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CUZCO, *URBS ET ORBIS*: ROME AND  
GARCILASO DE LA VEGA'S SELF-  
CLASSICALIZATION

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**ABSTRACT** This article foregrounds the crucial importance of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's reading of the Classical tradition in the construction of the historiographic, philosophical, and epistemological categories deployed in his work as translator and chronicler. The first section examines El Inca's stylistic and conceptual appropriation of Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'amore*, and the application of Ebreo's Neoplatonic syncretism to a metaphysical identification between Cuzco and ancient Rome. The second section situates Garcilaso's own fascination with Julius Caesar within a literary and literal genealogy of soldiers/writers that begins with the Roman and finishes with El Inca. By using the Classics as a starting point to understand Garcilaso's negotiation of Greco-Roman, Jewish, Renaissance, Andean, Christian, and broader transatlantic categories, this essay demonstrates how El Inca both propounded and sought to embody a *mestizaje* far more complex than the Spanish/Indigenous duality through which he is often understood.

*Preliminaries*

Even though scholars have generally recognized the importance of the Greco-Roman tradition in the work of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, only in the last two decades has the relevance of this connection become particularly prominent. The results of recent analyses have made manifest that Garcilaso's interest in the Classics was never merely erudite or referential—that

indeed his interest in the Classical tradition must be regarded as a key element of El Inca's efforts to incorporate a compelling image of the Incan civilization into extant narratives of the transatlantic world. The recognition of the textual conjunction of ancient and New World narratives in the work of Garcilaso imposes, however, a further critical task: that of reflecting upon the selective use of the Classics in El Inca's historiographic project. Fully aware of the cultural capital that the Classical tradition could provide to this project, Garcilaso deploys a strategic instrumentalization of the Greco-Roman legacy that takes on very different conceptual, rhetorical, and philosophical levels. In this paper, I intend to address the nuances of this instrumentalization by exploring two different yet intimately related tactics of appropriation of the Classical tradition in the work of Garcilaso. The first leads us to Rome via the philosophical lucubrations of the Neoplatonist Leone Ebreo; the second, by way of a rhetorical genealogy, to the authorial persona of Julius Caesar.

Let us say two words about these textual nodes. Firstly, just as the Classicism of El Inca has gained more critical attention in recent years, so too has the role of his translation of Leone Ebreo's Neoplatonic dialogue, the *Dialoghi d'amore*, in the consolidation of Garcilaso's own historiographic masterpiece, the *Comentarios reales*. The connections between these two authors, however, tend to be defined in generic conceptual terms, even though the concrete textual strategies through which Garcilaso's writing metabolizes Ebreo's philosophical apparatus are constitutive of his literary style and epistemological perspective. In order to critically substantiate the relationship between Garcilaso and Ebreo, the first part of this essay advances a series of close readings of passages from El Inca's corpus, aiming to identify specific textual symptoms of his reading, translation, and strategic appropriation of the *Dialoghi's* philosophical and stylistic apparatus. I am especially interested in foregrounding the interaction Garcilaso creates between Neoplatonism and the political and rhetorical value of ancient Rome in his characterization of the city of Cuzco.

The second section of this essay focuses on a more rhetorical Classicism: Garcilaso's self-identification with the Roman general and historian Julius Caesar. This connection has also been largely debated. Allured by the lexical coincidence between the titles, *Comentarios reales* and *Commentarii rerum gestarum*, and intrigued by the multiple references Garcilaso makes to Caesar, scholars have for a long time interrogated the relationship between both works. Indeed, this association became something of a commonplace in the

scholarship devoted to Garcilaso. Recent works, however, minimize and even emphatically reject any significant linkages between the Roman and El Inca. I will contend, however, that the Julius Caesar trope does become highly relevant when understood within the project of the “Romanization” of the city of Cuzco—especially in terms of the role Garcilaso assigns for himself within this project. To this end, I explore a concrete genealogy through which El Inca relates himself to Julius Caesar, proposing that Garcilaso imagines the Roman as a quasi-ancestor of a lineage of soldiers/writers—one that crystallizes its dual potential in his own authorial role as chronicler of the Incas.

