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“ FAILING TO MARVEL ” :  
Atahualpa’s Encounter with the Word\*

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The encounter between Atahualpa and the Spaniards in Cajamarca Plaza on 16 November 1532 provided the dramatic moment that has been highlighted in narratives of the conquest of Peru by generations of historians, from Francisco de Jerez and Titu Cusi Yupanqui to William Prescott. More recently, James Lockhart’s highly influential *Spanish Peru* (1968) and its companion, *The Men of Cajamarca* (1972), have defined the striking encounter at Cajamarca as the starting point for understanding the conquest history of Peru.<sup>1</sup> Edward Said and Peter Hulme, however, have suggested that within the genre of conquest narrative the conflict among different versions of the same event mainly revolves around the issue of where the story should start.<sup>2</sup> If so, readers are impelled to take the designated beginning of the history of Spanish Peru—the events at Cajamarca—as not merely a dramatic framing device for telling history but as a choice implying an ideological understanding of the Spanish role in Peru. In recent American historiography, this choice of beginning with the events at Cajamarca has become a means of telling a classic tale of upward social mobility for Spaniards, one that starts with the capture of treasure at Cajamarca.

Because this scene has become such a familiar moment to historians, I propose to reread the encounter in light of a critical tradition deriving from literary criticism and anthropology, rather than historiography, in an effort to bring into play a mode of understanding that has taken on increasing importance in the last ten years, as at least one set of disciplinary boundaries between anthropology, literary theory, and history have blurred. From the standpoints of anthropology and literary

\*This article is a revised version of a paper given at the panel “Texts and Conquests” at the Latin American Studies Association meeting, 17–19 March 1988, New Orleans. The author wishes to thank fellow panel participants Peter Hulme, Rolena Adorno, and José Rabasa for their comments as well as Michael Harbsmeier, Hayden White, and the *LARR* editors and anonymous reviewers.

1. James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532–1560: A Colonial Society* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); and *The Men of Cajamarca* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972).

2. Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); and Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters* (London: Methuen, 1986), 172.

theory, the encounter between Atahualpa and the Spaniards constitutes the kind of episode that French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss labeled “the writing lesson,” the classic scene of encounter between literate and nonliterate cultures.<sup>3</sup> In a critique of Lévi-Strauss’s 1955 classic *Tristes Tropiques*, however, French philosopher Jacques Derrida has shown that despite Lévi-Strauss’s efforts to avoid ethnocentrism, he continued to couple writing with cultural superiority.<sup>4</sup> For example, Lévi-Strauss wrote, “Of all the criteria by which people habitually distinguish civilization from barbarism, this one should at least be retained: that certain peoples write and others do not” (p. 291). Derrida countered that distinguishing between alphabetic writing and speech merely reinforces belief in the greater authenticity of speech. In invalidating the distinction between speech and writing in Western metaphysics, he also challenged the privileging of alphabetic writing—the belief that its possession distinguished civilized men from barbarians, a conviction characterizing Western philosophy since at least medieval times.<sup>5</sup>

In the sixteenth century, belief in alphabetic writing’s privileged status claimed Spanish adherents as diverse as the main critic of military conquest, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, and its main supporter, Juan Ginés Sepúlveda.<sup>6</sup> This essay will show how the classic Western faith in writing’s manifest cultural superiority operated in one of the earliest Spanish narratives of the encounter by Francisco de Jerez and how subsequent versions by natives Garcilaso de la Vega, Titu Cusi Yupanqui, and Guaman Poma de Ayala defined their own critical (albeit written) responses to the conquest and the introduction of writing.

Imagine the following scene if you will, filmed in broad panorama at considerable distance from the main event. Two men, the Inca chief

3. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques* (Paris: Editorial Plon, 1955).

4. Jacques Derrida, “The Violence of the Letter,” in *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1976). See also Roland Barthes, “The Writing Lesson,” in *Image/Music/Text*, translated by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 170–78.

5. Bartolomé de Las Casas attributes the distinction to Aristotle’s *Politics*. But as Anthony Pagden argues, Las Casas must have been thinking of Thomas Aquinas’s commentary *Sententia Libri Politicorum* because the distinction does not appear in Aristotle’s writings. See Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 126–32, 225, n. 18. Ancient classical writers like Cicero cited speech, rather than writing, as the source of man’s special distinction, the quality that “has united us in the bonds of justice, law and civil order, this that has separated us from savagery and barbarism.” See Cicero, *De natura deorum*, translated by H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), vol. 2, lix. 148, p. 267.

6. Domingo de Soto summarizes their positions in “Este es un traslado de un sumario que por comisión de la congregación que Su Majestad mandó juntar en Valladolid el año de cincuenta, coligió el muy reverendo y doctísimo padre, maestro fray Domingo de Soto.” See Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Tratados* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965), 281–82. See also Lewis Hanke, *All Mankind Is One* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 83–84, 87.

Atahualpa and Dominican Fray Vicente Valverde, meet and appear to converse. The priest is holding a cross in one hand and a book in the other. Suddenly the book is out of the friar's hand and on the ground. While this event is taking place (or shortly thereafter), a battle breaks out, the Inca chief is captured, and many of his followers are killed.

What happened to the book? How did it end up on the ground? Did Fray Valverde drop it, as Garcilaso de la Vega suggested? Did Atahualpa throw it to the ground because the Spaniards had similarly offended a sacred object of his the day before, as Titu Cusi Yupanqui recounted? Or was it an unprovoked insult resulting from the even greater insult of Atahualpa's striking the friar's hand as he attempted to open the book for the chief, as described by Francisco de Jerez? All these versions of the same event have been put forth to describe the fate of that emblematic representation of Western religion and culture, the book. This analysis will contrast the first widely circulated Spanish account of these events by Francisco de Jerez with three subsequent versions by native authors: neo-Inca Titu Cusi Yupanqui, mestizo Garcilaso de la Vega, and descendant of a family of native lords defeated by the Incas, Guaman Poma de Ayala. My purpose is to bracket the impossible question of what really happened on the plains of Cajamarca that day and concentrate instead on demonstrating how rhetorical strategies of beginning and narrative authority, in which attitudes toward language and writing play a central role, create different cultural contexts and have therefore spawned widely divergent interpretations of the significance of the events of 16 November 1532.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, I plan to show how contrasting the rhetorical strategies of long-canonized European narratives of conquest with more recently revived native accounts can heighten critical understanding of the events at Cajamarca and their subsequent renderings in historical writings.

Historical narratives are usually organized around the telling of a story that is presented to the reader as an account of "what really happened." A narrative that presents itself as telling "what really happened" belongs, regardless of the discipline with which it is customarily associated, to the literary genre of "realism." Realist narratives claim for themselves a kind of neutrality: to present the world "as it is," to describe scenes "as they were," and to narrate events "as they occurred." Admirable as these ambitions seem in writing historical narratives, realism actually implies methodological proceedings that are far from neutral in

7. According to Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, "Studying discursive formations requires a double reduction. Not only must the investigator bracket the truth claims of the serious speech acts he is investigating—Husserl's phenomenological reduction—he must also bracket the *meaning* claims." See Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 67.

describing initial contacts between Europeans and others and in some instances are wholly unbalanced.

Authors of historical-realist accounts since the sixteenth century have favored what are called “first-hand accounts” (usually designated by the ocular metaphor of “eyewitness”), as found in Pedro Pizarro’s account of Peru detailing “what I have seen.”<sup>8</sup> Although this new emphasis on eyewitness accounts, which began in the sixteenth century, has customarily been celebrated as a historiographic advance over historical writings that valued the opinions of classical authorities, the implicit biases of eyewitness testimony are often overlooked. What is actually meant by “eyewitness” reports are the first written accounts: statements by eyewitnesses, but only when such testimony appears in writing. In the initial encounters between Europeans and natives of Latin America, only Europeans had access to alphabetic writing, and as a result, the historical-realist approach cripples the credibility of native versions of events by favoring accounts of the conquerors (those who wrote) over those of the conquered (those who did not write). Not until years and sometimes decades after mastering the discourse of the conquerors did natives produce written versions of the encounter, and these natives who wrote were often not eyewitnesses. Therefore, to read conquest narratives critically requires foregoing the ideologically encumbered privileging of eyewitness (written) accounts, including the first authorized version of the events at Cajamarca by Spaniard Francisco de Jerez.

