do this? “The general aim—she tells us—would be to decolonize knowledge to attempt emancipatory mappings” (197).

One of the first Peruvian archaeologists to work on Peru was Mariano Eduardo Rivero who published in Vienna his *Antigüedades peruanas* in 1851 (284). This text becomes inserted into a textural fabric that includes historiography and literature. For those who think non-literary texts are worth less than literary ones, Castro-Klarén reminds us, “the distinction between literary and nonliterary texts has become less theoretically sustainable” (131). After all, as Walter Mignolo once famously

² For Castro-Klarén’s work on decolonizing Anderson’s “imagined communities” theory, see the volume she edited with John Chasteen.

stated, they are both texts, both varieties worthy of discourse analysis (“El mandato”, 453). Both, in the company of historiographic production, align us with the goal of not inventing the nation, but of excavating it, following the example of the discursive excavation that Castro-Klarén has done in *The Narrow Pass of Our Nerves*.

The rise of archaeology in the nineteenth century coincides with the birth of recognizing what Sara Castro-Klarén describes as “a new archeospace,” embodied in sites such as Pachacamac, Chavín, Tiahuanaco and Chan-Chan (279). These spaces offer grounding for memory to reorient the lettered city to include voices rising from pre-contact graves and monuments. This is significant because, as Castro-Klarén puts it, “Perhaps even more important than the material link to the land, archeology, for the peoples ‘without history,’ enables the conversion of collective memory into tradition and maybe even into history” (268). This is certainly the case with Peru (283).

The archaeological past is not just about reconstructing memory, it is also about correcting the flaws of memory; it is about forcing history to align with the facts as they can be adduced from scientific investigation. One of the flaws of memory results from the utilization of binary historiographical constructions that obfuscate the subtleness of history. For example, in a passage from Pedro de Cieza de León that Inca Garcilaso de la Vega quotes, a binary structure is established to frame the long-term conflict that should be called the Forty-Years War, involving several civil wars enduring from 1532 to 1572. Collapsing all those social upheavals and multipronged Spanish incursions into a notion commonly described as “The Conquest,” creates a bipolarity commonly described as “Indians” and “Spaniards.” This binary structure is set up by Cieza de León (who certainly acquired it through his dealings with his peer group) and it is then passed on to Garcilaso de la Vega who appropriates it. Garcilaso, directly quoting Cieza refers to these two extreme and reductive camps. He explains that the *indios*, “were fighting to liberate themselves and exempt themselves from such rough treatment, and the Spaniards to remain lords of their land and of themselves” [‘...peleavan por librarse y por eximirse del tratamiento tan áspero que se les hacía, y los españoles por quedar por señores de su tierra

y dellos’]’ (qtd. in *Historia general*, II, xxviii). This oppositional duality is appropriated by Garcilaso because it serves his dual-heritage purpose. Garcilaso’s mother was a princess in the imperial dynasty, his father a Conquistador.



For Garcilaso, the war was between Incas and Spaniards, and he cuts out or holds in lower esteem Andean peoples of other ethnic groups that the Incas had been conquering before the Spanish arrived on the scene. But reducing everything to Indians (read Incas) and Spaniards furthers the view of a conquest by Spaniards who were ultimately mightier than the Indians, who proved to be weaker. Even Guaman Poma, who otherwise sees so much, absorbed the binary paradigm. Regarding the 1536 siege of Lima by troops loyal to Manco Inca, he only tells us that Kusi Yupanqui Inca had 12 captains and 1000 men who were defeated by the Spanish captain Luis de Ávalos de Ayala and other captains.³ He thus

³ Garcilaso calls this general Titu Yupanqui and he also tells us that Agustín de Zárate called him Tiço Yopangui, and López de Gómara, Tizoyo (*Historia general* II, xxviii).

paints the famous siege as a binary encounter between Incas (or Indians) and Spaniards. These kinds of views were picked up by the famous nineteenth-century historian William Prescott, who was unfamiliar with a Guaman Poma not discovered until the twentieth century. Prescott describes the battle in this manner:

An Indian force had sat down before Xauxa, and a considerable army had occupied the valley of Rimac and laid siege to Lima. But the country around the capital was of an open, level character, very favorable to the action of cavalry. Pizarro no sooner saw himself menaced by the hostile array, than he set such a force against the Peruvians as speedily put them to flight; and, following up his advantage he inflicted on them such a severe chastisement, that, although they still continued to hover in the distance and cut off his communications with the interior, they did not care to trust themselves on the other side of the Rimac. (1029)

For his part, Garcilaso wrote: “the battle took pace initially on a plain [and] those [Spaniards] mounted on horseback killed many Indians because of the advantage they held with arms and horses” [la batalla al principio fué en un llano, mataron los de cavallo muchos indios, por la ventaja que en las armas en los cavallos les tienen] (*Historia general* II, xxviii). Prescott, of course, eventually became the authority on this period in Peruvian history [despite his calling the Incas “barbarians” (1025)]. Indeed, the publication of his *The Conquest of Peru* had much to do with dethroning of Garcilaso as a paramount authority, both in Spanish-language and English-language circles.

Castro Klarén’s theory about the essential need of understanding the archaeological past so that it may be incorporated into lettered history is proven empirically, for example, at Puruchuco, a battlefield site outside of Lima. It was that site, Garcilaso’s “plain” and Prescott’s “country around the capital... of an open, level character,” from which the Siege of Lima was launched. There, archaeologist-producer Graham Townsley tells us in a PBS *Nova* documentary titled *The Great Inca Rebellion* that two archaeologists, Elena Goycochea and Guillermo Cock, have found layers of graves through their stratigraphic research. They discovered that the remains were not buried in the fetal position, as would be usual and traditional, and are not necessarily facing the sun, as would also be expected for a people who worshiped a solar deity. They have instead been

buried chaotically. Further forensic research on the skulls has shown that these Incan people were not killed by bullets and swords, as described by Garcilaso, but by blunt force trauma. As mentioned, the battle took place four years after the fall of Cuzco, in August 1536, and constituted a siege of Lima commanded by the Inca general, Kusi Yupanqui, and his troops. History tells us that Pizarro's small band of Spaniards defeated them, but archaeology reveals that they were killed with Andean clubs, thus dying from blunt force trauma. Manuel Burga has discovered in his Andean research that Governor Pizarro actually called for help from his Andean allies, the *curaca* of the Huancas, the curaca from Pachacamac, and the Huaylas curaca Cóndor Huacho (140-141). María Rostworowski, working from a little known anonymous *Relación del sitio del Cusco* and other rare documents, also argues that the Huaylas curaca was involved and offers a variant of her name, Contarhuacho (26). What we know from non-canonical documents of this type as well as from archaeology is that the siege of Lima was given form by a civil war between Incas and Huaylas. Pizarro's mistress, the *ñusta* Quispe Sisa, also known as Inés Huaylas Yupanqui, was, as her name suggests, from Huaylas. The Huaylas were from a province, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega tells us, that was incorporated into the Inca realm by the Inca Cápac Yupanque (*Comentarios reales*, VI, xi). This would mean that the Huaylas nation was independent from Incan society until around the fourteenth century. Most likely the Incas actually entered the streets of Lima, but Quispe had sent a runner to Huaylas asking her mother to send an army to protect her. Lima was defended not by Spaniards but by the Huaylas army protecting their *ñusta*, or princess. As Rostworowski puts it, Contarhuacho's intention "was to rescue [her granddaughter] Francisca Pizarro and her daughter, Doña Inés" [era socorrer a Francisca Pizarro y a su hija doña Inés] (26). From such little-known sources as the ones Rostworowski and, perhaps even more importantly, those from archaeological excavation, Peruvians now know that Lima was not successfully defended by a handful of "brave" Spaniards defeating over a thousand Incas. They now know that this was not only a siege and defense of Lima, it was also an inter-Andean civil war between the Incas and the Huaylas, and other ethnic nations—with the Spaniards,

perhaps cowardly so, standing on the sidelines. Archaeology tells us that, of the many wounds inflicted that day, only two have been found to be from musket-shots.