I argue, in sum, that the various Classical tropes interwoven in Garcilaso’s writing ultimately serve the purpose of defining Garcilaso’s own role as an epistemological agent and lens through which those connections are validated. By focusing on this literary process, which I call authorial self-classicalization, I seek to supply further evidence of the necessity of disentangling Garcilaso’s narrative persona from the Spanish/Indigenous duality that is often used to define the author, in favor of a far more complex form of *mestizaje*.

### *Cuzco, Urbs et Orbis*

Let us begin by briefly outlining the contents of Leone Ebreo’s *Dialoghi d’amore* (1501–1502).<sup>1</sup> A prominent instantiation of the tradition of philosophical dialogues which became widely popular during the Renaissance, the *Dialoghi* is composed of three dialogues which address the meaning, origin, characteristics, functions, and consequences of love. Following the protocols of allegorical writing, Ebreo splits the word “philosophy” in order to create the two dialogists of his treatise: Filone (“Philo,” love) and Sofia (“Sophia,” wisdom). Over the course of three dialogues in which Filone insists on his unrequited love for Sofia, the two characters take the subject of love as the point of departure for an exploration of a series of philosophical topics as varied as the relationship between human anatomy and the organization of the universe, the different mechanisms and processes of the acquisition of knowledge, the relationship between the Old Testament and Classical philos-

1. See Carmen Bernard’s *Un Inca platonicien* for a detailed report of the *peripeteias* of Leone Ebreo and his *Dialoghi d’amore* in connection with El Inca’s own personal and authorial vicissitudes.

ophy (in particular, the links between Moses and Plato), the different ways to interpret a text, and even the possibility of recovering the narratives of ancient Greek and Roman mythology as philosophical allegories.

The most prominent feature of Ebreo's *Dialoghi* is the associative impetus that allows the text to coordinate the most diverse discourses and motifs available in his time. The treatise manages to artfully synthesize the subjects of its Platonic ancestors, the *Symposium* (where Socrates and his Athenian friends debate the nature of love) and the *Timaeus* (in which Plato voices his theories on the creation and constitution of the Universe). Furthermore, the *Dialoghi* advances this synthesis by inflecting its thematic diversity through intellectual paradigms taken from multiple traditions—to wit, Classical, Renaissance, Jewish, Islamic, and Christian codes. The Classical *Symposium*, in this sense, not only constitutes a thematic antecedent of the *Dialoghi*, but also a rhetorical model: while in the majority of Platonic dialogues a predominant voice—usually Socrates's—defines the rhythm of the conversation, the *Symposium* is constructed as a series of relatively long interventions in which several participants, including Socrates, advance particular arguments in very distinct styles. This stylistic polyphony becomes discursive in the *Dialoghi*, in which human physiology and the origin of planets, the Kabala and the Hermetic tradition, and Moses and Averroes all become the various accents through which the treatise's main subject is analyzed and discussed. The *Dialoghi* thus enables an epistemological orchestration of material, intellectual, and historical differences through the agency of the unifying and transcendental principle of love. Through this conceptual and cultural weaving Ebreo manages to efficiently narrativize very dense matters of Classical and Renaissance philosophies. Hence the wide dissemination of his dialogue, attested to by the numerous reprints of the book and the various translations in Latin and Romance languages that followed its first appearance in Italian.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that Ebreo left a profound imprint on his attentive translator, El Inca. Garcilaso's fondness for Ebreo, however, was for a long time a puzzle for literary critics, who tried to solve the question of El Inca's Spanish rendering of the *Dialoghi* by deeming it a mere "preparatory exer-

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2. In the most recent English translation of the *Dialoghi* (*Dialogues of Love*, 2009), Rosella Pescatori reports that "between 1541 and 1607 it was republished no less than twenty-four times, and between 1551 and 1660 it was translated into French, Latin, Spanish, and Hebrew" (3).