Another convention of realism in writing historical narratives is reconstructing “what really happened” by consensus—remedying the divergence among different accounts of the same event by establishing what is true as what the greatest number of authors agree on independently of each other.<sup>9</sup> But to believe that similarity in accounts is grounded in a mimesis of a common “reality” or “what really happened” is to credit only one possible source of consensus. The common “reality” that similar narratives are presumed to mimic may not be the external events “out

8. Pizarro justifies his account in this manner, “Como los escritores no escriben lo que vieron sino que oyeron, no pueden dar clara ni verdadera noticia de lo que escriben. . . . acordé sacar a luz . . . como persona que se ha hallado en estas provincias desde el principio de la conquista hasta el fin.” See Pedro Pizarro, *Relación del descubrimiento y conquista de los reinos del Perú* (originally published in 1571) in *Biblioteca Peruana* (Lima: Editores Técnicos Asociados, 1968), 449. An even better-known observation is Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo’s sarcastic comment about “others who from Spain easily presume to write of the Indies without having seen them.” See his *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (Asunción: Editorial Guaranía, 1944), 1:29, 39. See also Victor Frankl, *El antijovio de Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada y las concepciones de realidad y verdad en la época de contrareforma y del manierismo* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultural Hispánica, 1963), 82–101.

9. For an example of a “realist” version of the encounter between Atahualpa and Fray Vicente, see Raúl Porras Barrenechea, *Las relaciones primitivas de la conquista del Perú* (Paris: Imprimeries Les Presses Modernes, 1937), p. 86, n. 33. A wholly Eurocentric “realist” version of the encounter is John Hemming, *The Conquest of the Incas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1970), 33–41, 549–50.

there" but rather the shared cultural convictions of European writers and audiences. To avoid this kind of bias, it is necessary to contrast accounts of the same event from differing cultural perspectives.

Finally, as often occurs in historical writing, the consensus that all are willing to agree on—in this case, the presence of the friar, Atahualpa, and a book that falls or is thrown to the ground—are the least interesting and least informative dimensions of the various accounts. Vastly more telling are the writer's choice of a starting point for narration, the means used to construct authority for his or her own version of the events,<sup>10</sup> and the explanation of the critical event—in this case, why the book was thrown or fell—in other words, the rhetorical strategies of description and narration. These strategies provide the keys to understanding something more significant than the "truth" of "what happened": its meaning and the larger significance.<sup>11</sup> Because this meaning is created by each historian or original narrator in the context of his or her own cultural system, understanding how the meaning of the events is conveyed through description and narration implies understanding how cultural convictions shape conquest narratives.

The methodological key to this kind of interdisciplinary understanding of conquest narratives lies in adopting a different perspective that focuses not on similarity in various accounts of the same event but on difference. By examining the differences between European and native accounts (which also illuminate the similarities among European accounts), scholars can locate the cultural grounds and rationales that create meaning in accounts presenting themselves as reports of "reality." The first step in such a critical history is therefore to understand the ground on which all accounts of the Spanish conquest are presented and created, the ground of written language.

In 1492 Antonio de Nebrija presented Queen Isabella with a book, the first grammar of the Castilian language. Nebrija's dedication to Her Majesty on the first page read, "Language was always the companion of empire. . . . language and empire began, increased, and flourished together."<sup>12</sup> Nebrija's words proved to be truly prophetic regarding the

10. According to Michel de Certeau, "Realism, or the legitimation of discourse by its 'references,' originates with the author, the person legitimized by social credentials, and is transferred from the author to his text." See his *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, translated by Brian Massumi, foreword by Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 32.

11. According to Barthes, "Narration can only receive its meaning from the world which makes use of it." See his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" in *Image/Music/Text*, 115. Hayden White glosses this observation as "to mistake a 'meaning' (which is always constituted rather than found) for 'reality' (which is always found rather than constituted)." See White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 36.

12. Antonio de Nebrija, *Gramática Castellana*, photographic reproduction of the 1492 first edition (Halle, Belgium: Max Niemeyer, 1909), folio 1.

role that language would play in the conquest of America.

In addition to being a military and political invasion, the Spanish conquest of the New World also entailed a conquest of language and a conquest by language.<sup>13</sup> Nearly one-quarter billion speakers of Spanish in the Western Hemisphere owe their language to the conquest of hundreds, perhaps thousands of indigenous tongues. Throughout the conquest, language became an instrument of domination, a means of coercing speakers of indigenous languages in order to mold their minds, expressions, and thoughts into the formulas, ritual phrases, and inflections of sixteenth-century Castilian culture. Although the ground of language was often contested, as the many narratives of resistance and accommodation attest,<sup>14</sup> the dominant language, grammar, and culture of Spanish South America became Castilian. To cite only one example of this linguistic conquest, one form of the verb "to understand" in Quechua, *hamuttani*, implies a universe of predominantly oral comprehension and appropriation—the function of taking from discourse what will succeed and what will not, of noting information that can be used again.<sup>15</sup> But to translate forms of this verb into the Spanish *entender* is to silence the Quechua inflected meanings of remembering (for future use) and sifting through speech in order to better direct the future. Domination by language thus enforces a kind of silence on the dominated, who are forced to carry the burden of the noncommunicated and the ultimately incommunicable.

Spanish conquerors during the first twenty years viewed language as an essentially transparent medium of communication. For Columbus, European languages could be readily understood by all people, and as Tzetzan Todorov points out in *The Conquest of America*, all other efforts at

13. For an excellent analysis of conquest via language in the Philippines, see Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988).

14. Narratives of resistance and accommodation are a type of story often told in history and anthropology books and articles in which the heroic Indians or workers bravely resist Spanish or capitalist efforts at domination and manage either to subvert the dominant system to accommodate their own ends or to die heroically while resisting. Hence comes the appellation "narratives of resistance and accommodation." Such stories were the dominant mode of explanation employed in writing on Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s.

15. See Diego González Holguín, *Vocabulario de la lengua general de todo el Perú llamada lengua quechua* (originally published in 1608; Lima: Imprenta Santa María, 1952), 148, 507–8. Regina Harrison cites different words for "understanding" in Quechua used by Pachacuti Yamqui (1613) and the lexicon of González Holguín. See Harrison, "Modes of Discourse: The *Relación de antigüedades deste reyno del Pirú* by Joan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua," in *From Oral to Written Expressions: Native Andean Chronicles of the Early Colonial Period*, edited by Rolena Adorno (Syracuse, N.Y.: Maxwell School of Citizenship, 1982), 65–99, esp. 86–87. On the function of taking from discourse for future use in Europe before the seventeenth century, see Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

communication using sounds simply were not considered to constitute language.<sup>16</sup>

Nor was the deployment of language as an instrument of power and domination in the conquest limited to the silencing imposed by the problematic equation of language with sixteenth-century Castilian. A particular collection of the sounds designated as language, which came to be known as the Requirement (*requerimiento*), became an essential part of the conquest itself and formed the basis for Spanish assertion of sovereignty over Atahualpa at Cajamarca.

At the request of King Ferdinand, Castilian jurist Juan López Palacios Rubios created in 1513 a written formula that could be used to justify the conquest of every New World tribe or empire based on the possession of Christian religious beliefs. The text made known the claims of the Spanish monarchs to dominion over New World peoples and was supposed to be read in the moments before the Spaniards rushed to attack. In this way, the language of the Requirement was not separate from the conquest but formed part of the ritual of its performance, in this case acts of bloodshed and murder. Lewis Hanke has eloquently described the varying performance of the Requirement: "it was read to trees and empty huts. . . . Captains muttered its theological phrases into their beards on the edge of sleeping Indian settlements, or even a league away before starting the formal attack. . . . Ship captains would sometimes have the document read from the deck as they approached an island, and at night would send out enslaving expeditions whose leaders would shout the traditional Castilian war cry 'Santiago' rather than read the Requirement before they attacked."<sup>17</sup>

Although the Requirement exemplified an imperialism of speech, its content referred back to a body of writings sacred to the Spaniards and many other Europeans, sources that rationalized the conquest in their minds. The Roman Catholic Church provided the rationale for exercising power based on possession of a (self-proclaimed) superior religion. Centuries of Catholic theological and moral teachings formed a kind of latent text invoked by the Requirement and were thus implicated directly in the entire enterprise of conquest.