Rostworowski argues succession itself in Tahuantinsuyo was probably decided by civil wars and, thus, the more famous conflict between Huascar and Atahualpa was typical for Andean culture (in Castro-Klarén 208-209, n. 7). In fact, as the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos scholar explains in her biography of the *mestiza* Francisca Pizarro, the diverse Incan lineages all competed for power, contrasting with the European tradition (27). Therefore, the battle between Quispe Sisa and Kusi Yupanqui was also representative of the inter-Andean cultural trait of armed conflict to resolve political issues. Alvaro Vargas Llosa, in his novelized history on Pizarro's mestizo daughter, puts it another, not so subtle way: "Disputes between Indians, and not the clash between these and the conquistadores, was what defined things in favor of the latter" [Las disputas entre indios, y no el enfrentamiento entre éstos y los conquistadores, habían definido las cosas en favor de los segundos] (76). The lesson to be learned here is that literature and history can begin to draw on "archeo-space" to present a more balanced and objective view on these matters. Peruvians now know that the ruins of the nation explain their history, part of which were frequent civil wars that played into the Spaniards' hands.

But even the chronicler Guaman Poma, who seems to recognize all these issues, does not talk about the Huaylas army, or about Quispe Sisa. Why would Guaman Poma be silent about the Huaylas participation in the historical event? We can only guess, but he states that Kusi Yupanqui Inca, was the son of Tupac Yupanqui, the author's uncle (393[395]). Perhaps there was some kind of family pride, or perhaps, more likely, seventy years after the event, the Toledian chronicles of the years 1569-1581 had wiped clean the slate of truth to construct a vision of mighty and heroic Spaniards who could defeat the "barbaric" Incas. Of course, the category "Indians" does not allow for ethnic differences—what Antonio Cornejo Polar has described as Andean heterogeneity. Despite his heterogeneity, Guaman Poma, as stated above, is "estranged" from himself and even he, who saw so

much further than his contemporaries, could not see everything. There is great damage done with this kind of misrecognition resulting from narrow horizons, not only inside Peru, but also in Peru's image before the world.

This is not merely an academic matter. The last time I had an appointment with my optometrist, he said something like: "Oh, you study Peru. How is it that 200 Spaniards were able to defeat Indian armies, tens of thousands strong?" I tried to explain the European diseases that reached Tahuantinsuyo and killed the Inca King Huayna Capac before Pizarro and his marauding army even arrived. I also told him about the civil war between Huayna Capac's sons, Huascar and Atahualpa, about deceit and deception, and about Atahualpa's arrogance. But I simply could not get through to this optometrist, whose profession implies greater vision for his customers, and whose vision here falls short of the panoptic we all seek. My only recourse is to change eye doctors, because the "truth" of the Spanish-language chronicles was still too strong for Guaman Poma to overcome it in his time and it is still too strong for archaeology to overcome the prevailing "common wisdom" in our times. Thus, we come back to the arguments of Sara Castro-Klarén's book. We must get to the truth about what happened in the past and lay bare the lies of what has come down to us to reorient the flow of ideas toward the realm of objectivity. This would entail, as she puts it, an endeavor including "emancipatory mappings."

Sara Castro-Klarén's book offers what philosopher Taylor might call "a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals" (50). She puts Guaman Poma and Garcilaso de la Vega on the same playing field as Cristóbal de Albornoz, as Viceroy Toledo, as Francisco de Vitoria, as Bartolomé de las Casas, even though their cultures and their civilizations are not the Celtic-Iberian 'superior' civilization that was imposed on the Andes. And she positions all of these on the same playing field as archaeology. This is a great forensic-friendly strategy in the reconstruction of Andean identities as they flow to new and interesting representational possibilities in methodology, in history, and in literature. This is the most obvious and prudent way to overcome the stubborn colonialities that take the form of laziness and overdependence on the chronicles—at its best—or the form of mental prejudices that impede us from broadening our view to take in the

whole landscape—at its worst. It is that landscape with all its hues and varying depths that gives the nation its due.

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