cise,” so that even as late as 1982 Enrique Pupo-Walker could declare that “a pesar de la vigencia que el pensamiento neoplatónico alcanzó en el siglo XVI, no sabemos a punto fijo las razones que tuvo el Inca para adentrarse en la traducción de una obra repleta de sutilezas conceptuales” (18). Yet in the same book, Pupo-Walker observes that Garcilaso’s existence had been marked by processes of (linguistic and cultural) translation from the beginning of his life. He adds, “[a]demás, la fundamentación filosófica de los *Diálogos* se avenía sutilmente a la visión integral de la historia que se iba gestando en la mente del Inca” (18). Progressively, critics began to notice that, far from simple professional calisthenics, the relationship between both authors could be fundamental to understanding Garcilaso’s historiographic project. Scholars would eventually conclude that Garcilaso closely emulated the strategies of Ebreo in crafting his own depiction of the Incan empire as a highly evolved society which, despite its paganism, managed to effectively articulate a system of values fundamentally attuned to European Christian paradigms.<sup>3</sup>

The principal foible of these recent efforts is that while the relationship between Garcilaso and Ebreo has been conceptually mapped out, very little has been done to identify the particular textual strategies through which El Inca refracts the integrative philosophy of the *Dialoghi* in his own literary style. This refraction, however, is already manifest in the paratextual components of the translation (i.e., the sections not directly linked to Ebreo’s voice), starting with the title itself: *La traducción del Indio de los tres Diálogos de Amor de León Hebreo hecha de italiano en español por Garcilaso Inca de la Vega, Natural de la gran Ciudad del Cuzco, cabeza de los reinos y provincias*

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3. A brief history of this critical realization may be useful. Although in 1909 José de la Riva-Agüero had already surmised in Garcilaso’s writing “las huellas de sus propias lecturas neoplatónicas” (xlili), it was not until 1982 that Pupo-Walker suggested that Garcilaso’s work as textual translator could be read as an anticipation of his role as cultural translator. In 1986, D. A. Brading remarked that in Ebreo’s *Dialoghi* Garcilaso “found justification to interpret Inca [sic] myths and doctrines as an autonomous source of wisdom, derived from the Divine intelligence” (7). In 1988, Margarita Zamora recognized the formal and methodological importance of Ebreo’s treatise in Garcilaso’s work, but did not elaborate on that influence (50n37). In 1996, Doris Sommer devoted a full article to tracing the conceptual connections between both authors. Finally, in 2006, Bernard put together an entire book with the purpose of defining the linkages among Garcilaso’s historiographic project, the Neoplatonic speculations by Ebreo, and the works of late-16th-century Andalusian antiquarians (17). On the basis of these critical antecedents, Raquel Chang-Rodríguez could affirm, in 2010, that Garcilaso’s study of Ebreo played a crucial role in the composition of his *Comentarios reales* (11).

*del Pirú, Dirigidos a la Sacra Católica Real Majestad del Rey Don Felipe Nuestro Señor.*<sup>4</sup> Every single component of this title, and even the syntax, constitutes a marker of an intense process of intercultural negotiation. The self-designation “Indio” (which Garcilaso will use persistently throughout the *Comentarios* to refer to himself) is prominently placed at the beginning of the clause, not only anteceding the title of the text translated, but also the second, complete declaration of authorship, “Garcilaso Inca de la Vega,” in which the components of his Spanish name, “Garcilaso” and “de la Vega” are literally split to house, almost as an infix, the fundamental epithet of his intellectual persona: “Inca.” Further cultural allusions are located between “Indio” and “Inca”: the Jewish character predicated in the last name of Leone Ebreo, the Classical connotation of the philosophical category “Dialogue,” the language of the source text—Italian—and of the target—Spanish. The anachronism of the immediate reference to his *cuzqueño* origin is also functional in terms of this textual multiculturalism: fully aware that in the late 16th century it was Lima, the City of the Kings, that housed the administrative and political seat of the Viceroyalty of Peru, Garcilaso nevertheless describes his hometown as “cabeza de los reinos y provincias del Pirú,” a designation only fully accurate in a pre-Hispanic or Incan sense (a particularly important gesture because, as will be discussed later, the city of Cuzco plays a crucial role in Garcilaso’s articulation of cultural differences). Finally, in declaring the addressee of his translation, the “Sacred Catholic King Philip II of Spain,” Garcilaso concludes particularizing both the Catholic context of the publication and the political authority in which his translation is inscribed. In sum, in what is almost the realization of a wild fantasy of Neoplatonic syncretism, Garcilaso articulates a title that already refracts the integrative principles of Ebreo’s dialogues.