This Requirement invoking the ultimate authority of Christianity's right to rule the world was presumably the text read to Atahualpa in 1532 by Fray Vicente Valverde. Thus Atahualpa's unfortunate encounter with "the word" (in the form of printed breviary, Bible, or *Summa*) simul-

16. Tzetzan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), translated by Richard Howard, 29–33.

17. Lewis Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), 33–34.



taneously represented an encounter with the Word—a Middle Eastern and later European God, once conceived in the orality of a first- and second-century Greek and Aramaic tradition (John 1:1) but long since harnessed to the technology of writing and print. Thus if language was the companion of empire, as Nebrija wrote in 1492 with reference to Castilian being captured in a printed grammar, religion had become its text and pretext.

Despite hundreds of accounts of the Requirement's spoken performance, its latent text (the Roman Catholic Word) and its apparent text (as written and printed word) appear simultaneously in accounts of only one episode, the clash in Cajamarca Plaza on 16 November 1532. The first authorized version was published two years later by conqueror Francisco de Jerez, to be followed by multiple accounts of the day produced by generations of Spaniards.

The author of the *Verdadera relación de la conquista del Perú* (1534) was born in Seville but grew up in the New World in what is now Panama. Jerez was selected by Pizarro to serve as notary public to the expedition to Peru. He was present at most of the central events of the conquest, including the capture of Atahualpa at Cajamarca.<sup>18</sup> His *Relación* was published in Seville only weeks after he arrived in 1534, suggesting that much of it had been written shortly after the events described.<sup>19</sup> His main narrative authority derives from being an eyewitness loyal to Pizarro, and his account presents itself as an unabashed celebration of the encounter. In Jerez's *Relación*, the nature of his observations are presented as unproblematic and the grounds for judgment of the Indians so obvious that extensive explanations are nugatory. His account displays an exuberant pride in the achievements of the conquest and none of the defensiveness that was to characterize later narrative explanations.

The tone of the prologue to the *Relación* is unapologetic: "It occurred to me to write this account and send it to your majesty so that all may take notice of what I have said, which will be to the glory of God because aided by His divine hand, we have defeated and brought to our holy Catholic faith such a multitude of gentiles; and [it will be] to the honor of our Caesar, because with his great power and fortune these things have occurred in his time" (my translation). Jerez's account is clearly intended as a providentialist narrative in which the Spaniards are "aided by His divine hand" and news of the conquerors' actions "will be to the glory of God." Providentialism relegates even the king to the subsidiary status of having the good fortune to live during these events.

18. Francisco de Jerez, *Verdadera relación de la conquista del Perú* (originally published in 1534; Madrid: Historia 16, 1985), 13–17, 22–23. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

19. *Ibid.*, 41.

Jerez's narrative claims that Spanish superiority is unparalleled in history, greater even than the Romans: "When in ancient or modern times have such huge enterprises of so few [succeeded] against so many? . . . And who has equaled those of Spain? Certainly not the Jews nor the Greeks nor Romans, about whom most is written." Jerez continues to celebrate his role as military conqueror unselfconsciously by proclaiming that the Spaniards have accomplished more with fewer men and suffered greater indignities: "Because if the Romans subjugated so many provinces, it was with equal or greater numbers of people, in known territories, provided with the usual sustenance, and with paid captains and armies. But our Spaniards . . . were never more than two or three hundred, sometimes a hundred and even less. . . . And the many times they traveled, they were neither paid nor forced but went of their own will and at their own cost" (p. 60). The Spanish actions are presented as unquestionably military: they "subjugated" their actions in a manner paralleling the "paid captains and armies" of the Romans.

The unmistakable pride and arrogance of Jerez's prologue also implies an equally powerful denial of the humanity of others. The Indians of his *Relación* know nothing of human food (bread and wine) and are no better than beasts (for such is their food). The Spaniards conquered them while "sustaining themselves with the *bestial* sustenance of those who have never heard of bread nor wine, suffering herbs, and roots, and fruits, and have conquered what all the world knows" (pp. 59-60). The Spanish achievement is thus rendered greater not because the Indians are such worthy opponents (as Cortés characterized the Aztecs) but because they are so "bestial."

Having securely located one source of the Indians' inferiority in their food, Jerez does not hesitate to define their correct mode of behavior to the Spaniards. "And it will be said [of the conquest of Peru] that the Christians have put fear [*temor*] into the infidels and admiration into all human groups" (p. 59). Here Jerez implies that only European (and probably only Catholic European) groups are human and capable of "admiration." Infidels, the Indians among them, do not belong to "human groups," and their proper attitude toward the Spaniards, like that of all heathen, is fear. Ironically, in recounting the capture of Atahualpa, what disturbs Jerez most is the Inca's refusal to act awed by the Spaniards. As a result, the chronicler projects onto Atahualpa the overweening pride with which Jerez and perhaps his fellow Spaniards were so abundantly endowed.

Jerez's account of Atahualpa's encounter places Pizarro at center stage: "At daybreak, the Governor [Pizarro] left with all his people put in order and walked to within a league of Cajamarca, where he waited for the rear guard while all the infantry and horsemen armed themselves. He arranged them before the entrance into the town and made three files of

Spaniards on foot and on horseback. In this order they marched, [Pizarro] sending messengers to Atahualpa to come to the town of Cajamarca to meet with him" (p. 102).

Jerez's Pizarro, referred to as "the Governor" or legitimate political ruler, is portrayed as a decisive military strategist who single-handedly decides the arrangement of the troops. By including Pizarro's message to Atahualpa in the same sentence with his arming the marching men, Jerez locates the all-important beginning of the encounter in Pizarro's military preparations. From this perspective, the Indians merely react to superior Spanish military tactics. In returning to describing Atahualpa's fateful movements toward the plaza, Jerez has the Governor prodding Atahualpa into coming to Cajamarca by sending yet another messenger, again placing all initiative for Atahualpa's movements in Pizarro's hands (p. 110).<sup>20</sup>

Jerez then switches to describing Atahualpa's court, the colors of the servants' checkered livery as they sweep the road, followed by three additional squads in different dress, who are singing and dancing. Jerez's lengthy description of Atahualpa's approaching court actually undermines the Indian chief's stature by reminding the reader that Atahualpa is approaching Pizarro, not vice versa, as would have been the case had Atahualpa been a real (European) king (pp. 110-11). Pizarro, in contrast, behaves like a "real" ruler by waiting for the other to arrive.

As soon as Atahualpa's band has filled the square, Jerez interrupts the narrative of arrival to describe a captain sending Pizarro a signal, a military indication that the encounter between Spaniards and Indians is about to begin. "The Governor, seeing this [military sign] asked Father Friar Vicente if he wished to go speak to Atahualpa with an interpreter, and he said yes" (p. 111). A military signal thus frames the meeting between Atahualpa and the priest, rendering their communication subsidiary to an armed encounter.

Friar Vicente then approaches Atahualpa with "the cross in one hand and the Bible in the other" and speaking via the interpreter says, "I am a priest of God, and I teach the Christians things of God, and I also come to teach you. What I teach is what God has spoken, which is in this book." By the second sentence of this speech, Jerez has the friar uttering the embedded Hispanic cultural assumption about the connection between writing and religion. The priest teaches "what God has spoken" a message that has been imparted verbally, but "what has been spoken" is in the book: "Atahualpa asked him to give him the book in order to see it,

20. Pizarro's "authorization" of the narrative is invoked more subtly in the next paragraph, where Jerez indirectly implicates Pizarro as the author of the lengthy description of the town, its inhabitants, and surrounding terrain by using Pizarro's order to search for appropriate lodgings as the narrative rationale for describing the place where the encounter is to take place. *Ibid.*, 103.

and he [Fray Vicente] gave it to him closed. When Atahualpa did not succeed in opening it, the friar extended his arm to open it, and Atahualpa with great disdain hit him on the arm, not wanting him to open it. He stubbornly persisted in opening it, which he did, and not marveling at the letters or the paper, like other Indians, he threw it five or six paces from him. And to the words the friar had said via the interpreter, he responded with great arrogance" (p. 111).<sup>21</sup>

Thus in Jerez's version, Atahualpa not only fails to be fascinated by the paradox of an object containing speech but also fails to be awed by the Spaniards' cultural achievements, unlike "other Indians." Clearly, Atahualpa's fundamental flaw is pride: he treats the friar "with great disdain," refuses help, and is "stubborn" and "arrogant." His unprovoked act of throwing the Bible on the ground also conveys arrogance in his hurling the book some distance, as if it is unworthy of being near him.