In addition to this complex self-characterization—which, as Doris Sommer reminds us, constitutes no less than the first textual instance in which Garcilaso tested his title of “Inca” (392)—the historiographic projects of the author are also explicitly announced in the preliminaries of the translation. In the dedication to don Maximiliano de Austria, Garcilaso refers to the *Historia de la Florida* he is composing, “que ya está escrita más que la cuarta

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4. The edition of Garcilaso’s translation used in this paper does not provide page numbers for the paratext (i.e., editorial protocols, dedications, prologue, etc.). However, since all these documents are rather brief, my citations can be easily located in the preliminary pages of the text.

parte de ella,” and describes his plans to visit a Spaniard who witnessed Hernando de Soto’s campaign in Florida (the main subject of that book). The same historiographic intention is declared in the address to the King, where Garcilaso alludes to his account of “la jornada que el adelantado Hernando de Soto hizo a la Florida, que hasta ahora está sepultada en las tinieblas del olvido.” But more relevant to our discussion is the language that Garcilaso uses to announce his plans of writing what would become his *Commentarios*:

Y con el mismo favor [el de Vuestra Majestad el Rey] pretendo pasar adelante a tratar sumariamente de la conquista de mi tierra, alargándome más en las costumbres, ritos y ceremonias de ellas, y en sus antiguallas, las cuales, como hijo propio, podré decir mejor que otro que no lo sea, para gloria y honra de Dios Nuestro Señor, que, por las entrañas de su misericordia, y por los méritos de la sangre y pasión de su unigénito Hijo, se apiadó de vernos en tanta miseria y ceguera y quiso comunicarnos la gracia de su Espíritu Santo, reduciéndonos a la luz y doctrina de su Iglesia Católica Romana, debajo del imperio y amparo de V.C.M.

Once again, Garcilaso is subtly imitating Ebreo’s accent, but this time in the prognosis of what would be his masterpiece. The strategy here consists of blending philosophical categories with politically conservative statements, in this case, by selectively phrasing the official reason that legally and theologically justified the Spanish invasion of the Americas. Since the issuing of the 1492 Capitulations of Santa Fe, signed by Christopher Columbus and the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II and Isabel, and the 1493 Papal Bull *Inter Caetera* of Pope Alexander VI, the Spanish occupation of American territories had been explained as the Christian effort to save the souls of the barbarous nations. Garcilaso, consequently, inscribes the assimilation of the Empire of the Incas within the narrative of the Christianization of the New World—a “reduction” that operates “a la luz y doctrina de [la] Iglesia Católica Romana.” Yet these tropes, while iterating theological conventions, acquire a significance that goes beyond their protocolar character when evaluated in the context of the Neoplatonic treatise Garcilaso is translating and prologuing. On the one hand, both the imagery of the Trinity and the consolidation of the salvation of the New World operate through the agency of one of the three sacred personae: the Holy Spirit, the dimension of God identified since the Middle Ages with his Divine Love—different from God’s



Divine Power and his Divine Wisdom.<sup>5</sup> Garcilaso, in other words, chooses for the dialogues of love precisely the personification of the Love of God to explain the Conquest project. On the other hand, the pagan blindness of the Incas, “tanta miseria y ceguera,” is opposed to the divine light, “luz y doctrina,” brought about by the Church. Though formulaic, both statements are also consistent with the philosophical reasoning of the *Dialoghi*, which very early on characterizes God as the “Infinite Clarity” that renders any kind of knowledge possible (30).<sup>6</sup> In fact, within his own translation, following the common editorial practice of adding to the text brief subtitles to organize the contents, Garcilaso annotates in this section that “[n]uestro entendimiento tiene necesidad de la luz divina para los actos virtuosos.” The divine illumination of the Love of God that Garcilaso invokes is not, in other words, simply a common trope: it is *also* an allusion to the language that pervades the entire treatise he is translating. The gesture allows Garcilaso to create, from the beginning, the possibility of merging official narratives of the conquest with the metaphysical diction of Ebreo. The epistemological illumination of the Empire of the Incas by the Divine Spirit of Love, the *sine qua non* condition for the access to the knowledge gained by the Native Americans and El Inca himself after the Spanish invasion, is thus compatible with the Neoplatonic theorization of love expounded in the *Dialoghi*, which Garcilaso translates and, as a token from a new vassal, offers to the Spanish monarch.

Among these rhetorical and textual maneuvers, there is one that deserves special attention: Garcilaso’s announcement of his intimate knowledge of the Incan cultural practices, “las cuales, como hijo propio, podré decir mejor que otro que no lo sea.” The language used in this declaration constitutes an abbreviated yet precise rendering of the narrative positioning with which, several years later, Garcilaso will introduce his masterpiece, the *Comentarios reales*. The textual similarities between both declarations are remarkable:

Aunque ha habido españoles curiosos que han escrito las repúblicas del Nuevo Mundo, como la de México y la de Perú y las de otros reinos de aquella gentilidad, no ha sido con la relación entera que dellos se pudiera

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5. A well-known instance of the identification of Love with the Holy Spirit, as well as “Power” with the Father and “Wisdom” with the Son, appears on the ledge of the doors of Hell in Dante’s *Inferno*: “Giustizia mosse il mio fattore; / fecemi la divina *podestate*, / la somma *sapienza* e ’l primo *amore*” (3.4–6; my emphasis).

6. Citations from Ebreo come from Garcilaso’s translation.

dar, que lo he notado particularmente en las cosas que del Perú he visto escritas; de las cuales, como natural de la ciudad del Cuzco, que fue otra Roma en aquel Imperio, tengo más larga y clara noticia que la que hasta ahora los escritores han dado. (4)

Taken from the very first lines of the *Comentarios*'s "Proemio al lector," and closely echoing the declaration given in the *Dialoghi*, Garcilaso's authority is once again grounded in an epistemological superiority linked to his indigenous origins. And as in the fragments cited previously, the lexical and syntactical choices of this excerpt also provide an outstanding example of the complexities of Garcilaso's style. First is the designation with which he refers to his antecedents: "españoles curiosos," a peculiar clause not because of the adjective "curioso" (which Garcilaso uses in the older Spanish sense of diligent, laborious, or careful in the execution of a certain task ["Curioso"]), but because of the demonym "Spaniards," which conveys, in an indexical, distancing gesture, that the narrator is not a Spaniard. This self-attributed alterity distinctly introduces Garcilaso's concern for the limitations of a historiography that, although extant, "no ha sido con la relación entera que [de esas repúblicas] se pudiera dar." In his English translation of the *Comentarios*, Harold Livermore renders this clause "*they* [the Spaniards] have not described these realms so fully as *they might have done*" (4, emphasis added), but in reality Garcilaso neither uses an active voice nor concedes this potentiality to the Spanish authors. What he actually says is that previous historiography "has not been done with the entire account that could be given of those states." In full opposition to what Livermore's active voice admits, Garcilaso implies that former Spanish chroniclers could not have been capable of giving such a complete account because, as opposed to him, they were not "native[s] of the city of Cuzco"; in other words, they lacked direct access to the culture they were trying to describe. The syntax of *El Inca* is artful and effective: the initial otherness, implicit in the reference to those "curiosos españoles," announces and leads to his subsequent identification with the city of Cuzco, which now renders Garcilaso's alterity (with respect to the Spaniards) explicit and fully defined. By setting his authorial voice in contradistinction to previous Spanish writers, by crystallizing it in relation to Cuzco, Garcilaso devises from the very first words of his *Comentarios* a notion of distinct native authenticity which, on account of its epistemological advantages, becomes a fundamental justification of his version of Incan his-

tory. Hence his forceful conclusion: “[T]engo más larga y clara noticia que la que hasta ahora los escritores han dado.”