The imputation of arrogance in the scene with the book at Cajamarca is also found in other early Spanish accounts. Hernando Pizarro's 1533 official report to the Audiencia of Santo Domingo recounts that he too interrogated the Inca (once the latter was safely imprisoned) as to why he "threw the book and showed such arrogance." Miguel de Estete's *Noticia del Peru* (1535) attributes the Hispanic perception of a prideful Atahualpa to the friar, who "practically runs" to Pizarro saying, "Why do you waste time with politeness and requirements for this arrogant dog?"<sup>22</sup>

Jerez's extreme irritation at Atahualpa's "failure to marvel" suggests an intense frustration of cultural expectations: the long-standing belief that alphabetic writing distinguished civilized men from barbarians. Expressing similar sentiments, Sepúlveda characterized Indians as "uncivilized people who are more barbarous than can be imagined, for they are absolutely lacking in any knowledge of letters."<sup>23</sup> He even suggests elsewhere that the absence of writing proved the lack of humanity itself "with those little men in whom you will scarcely find traces of humanity, who not only lack culture but do not even know how to

21. Jerez is reluctant even to credit Atahualpa with curiosity, a trait that would undermine Jerez's portrait of the chief's haughtiness.

22. Hernando Pizarro, "La carta de Hernando Pizarro a la Audiencia de Santo Domingo, de 23 de noviembre de 1533," in *Tres testigos de la conquista del Perú*, edited by Miguel Muñoz de San Pedro (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1953); see also Miguel de Estete, *Noticia del Perú* (originally published in 1535) in *Biblioteca Peruana* (Lima: Editores Técnicos Asociados, 1968), 1:345-402. The first published account by Cristóbal Mena also recounts the friar calling the Indians "dogs." See Cristóbal de Mena's "anonymous" *La conquista del Perú llamada Nueva Castilla* (originally published in 1534), in Raúl Porras Barrenechea, *Las relaciones primitivas de la Conquista del Perú*, 79-101, esp. 85-86.

23. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo, o de las justas causas de la guerra contra los indios* (originally published in 1535; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1951), 35. See also Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 117-18. This idea was echoed by Juan Maldonado in 1549. See Francisco Rico, "Laudes litterarum," in *Homenaje a Julio Caro Baroja* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1978), 895-914, 906-7.

write."<sup>24</sup> Atahualpa's refusal to immediately recognize writing (especially in printed form) as the outward source of Spanish superiority frustrated Jerez's ingrained expectations of how natives should respond to this sixteenth-century "writing lesson." Thus the conquest of language and by language was also one in which language, particularly written language, played a major role as a symbol of cultural authority.

Atahualpa gave further offense by not responding to the offer of Christianization—the content of the message. Instead, he turned the discourse to the more immediately obvious subject of Spanish behavior, demanding restitution for the Spaniards' treatment of his chiefs and theft of clothes. This interpretation, echoed by several of the Spanish "eyewitness" accounts,<sup>25</sup> doubles the insult: Atahualpa was oblivious to both the form of the message (the book) and its content (Hispanic Catholicism).

In Jerez's version, the friar then returns to confer with Pizarro, "telling him all that had happened with Atahualpa, and that he had thrown the sacred Scripture on the ground. Then the Governor, armed with the weapons in his clothes, took his sword and leather shield and with the Spaniards accompanying him entered among the Indians with great courage; and with only four men who could follow him to the litter where Atahualpa was, [Pizarro] fearlessly put his hand on Atahualpa's arm and shouted 'Santiago'" (pp. 111–12).

While Jerez did not attempt to explain why Pizarro acted as he did, the narrator intimated motive through juxtaposition. The last phrase in his account of the friar's conference with Pizarro refers to the act of throwing the Bible, here described as "sacred" Scripture, a characterization that underlines the nature of the offense. The next sentence begins "Then," as though implying a temporal and therefore causal connection between Atahualpa's mistreatment of an object sacred to the Spaniards and Pizarro's reaction. Although Jerez was close to Pizarro and present during the event, he did not presume to explain what was going on in Pizarro's mind, a strategy that gains credibility for his account in comparison with much later accounts claiming prescience. Jerez's rhetorical strategy was more subtle and more effective. He underscored Pizarro's courage by having him reach Atahualpa with only four men and, still undaunted, give the traditional war cry, thereby reinforcing the Western myth that only a few civilized men are needed to subdue an army of savages. In describing Atahualpa's capture, Jerez remarked, "It was a marvelous thing to see imprisoned so rapidly a great lord who had come so mightily" (p. 112). The dominant note here is unrepentant joy at

24. Sepúlveda, *Demócrates segundo*, 78–79.

25. Mena, *La conquista*, 85; Juan Ruiz de Arce, "Relación de los servicios en Indias," edited by Conde de Canilleros, *Boletín de la Academia de la Historia* 102 (1935):327–84, esp. 362; and Miguel de Estete's *Noticia del Perú*, 1:345–402.

having humiliated a prideful foe, one who failed to recognize his rightful inferiority to the Spaniards and also failed to acknowledge the achievements of Spanish civilization, such as writing.

When Jerez stated forthrightly that most Indians were curious about writing, he implied that handing a religious book to an Indian chief while performing the Requirement may not have been as unique an act as accounts of the events at Cajamarca make it seem. Even setting aside other accounts of Peruvian Indians' response to writing, the expectation that natives will marvel at writing can be found in dozens of other European accounts in French, Spanish, and English from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Such responses have been reported by natives as diverse as those in Raratonga in the South Pacific in 1836, Hindu speakers under a tree in Delhi in 1817, the Ibo of Nigeria in 1789, the coastal North Carolina Indians in 1585, the Tupi Indians of Brazil in 1556, and the Nambikwara of Brazil as late as 1938.<sup>26</sup> The geographic diversity of reports of native "marveling" over several centuries of encounters with non-Europeans suggests not an implausible similarity among the Ibo, Hindus, Tupi, Nambikwara, and Raratonga but rather a historical continuity in Western expectations of the conduct of non-European peoples. To understand this expectation of marveling, it is necessary to step beyond the "truth" offered by European "eyewitnesses."

A subsequent generation of neo-Inca, anti-Inca, and mestizo authors all differ from Jerez (and the other Spanish "eyewitnesses") in their reinterpretations of the way in which Atahualpa viewed the nature of writing and attendant claims of Spanish domination. Their responses constitute a kind of internal critique (given that the existing responses are

26. The wonder that natives experience at writing has been recorded in chronicles as diverse as Jean Léry's sixteenth-century account of the Tupi in Brazil, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*, originally published in 1578: "I used to write a few sentences. Then, in reading to them afterward, in their eyes it all seemed like some kind of sorcery. One would say to another, 'Is it not a marvel?'" Cited by Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, translated by Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 214. Other sources also reflect this theme: the account of an eighteenth-century Ibo, *The Interesting Narrative of Alaudah Equianoh or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself*, 4th ed. (Dublin: Printed by the author, 1791); J. Williams's account of Wesleyan missionaries among the Raratonga in the Cook Islands (1837), cited by Brian Street in "Orality and Literacy as Ideological Constructions: Some Problems in Cross-Cultural Studies," *Culture and History* 2 (1987):13-14; and Thomas Hariot's *Roanoke Voyages* (originally published in 1585), in *The Roanoke Voyages*, edited by David Beers Quinn (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955), 375-77. An almost identical scene of "marveling" at the Bible is described as having taken place under a tree outside Delhi in 1817. See Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817," in *Europe and Its Others*, edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iverson, and Diana Loxley (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), 2:89-106. As recently as 1955, French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss describes writing as one of "the marvels I had brought" to the Nambikwara of Brazil in 1938. See his *Tristes Tropiques*, 289. See also Michael Harbsmeier, "Early Travel to Europe: Some Remarks on the Magic of Writing," in *Europe and Its Others*, 1:72-88.

all written), a counterpoint to the universalist aspirations of Spanish discourse regarding the transparent superiority of written language. These interpretations attempt to explain the scene of frustration—Atahualpa's failure to marvel.

The so-called *Relación de la conquista del Perú* (1570) was actually dictated to a priest by the second-to-last monarch of the neo-Inca state, which fought a forty-year war against the Spaniards. During the final years of this war, the leader of the rebellion, Titu Cusi Yupanqui, attempted to achieve through language (the other major weapon of European domination) what he was unable to achieve through war: recognition by the Spanish Crown as the legitimate native lord of Peru, which would have entailed bypassing the claims of the heirs of Atahualpa and Huascar, sons of the last uncontested ruler.<sup>27</sup>

Anthropologist Frank Salomon has noted that Titu's account of the conquest is characterized by a persistent parallelism: "Incas and Spaniards do essentially the same things, striking blows and counter-blows, and they talk the same way, in hortatory set-pieces of archaizing style."<sup>28</sup> This narrative parallelism discursively equalizes the stature of Spaniards and Incas, and Titu Cusi Yupanqui extended this parallelism to a scene of hospitality: "My uncle Atahualpa . . . received them [the Spaniards] very well. He gave one of them a drink of the kind we use from a golden vessel, [but] as the Spaniard took it into his hand, he poured it on the ground. And because of this my uncle became very angry."

The Spaniard's rejection of hospitality became part of the strategy of narrative equalization as Titu Cusi recounted the encounter between Atahualpa and the Word: "And after this, those two Spaniards showed my uncle a letter or a book, or some such, I don't know what, saying that it was the *quillca* [drawing or inscription] of God and the King. But my uncle, as he felt affronted by the spilling of the *chicha*, which is what our drink is called, took the letter or whatever it was and threw it down saying, 'How do I know what it is you give me there? Move along, go away'" (pp. 15–16).

According to Titu Cusi's account, Atahualpa's gesture of throwing the book on the ground mirrors the gesture that preceded it—the Spaniard's pouring the *chicha* on the ground—and thus establishes a symmetry between Inca and Hispanic behavior, each one causing an object sacred to

27. Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *Relación de la conquista del Perú*, originally published in 1570 (Lima: Ediciones de la Biblioteca Universitaria, 1963). The original Spanish title was "Instrucción del Inga don Diego de Castro Titu Cusi Yupangui para el muy Ilustre Senor el Licenciado Lope García de Castro." For a useful commentary, see Raquel Chang-Rodríguez, "Writing as Resistance: Peruvian History and the *Relación* of Titu Cusi Yupangui," in Adorno, *From Oral to Written Expression*, 55–57.

28. Frank Salomon, "Chronicles of the Impossible: Notes on Three Peruvian Indigenous Historians," in Adorno, *From Oral to Written Expression*, 13.

the other to end up on the ground. While the Spanish accounts of Hernando Pizarro, Miguel de Estete, and Francisco de Jerez narrate Atahualpa's act as one of unprovoked disrespect, Titu Cusi reinterpreted the event by narrating a prior scene of initial provocation in the dismissive gesture of spilling. Thus Titu's narrative of the book episode began not on the plains of Cajamarca but with an earlier incident.

Titu Cusi enhanced the credibility of his version of events by invoking his status as a relative of the man who threw the book to the ground ("my uncle Atahualpa"). He thus avoided explaining how he knew what Atahualpa was thinking at the moment of the encounter by calling to mind kinship and common culture. Implicitly invoking his position as an Inca who was not close to the event temporally but close to it in culture and kinship, Titu Cusi called attention to his knowledge of Inca cultural rhetoric and performance in a persuasive manner. This strategy enabled him to claim a distinct authority from the one Europeans claimed for themselves—the status of eyewitnesses to the event, the criterion that continues to be invoked by contemporary authors of historical realist narratives as a canonical principle of historiographic truth.<sup>29</sup> Titu Cusi instead subverted this principle by privileging the cultural understanding of rhetoric and performance that he claimed to share, not as leader of the neo-Inca state (his actual status) but as kin of the last Inca chief (the status Titu sought via Spanish recognition).

Titu Cusi Yupanqui implicitly acknowledged the sacred character of the writing and the status of the book in describing it as an inscription of the God or King, but he denied any offense by insisting on the insult's equivalence to the Spaniard's spilling the chicha the day before. In this account, the Inca chief's comprehension is established at an essential level—the ability to understand Spanish cultural behavior by recognizing sacred objects. But this understanding is not reciprocated because the nameless Spaniards have no similar capacity to fathom Indian culture. On this level, narrative parallelism is abandoned, as Titu Cusi invents Atahualpa's superior powers of understanding cultural others. In Jerez's account, the positions are exactly reversed. According to Jerez, Atahualpa's "failure to marvel" is incomprehensible except in terms of defect of character ("arrogance") because the Spanish position (like the language in which it is expressed) is transparently valid.

Neither Yupanqui's nor Francisco de Jerez's account discusses an issue raised by another author: the problem of negotiation of meaning, or the issue of translation. In the version constructed by Garcilaso de la Vega, translation is a critical element.

29. Because establishing narrative authority is a European device, how this authority was to be created may have been discussed between Titu Cusi and the priest or even added by the friar to whom the account was dictated in order to legitimize this interpretation of the event.



Mestizo writer Garcilaso de la Vega begins his account of contact between Atahualpa and Pizarro by characterizing the embassy sent by Atahualpa to greet the Spaniards as pledging friendship, begging pardon for offenses, and asking that the executions not be continued. Completely absent from Garcilaso's portrait is the arrogance ascribed to Atahualpa by Jerez, Hernando Pizarro, and Estete. He is depicted instead as an improbably deferential, humble king of the Inca empire who asks for favors as if he had already (and implausibly) acknowledged Spanish suzerainty.<sup>30</sup> Although Garcilaso's version is at odds with that of Jerez in assigning initiative for the contact to Atahualpa, Garcilaso only partially reversed the passivity of Jerez's Inca by portraying Atahualpa's crucial initial approach as deferential.

Garcilaso presents the Spaniards as debating about whether Atahualpa's presents were meant to lull them into complacency or were evidence of his "generosity," "gentleness," and "magnificence." Garcilaso comments that the majority sided with the favorable view but regretted the inadequacy of the interpreter (pt. 2, bk. 1, chap. 7, p. 668). In other words, the inability of some Spaniards to recognize the true generosity, magnificence, and gentleness of the Inca chief stemmed not from their suspicions about the meaning of hospitality under hostile conditions but from something far more exculpatory for Spaniards and Indians alike: their inability to understand adequately the others' statements, or the problem of translation.

Having introduced exculpation by translation in the prelude to the scene with the book, Garcilaso proceeds to expand his argument at great length. The tedious verification of Fray Valverde's copy of the Requirement and its verbatim transcription are intended to legitimize a pure original text that was contaminated only by translation.<sup>31</sup> Garcilaso's explanation of how translation distorts the message focuses on two central elements: the character of the interpreter himself and the lack of Quechua equivalents for Spanish religious concepts, even in the early seventeenth century.

Garcilaso first demeans the Indian interpreter by referring to him

30. Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios reales de los Incas: Part II, Historia general del Perú* (originally published in 1617). The edition cited here is Edición Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles (hereafter BAE) (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1960).

31. For the humanist (European) background on Garcilaso's narrative pose as "translator," see Margarita Zamora, *Language, Authority, and Indigenous History in the Comentarios Reales de los Incas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 12-84. On the evolution of this position in Garcilaso's texts, see Susan Jákfalvi-Leiva, *Tradición, escritura y violencia colonizadora: un estudio de la obra del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1984). My own view is that Garcilaso mystifies his origins for a Spanish audience by deploying the narrative pose as a "Quechua speaker," a reality not penetrable for Spanish readers. His additional invocation of the unexplained "tradición de los quipus" to account for his knowledge of the scene with the book strikes me as simply another move intended to mystify his narrative authority and make it exotic.

only by his (Christian) first name and later by its diminutive, "Felipillo." Garcilaso lists a string of derogatory personal characteristics—"of very plebeian stock," "a boy," "barely twenty-two," a "serf-like servant." Together they form an array of Spanish status markers intended to disparage the translator by appealing to the prejudices of an aristocratic readership.<sup>32</sup> Garcilaso employs a similar set of status markers to describe Felipe's speech: "he spoke corruptly like raw blacks from Africa"; and "the words he used were those that raw, inexperienced soldiers used: 'I swear to so and so,' 'I make an oath,' and other similar and worse expressions." Garcilaso further appeals to the prejudices of an audience educated in neoscholastic authoritarianism by impugning Felipe's method of education: "He learned Spanish without anyone teaching him, only from listening to the Spaniards speak" and therefore was "badly taught" in both Quechua and Spanish. Felipe's religious education is judged similarly deficient because he was not given "any instruction in the Christian religion" and therefore "has [no knowledge] of the Apostolic Creed" (p. 48). By labeling Felipe as a social inferior who fails to conform to aristocratic models of decorum and education, Garcilaso was attempting to co-opt his upper-class audience into blaming not the message but the messenger. Ironically, when Garcilaso elsewhere describes a European learning an Indian language in the same fashion, the process of learning is evidence of God's blessing, "a miracle" rather than lower-status behavior.