Given that this “clara noticia” (a clarity, as we have seen, philosophically conditioned by the Neoplatonic notion of Divine Light) depends critically on Garcilaso’s indigenous condition, the invocation of a comparison as exogenous as the city of Rome—“Cuzco, que fue otra Roma en aquel Imperio”—and precisely in the very midst of the declaration of his exceptional authority, appears an intriguing and even provocative gesture. That may explain the plethora of attempts to interpret this sudden allusion to Rome—which is, in fact, one of the most commonly cited sections of Garcilaso’s work. Some critics highlight the parallels between Roman and Incan history that the reference enables. Claire and Jean-Marie Pailler call it “la référence essentielle,” for it creates the rhetorical base of the subsequent, numerous analogies between the Old and the New Worlds (221); while both Ralph Bauer (217) and Roberto González Echevarría (545) remark that the Rome clause allows Garcilaso to portray the Incan Empire along the lines of the religious transformation that took place in Europe, insofar as Incan paganism, like the Roman or Greek versions in the Old World, paved the way for the arrival of Christianity in the Americas. Other critics have instead commented on the role of this analogy as functional for Garcilaso’s self-definition as authoritative chronicler of the New World. For Nicolás Wey-Gómez, for instance, Garcilaso’s pagan origins render him a witness of the pre-Hispanic history of the Americas (15); whereas, for the Paillers, “en pérennisant par l’écrit cette histoire péruvienne, comme les historiens gréco-romains l’avaient réalisé en leur temps, l’Inca se montre l’égal des plus grands écrivains de l’Antiquité” (232).

All of these conclusions assume that the parallelism between Rome and Cuzco operates primarily as a rhetorical strategy aimed at more persuasively engaging with the general reader (primarily a European one) at whom the *Comentarios* aims. And there is nothing fundamentally wrong with this assumption: in an intellectual community in which the Classics constituted one of the primary foundations of literate knowledge (along with the Biblical and the Patristic traditions), Garcilaso knew that the allusion to Rome, the most prominent site of cultural production for the European imagination, would produce an important effect on his audience. At the same time, however, the Neoplatonic philosophical substratum of Garcilaso’s writing enables a relationship between Rome and Cuzco that goes beyond the parallelism’s rhetorical value, or that complements it—a subtler meaning which would

nevertheless be very significant for a specialized readership. The locution through which Garcilaso invokes Rome already hints at this alternative sense. Three times throughout the *Comentarios* El Inca repeats, almost verbatim, his invocation of Rome.<sup>7</sup> In none of these cases, however, does Garcilaso rely on mere simile—he does not say that “Cuzco fue *como* Roma en aquel Imperio”—but rather on an idea of otherness—“Cuzco fue *otra* Roma” (emphases added). He even shuns a comparison the conquistadors had often made between the city of Toledo and that of Cuzco (“También le llamaron la Nueva Toledo, mas luego se les cayó este segundo nombre, por la impropiedad de él”), to immediately reiterate his own trope: “[P]orque el Cuzco, en su Imperio, fue otra Roma en el suyo, y así se puede cotejar la una con la otra porque se asemejan en las cosas más generosas que tuvieron” (290).