Garcilaso moves from describing the person of the translator to an account of the translation itself. He alleges that Felipe garbled the message, saying instead of the Trinity, God three-in-one, "God three plus one is four." But given Roman Catholicism's tenet of the fundamental incommunicability of the concept of the Trinity (called a "mystery" by the orthodox), Felipe's gloss appears at least as reasonable as the original concept that he was supposed to convey.

To justify the argument that the translation was defective, Garcilaso offers not the events at Cajamarca but the difficulties evidenced by Spanish catechisms, printed fifty-three years later, in finding equivalents for the religious concepts expressed in the Requirement: the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, Grace, and the sacraments (pp. 48–49).<sup>33</sup> But this difficulty

32. Zamora, *Language, Authority, and Indigenous History*, 133. While Garcilaso's disdain for Felipe may have stemmed partially from his regional origins (Felipe was not a Cuzqueño), Garcilaso's attacks are couched wholly in the language of Spanish status markers.

33. Garcilaso uses a confession guide of 1585 written in Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara in which the question "Are you a baptized Christian?" is translated with only the verb "to be" in Quechua and "baptized" and "Christian" in Castilian. The same thing occurs with the question "Do you know Christian doctrine?" where the verb form "do you know?" is asked in Quechua and the rest in Castilian. See also Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios limenses* (Lima: n.p., 1951–1954), vols. 1–3. For a similar critique of Garcilaso's treatment of the interpreter, see Regina Harrison, *Signs, Songs, and Memory: Translating Quechua Language and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 40–43.

does not lead Garcilaso to question the universality of Spanish religious concepts. He alleges instead (echoing an earlier narrator, José de Acosta) that the problem is rooted in the difficulty of the Indian (not Spanish) language (pp. 48, 50).<sup>34</sup> According to Garcilaso, “Felipillo’s misinterpretation was not his fault, or that of Fray Vicente Valverde, or of the Spaniards, but of the Indian language”—in other words, what really created the problem at Cajamarca was the inferiority of the Quechua language. Thus the point that Garcilaso acknowledged at first—the problem of translation—gives way to a second agenda that demeans the Indians’ language.

Although Garcilaso compliments Quechua at other points in his *Commentaries*, his praise for its qualities never raises it above Spanish. At best he begs for Spanish recognition of the merits of this indigenous language, a plea that only enhances Spanish superiority by acknowledging the right of Spanish-speakers to be the arbiters of the “quality” of an indigenous language. At the crucial moment when the religious concepts central to Spanish domination are introduced, Garcilaso recognizes Quechua’s “inferiority as a language” in relation to Spanish as a language of mastery as well as a language of truth.

After establishing Quechua’s inferiority, Garcilaso continues in the same vein, demeaning its speakers by extending his original concept of “Felipillo’s” stupidity (*torpeza*) to all Indians: “The stupidity of that interpreter . . . was not his fault, but the ignorance of all [Indians]. Even in my time, twenty-nine years after the events of which we are speaking, [when] the Indians . . . were more accustomed to hearing Castilian, they had the same stupidity and difficulty that Felipillo had” (p. 48). Exempting only himself and two fellow Incas from the general stupidity of Indians, Garcilaso seeks to elevate his authority (as an Inca) to speak for all (these stupid) Indians, thus implicitly denigrating all other native accounts and in the process betraying considerable arrogance. In his self-proclaimed role as spokesman, only Garcilaso (and perhaps a fellow Inca or two) could have translated the Requirement adequately. Garcilaso’s popularity in seventeenth-century Spain is easy to understand: he simply confirmed metropolitan prejudices about the superiority of Spanish civilization and language, a testimony all the more valuable because he was, after all, one of “them.”

Garcilaso also portrays a wholly implausible response to the Requirement by Atahualpa: the Inca chieftain articulates Garcilaso’s critique of the interpreter’s incompetence and social status, accepts the dominion of the “wiser and braver” Spaniards if peaceful rather than accompanied

34. “Aún nombrarle [a Dios] no saben sino por nuestro vocablo.” See José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (originally published in 1590), edited by Edmundo O’Gorman (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1962), 220.

by "acts of cruelty," and credits the Pope with the sole right to collect tribute from the Incas (chap. 24).

Garcilaso then describes impatient Spanish soldiers, unable to endure the lengthy talking, as moving among the Indians (on their own initiative, without a signal from their leader) and beginning to fight and steal Inca gold, silver, and precious stones. In contrast with Jerez's account of Pizarro's careful coordination of military action that day, Garcilaso's version has the Inca leader speaking at such length that he wears out the patience of the Spanish soldiers, who seek revenge against the spoken word.

Garcilaso's account shifts attention away from the central event in most other versions—the dropped or thrown book—and focuses instead on language, the speech surrounding the event. He also begins his narration of what happened to the book by adopting the omniscient authorial tone familiar to readers of historical realism. He states, "What happened was that Friar Vicente Valverde incited a disturbance because when the Indians gave a sudden shout, Valverde feared they would do him harm, and he rose so rapidly from the seat in which he was talking to Atahualpa that as he stood up, the cross fell from his hand and the book that he was holding on his lap also fell." Garcilaso then describes Valverde's picking up the book and returning it to the Spaniards, telling them not to harm the Indians because he had become fond of Atahualpa. Garcilaso's authorial stance suggests that his attempt to invoke Western narrative realism ("what happened") is simply an elaboration of one of the major European interpretations of the conquest, constructed (like all other versions) after the fact.

Garcilaso's intellectual inspiration derived not from America but from Spain and the major Spanish narrative critical of the conquest, that of Bartolomé de Las Casas. He had forcefully pointed out the need for adequate translation of Spanish religious ideas because few Indians had any knowledge of Spanish.<sup>35</sup> The second major point of Las Casas's critique was that conquest by force was morally wrong and that conquest

35. In the Latin version that Las Casas presented verbally at Valladolid in 1550–51 (the *Apologética historia*, chap. 33), he argued: "What language will the messengers speak so as to be understood by the Indians? Latin, Greek, Spanish? Arabic? The Indians know none of these languages. Perhaps we imagine that the soldiers are so holy that Christ will grant them the gift of tongues so that they will be understood by the Indians? . . . No law, constitution, or precept is binding on anyone unless the words of the language in which it is proposed are clearly understood." In *Defense of the Indians*, translated and edited by Stafford Poole (De Kalb: University of Northern Illinois Press, 1974), 217–18. On Garcilaso's familiarity with Las Casas's work, see Zamora, *Language, Authority, and Indigenous History*, 106. Roberto Fernández Retamar's observation could easily apply to Garcilaso: "We have been so thoroughly steeped in colonialism that we read with real respect only those anticolonialist authors disseminated from the Metropolis." See *Caliban and Other Essays*, translated by Edward Baker (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 18.

and conversion should proceed peacefully.<sup>36</sup> Garcilaso's portrayal of Fray Vicente is almost a parody of the "good" priest who, despite his gruff voice,<sup>37</sup> is no accomplice to military conquest and even begs the military official (Pizarro) not to harm the Indian. Garcilaso's tale of Friar Vicente's opposition to military conquest in the scene with the book contrasts sharply with Miguel de Estete's friar, who "practically runs" to Pizarro demanding that Pizarro not expect him to waste more of his breath on "that arrogant dog."

In Garcilaso's version, even Atahualpa's initial response to the friar's approach in Cajamarca square displays the same deferentiality that was attributed his earlier reception of the Spanish embassy: "We say that when the father Fray Vicente arrived to speak to the Inca, the Inca greatly admired the appearance of the Dominican friar."<sup>38</sup> Garcilaso represents Atahualpa as admiring not the friar's looks but his distinctive religious garb—his habit, small cross, tonsure, and beard. By imputing to Atahualpa great respect for the emblematic representation of Spanish Catholicism in the friar's dress, Garcilaso attempts to undermine the usual Spanish justification for the military attack on Atahualpa: his refusal to accept the Requirement (and Hispanic Catholicism).

The emblematic representations of Spanish Catholicism in Garcilaso's version also extend to the symbols the friar was holding: "a small cross and a book that was Silvestre's *Summa*." But Garcilaso goes beyond merely mentioning his version of the title of the text Fray Valverde carried in pointing out the contradictions among historians: "Others say that it was the breviary, yet others, the Bible. Let each one choose what pleases him most." Garcilaso's own choice is the popular sixteenth-century edition of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles* by Italian Friar Francisco Sylvestre of Ferrara (1474–1528). The *Summa contra gentiles*, an account of the Christian faith written between 1259 and 1274, had been designed to persuade Moslems to convert to Catholicism. The book Garcilaso chose thus carried the message of his account of the incident: persuasion by

36. This theme appears in Las Casas even earlier than his critique of language. See *Del único modo de atraer a los pueblos a la verdadera religión* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1942). Although the text (thought to have been composed circa 1537) was not published until the twentieth century, Las Casas expounded its ideas frequently. See Agustín Millares Carlo, "Advertencia," vii; and Lewis Hanke, "Introducción," xxxiii.

37. "Decimos que cuando el P. fray Vicente llegó a hablar al Inca, el Inca se admiró grandemente de ver la forma del fraile dominicano, de la barba y corona raído como la truyen los religiosos, y del hábito largo, y de la cruz de palma, que en las manos llevaba, y un libro que era la suma de Silvestre: otros dicen que la Biblia; tome cada uno lo que más le agradare" (emphasis added). See BAE 143:46.

38. Garcilaso criticizes Fray Valverde only for the way he delivered the requirement: "seca y muy áspera, sin ningún jugo de blandura, ni otro gusto alguno" ("dryly and very gruffly, without any gentleness or other refinement"), BAE 143:48. Even here, however, Garcilaso attributes this criticism to other Spaniards, thus avoiding directly criticizing the Spaniards himself.

peaceful means, mainly rhetoric and reason, as to the superiority of the Catholic religion. Garcilaso's comment that each one may decide which book Friar Valverde carried in his hand solely on the basis of personal pleasure (*agrado*) not only invalidates the judgment of other historians but effectively undermines any possibility of certain knowledge of the book, including Garcilaso's own. In a larger sense, however, it does not matter which text was carried because all were part of the latent text of Roman Catholicism that provided the ideological rationale for conquest. Garcilaso picked the title that illustrated the version he was trying to tell: the classic religious critique of military conquest arguing for the use of rhetoric and reason to persuade the Indians of the superiority of Spaniards and their Catholicism.

While Garcilaso attempted to raise the issue of translation to exculpate Spaniards and Indians alike for the events at Cajamarca, his attempt to deflect blame resolved itself into an affirmation of the inferiority of Indian civilization and its language. Had he stuck to the issue of translation, Garcilaso would have faced the more pressing issues of the legitimacy of conflicting claims to sovereignty over Peru. If all that happened was miscommunication, then clear translation would have eliminated all the difficulties. But would it? Readers would still be faced with the conflicting claims of two religions, two political systems, and two cultures. Even if clear communication had occurred, on what grounds is the legitimacy of political, religious, and cultural supremacy to be debated—Christian or Inca? Garcilaso adopted the position of Las Casas and in doing so accepted Spanish supremacy. For all Garcilaso's protestations of his Inca (but not Indian) heritage, his social prejudices and choice of inspirational source reveal him to have been writing within the mainstream of Spanish narratives. Unlike the Inca descendant Guaman Poma de Ayala, Garcilaso offered no real resistance.

Perhaps the most charming (and probably apocryphal) account of Atahualpa's reaction to the printed book is that offered by Guaman Poma in his *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (1615). Like the other native accounts, his narrative begins with scenes of Atahualpa's hospitality to the Spaniards as he offers silver, gold, rotating servants (*mitayos*), women, and *camaricos* (work obligations). Although Garcilaso characterized gift-giving as deferential behavior toward a superior Spanish civilization and Titu Cusi portrayed it as ordinary Inca conduct toward strangers, Guaman Poma described the Inca's gifts as a bribe intended to persuade the Spaniards to leave Peru.<sup>39</sup> Such gifts would have conveyed neither deference

39. Guaman Poma de Ayala states, "Le dixo que le daría [a Pizarro y Almagro] much oro y plata para que se bolbiesen." See his *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (originally published in 1615), in the Spanish edition edited by Rolena Adorno and John Murra (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1980), 353. See also the excellent critical study of Guaman Poma by Rolena Adorno.

nor graciousness but a demand for concession, conduct befitting the ruler of the land.

In Guaman Poma's version of the encounter at Cajamarca, Atahualpa continues to play the role of ruler by issuing a challenge to the friar's authority for having asserted that Atahualpa's gods were frauds and his God the true one: "Fray Vicente responded that his gospel, his book, had told him. And Atahualpa said: 'Give me the book so that it may speak to me.' And so he gave it to him, and he [Atahualpa] took it in his hands and began to flip through the leaves of the book. And the Inca said 'What? How is it that it does not tell me? It does not even talk to me, that book!' Speaking with great majesty, seated on his throne, the Inca Atahualpa flung the book from his hands."<sup>40</sup>

Guaman Poma's portrait of Atahualpa displays all the recognizable attributes of a European prince: he sits on a throne, speaks with majesty, commands the friar to hand him the book, and then throws away the object when it fails to live up to the expectations created by its presenter. This portrait contrasts sharply with Jerez's portrayal of a seated Pizarro waiting for the inferior Indian commander to approach him and also with Garcilaso's equally improbable deferential king of the Incas. By presenting Atahualpa's behavior as the recognizable imperiousness of a European monarch, Guaman Poma endowed Atahualpa with trappings of kingship understandable to a European readership.

In Guaman Poma's account of Atahualpa's reaction to the book, the Inca demonstrates the curiosity about writing and written texts that Francisco de Jerez expected of all Indians. In creating a narrative that affirms half of what Jerez declared to be nothing more than the proper response of indigenous peoples, Guaman manages to effectively subvert the more important other half of Jerez's assumption (of the immediate and obvious superiority of writing) by having Atahualpa express the sarcastic disdain of an oral people for what Titu Cusi called "white cloths,"<sup>41</sup> (the sixteenth-century equivalent of green vibrating crystals carried by Martians as evidence of the obvious superiority of their culture). Atahualpa is

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no, *Writing and Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). According to Guillermo Ludeña de la Vega, *camaricos* are work obligations or orders. See *Vocabulario y quechua utilizado por el cronista indio Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala* (Lima: Perúgraph Editores, 1982).

40. Poma de Ayala, *Nueva crónica*, 357. Sabine MacCormack maintains that Francisco Gómara was the first to suggest that Atahualpa held the book to his ear, expecting the book to speak. See MacCormack, "Atahualpa y el libro," *Revista de Indias* 68 (1988):693-711. Whether Guaman Poma borrowed from Gómara, or the story was an orally communicated native legend that both Gómara and Guaman Poma had heard, or both authors derived it independently from native sources is less important than the cultural interpretation that Guaman Poma provides. MacCormack, however, classifies Guaman Poma and Garcilaso as "Andean" authors rather than as situated ambiguously between Spanish and Quechua traditions.

41. Titu Cusi, *Relación de la conquista*, 15. Guaman Poma himself satirized the act of reading as crazy people talking to inanimate objects: "Y que de día y noche hablan cada uno con sus papeles, *quilca*." See Guaman Poma, *Nueva crónica*, 353.

outraged at discovering a deception: "it does not tell me. . . . It does not even speak!" His reaction results not in the awe depicted by European narratives of similar scenes in other regions but in rejection: "Speaking with great majesty, seated on his throne, the Inca flung the book from his hands."

Guaman Poma challenged not the Spaniards' belief in the transparency of language (as did Garcilaso de la Vega and Las Casas) but their more significant confidence in the transparency of culture. By pointing to the essential incomprehensibility of a traditional European symbol of cultural authority, Guaman Poma issued a more profound challenge to European rationalizations of conquest. In undermining the assumptions about the transparent superiority of Spanish writing, he challenged their aspirations for transparent and therefore universal grounds for cultural superiority, the ultimate basis for the perceived right to dominate the other peoples of the world. While Guaman Poma apparently came to admire the achievements of writing,<sup>42</sup> he challenged not merely the imperialism of the spoken word in the performance of the Requirement (as did Las Casas) but condemned both its symbolic form (the book) and its content asserting the imperialism of the Western text in the perceived right of Christianity to extend itself over all the world.

## CONCLUSION

Michel de Certeau has said of historical narratives, "Contrary to all scientific tradition which postulates an autonomy of discourse in relation to its producer's position," the author's "social credentials play a decisive role in the definition of the discourse's status."<sup>43</sup> In sixteenth-century Spanish historical narratives, this invocation of the author's social position demanded asserting aristocratic status or privileged political standing. The "eyewitness" authority invoked by Francisco de Jerez (the written account of someone who was there) was buttressed by his social and political position as notary to Pizarro. For native writers who could not claim high Spanish status, the main source of authority is the analogous position of being kin to ruling Indian elites. Such kinship was claimed by Titu Cusi Yupanqui as the Spaniards' heir designate to "my uncle Atahualpa." Garcilaso de la Vega claimed kinship via maternal connections to Inca nobility ("my mother's uncle"), while underlining his status as only half-Indian. Similarly, Guaman Poma insisted on the political importance of the defeated native dynasty to which his family belonged. Differences

42. *Nueva crónica*, 8, 60. For a skeptical interpretation of these pages, see Rolena Adorno, "The Language of History in Guaman Poma's *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno*," in Adorno, *From Oral to Written Expression*, 132.

43. Certeau, *Heterologies*, 32.



in narrative authority further separate European and native accounts. Europeans claim the criterion of European narrative realism—the superiority of “eyewitness” claims to truth—while native accounts claim kinship with defeated native lords in order to privilege orally communicated knowledge and thus invoke the Western belief in the greater authenticity of speech in attempting to counter the equally European tradition of visual witnessing as evidence of the reliability of texts.

Whether Atahualpa’s gesture with the book was a deliberate “throwing” or “flinging” or an accidental “falling” depends on the kind of story the narrator wished to tell. If the story was to be one of unbridled Inca arrogance or revenge for a similar offense, the book was “thrown.” If the story was one of native dismissal, the book was “flung.” But if the story was one of simple miscommunication, the book accidentally “fell.” Attempting to determine what really happened to the book on the basis of mere consensus among existing accounts (the approach of historical realism) simply confuses mere repetition (the frequency with which a particular version is told) with truth. Rather, it was the kind of story about the other that the narrator wished to tell that determined how the book left the friar’s hands and landed on the ground of Cajamarca Plaza.

To narrate such a story, the crucial beginning of the book scene must be found elsewhere. In Jerez’s account, the narrative begins with military strategy; in Titu Cusi, with the earlier provocation of spilling the sacred chicha; in Guaman Poma, with the dignity and majesty of the Inca himself; and in Garcilaso, with Atahualpa’s deference toward the obviously superior Spanish social order. Given such divergent sources of narrative authority and choices of beginning, it is no wonder that the kinds of stories these narrators related vary widely.

Jerez exuberantly celebrated the conquest in a tone characteristic of the early years, marking his narrative by military signals. Secure in his belief in the superiority of Spanish military prowess, he narrated a familiar Western story of how colonial peoples merely respond to the conqueror’s directions, lacking initiative and ambitions of their own. But when the subject shifts from military to cultural ascendancy, Jerez’s self-assurance faltered. The Spaniard was unable to contain his irritation at the Inca’s failure to marvel, his refusal to recognize a classic emblem of Western cultural supremacy, its possession of writing. This reaction frustrated Jerez’s beliefs in Spanish culture’s claims to universality.

While Garcilaso de la Vega adopted the major Spanish counter-discourse criticizing militaristic conquest, his distinctive gloss on this familiar critique merely elaborated the problem of translating Spanish domination. Like Jerez’s account, it supported the legitimacy of the conquest. In effect, the religious critique usually identified with Las Casas merely shifted the emphasis on the domain of Spanish superiority from military prowess to cultural achievement. Like Las Casas, Garcilaso fa-

vored peaceful domination through better translation. Neither Garcilaso nor Jerez challenged the essential message of Spanish domination, disagreeing only about the method by which it should be transmitted. In contrast, both Titu Cusi Yupanqui and Guaman Poma de Ayala challenged a key element of the Spaniards' conviction of their cultural supremacy, their possession of written texts.

Titu Cusi's account did not so much criticize this belief in the superiority of writing as undermine it. By comparing the written text as a sacred object to chicha, an Indian sacred object, Titu Cusi asserted the equivalence of writing and chicha in cultural terms that are mutually exclusive because there are no grounds beyond the similarity of sacred objects that allow one conception of the sacred to criticize the other. Like Titu Cusi Yupanqui, Guaman Poma undermined the assumption of Spanish superiority by suggesting that the demonstrable achievements of writing and printing were by no means obvious.

Thus the critique of Spanish conquest has not been limited to the well-known censures of military methods developed by Las Casas. Only one of the non-Spanish authors, Garcilaso de la Vega, adopts this perspective. As a mestizo, he was the most thoroughly Hispanicized of all and the only native who composed virtually his entire narrative in Spanish. Although the writings of Las Casas and Garcilaso have been accepted as part of the Hispanic literary canon, the most cogent critiques of the Spanish conquest came not from their quasi-official counterdiscourse but from the conquered. This source suggests that the greatest potential for cultural critique lies with those who are involuntarily subject to it.

Only by juxtaposing the canonical texts of the conquerors with those of the conquered can the implicit cultural limitations of the dominant be revealed.<sup>44</sup> The narratives of Titu Cusi Yupanqui and Guaman Poma de Ayala (which the Spanish colonial authorities never allowed to be printed and were published only in the twentieth century) provide the most radical critiques of this position. In rejecting the transparency of the conventional ideas about Spanish cultural superiority, both narrators refused to allow the conquerors to continue their comfortable self-deception that their system of beliefs was either transparently or universally superior. Had the Inca writers been accepted as part of the Spanish literary canon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, their texts

44. Dreyfus and Rabinow define these cultural limitations on discourse as "the system of rules that govern what sort of talk . . . can in a given period be taken seriously." See Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 66. Dominick LaCapra has argued that sticking to canonical literature is sufficient provided that one reads it critically. Such a limitation, however, forces the exclusion of critical discourses that lie outside the canon, with the result being that the objections of women, blacks, natives, and those involuntarily subject to colonial powers are effectively eliminated. See LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 113

would have undermined the grounds on which the cultural authority of Spanish conquest rested: religion and writing. While religion was too powerful to be challenged openly in the heyday of the Spanish Inquisition, Titu Cusi Yupanqui and Guaman Poma de Ayala could challenge belief in the supremacy of writing and thus frustrate the ethnocentric expectations of this sixteenth-century "writing lesson."

Textual imperialism as exemplified in this article is thus fundamentally cultural: the belief in the superiority of writing over speaking, and of Christian religion over Inca beliefs. Built into these convictions of Spanish superiority and their symbolic manifestations was a deeply rooted need to believe in their transparency to other (inferior) cultures as symbols of cultural authority, the expectation so intensely frustrated by Atahualpa's failure to marvel.

The general expectation of European writers that nonliterate peoples would be humbled by being confronted with writing most likely grew out the European experience itself. Contrary to the view of Sepúlveda or even Lévi-Strauss, the possession of literacy does not distinguish civilized beings from barbarians (or modern "primitives"), but it did differentiate European ruling elites from their nonliterate countrymen. Marveling was the response literate European elites expected from nonliterate peoples well-acquainted with the belief in the marvelous supremacy of alphabetic writing.<sup>45</sup> Its becoming the symbolic manifestation of the European ruling classes' hegemony created the expectation of "marveling" as the appropriate response from all social inferiors. Of these, American natives were, in the sixteenth century, simply the latest.

45. For specific examples of how this belief in the cultural superiority of writing functioned in medieval Europe, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).