“La una con la otra”: one more time, the diction of Garcilaso is tantalizing. Instead of the predominance of one city over the other, Garcilaso is clearly striving to even out the relationship between both imperial metropolises. In this context the Neoplatonic epistemology of the *Comentarios* emerges: the commensurable balance of Rome and Cuzco propounded through the triple iteration of the same clause can in fact be read not as a mimesis but rather, by way of a rhetorical mitosis, as a duplication of the imperial properties of the Roman Empire in the Americas. In other words, Rome operates as a Platonic *eideia* of Empire with historical variations in the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic: the city of Rome on the Italian peninsula is the European Rome; the city of Cuzco is, in turn, the American Rome. Instead of imagining the latter as an imitation of the former, or both as parallel phenomena in a purely rhetorical sense, Cuzco and Rome are both presented as equipollent materializations of an ideal of Empire. The non-Christian character of the Incan Empire, with its alleged anticipations of the Christian Evangelization, is in this way metabolized through its metaphysical equivalence with the most prestigious pre-Christian society for the European tradition. Thus, the derogatory sense of the term *gentiles*, used by El Inca to designate the “ancient republics of Mexico and Peru” and properly translated by Harold Livermore as “heathens,” also gives room to the more neutral sense of the word “pagans,” traditionally ascribed to the ancient Greeks and Romans. The corollary of this ascription is also relevant in negative terms, when con-

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7. These cases appear in the prologue “To the Reader” (4); at the beginning of section XX of the sixth book (248); and in section VIII of the seventh book (290).

sidering its implications for previous chronicles of the Conquest. As a result of this classicalization of Cuzco, Garcilaso is implicitly barbarizing the Spanish chroniclers, deeming them, precisely, βάρβαροι [bárbaroi], the foreign destroyers and storytellers of an empire that was not theirs.

The formula “other Rome,” therefore, presents itself as the rhetorical construct that signals from the outset the philosophical properties attributed to Cuzco. This gesture becomes crucial to understanding the description of the urban layout of the Incan city according to Garcilaso, as the section entitled “La ciudad contenía la descripción de todo el imperio” distinctly evinces:

Los Incas dividieron aquellos barrios conforme a las cuatro partes de su Imperio, que llamaron Tahuantinsuyu, y esto tuvo principio desde el primer Inca Manco Cápac, que dio orden que los salvajes que reducía a su servicio fuesen poblando conforme a los lugares de donde venían: los del oriente al oriente y los del poniente al poniente, y así los demás. . . . [Las casas estaban construidas con] tal orden y concierto que, bien mirados aquellos barrios y las casas de tantas y tan diversas naciones como en ellas vivían, se veía y comprendía todo el Imperio junto, como en el espejo o en una pintura de cosmografía. (293)

Garcilaso’s Neoplatonic fashioning of Cuzco could not be more blatant. At the beginning of Ebreo’s *Dialoghi*, Filone had explained to Sofia that “nuestro entendimiento es un espejo y ejemplo, o, por decir mejor, una imagen de las cosas reales” (18). Knowledge, in other words, is the reflection of reality. The synecdochic relationship between the city of Cuzco and the Incan Empire, where the former represents the latter “como en el espejo o en una pintura de cosmografía,” follows the same protocols almost verbatim: Cuzco constitutes the urban materialization of a transcendental epistemology. Cuzco, as Rome, operates under the protocols of *urbs et orbis*. The city reflects the world.

The Roman character that Garcilaso emphatically grants to the city of Cuzco must therefore be understood as *both* a philosophical and a tropological device in the imperial history he propounds. Well trained by his careful reading of Ebreo, Garcilaso consciously adopts the strategy of infusing Incan historicity with a transcendentalist character. The material aspects of Cuzco, far from being relegated to a secondary place with respect to its metaphysical properties, or at odds with them, become a powerful substantiation of the transcendental properties attributed to the city. Particularly symptomatic of

this latter point is the fact that Garcilaso not only made sure to be familiar with the accounts of Classical authorities on Rome, but also with the numerous sixteenth-century Renaissance descriptive records of Rome. These texts, which Garcilaso's critics have often overlooked, were very popular in his time. Indeed, between 1543 and 1604 no less than eight different authors (mostly Italian) had published, under the common title of *L'antichità di Roma* 'Antiquities of Rome' or variations of it, meticulous descriptions of how Imperial Rome had looked before its destruction, including precise numbers and names of mounts and rivers, streets and avenues, temples and public areas, bridges and columns, and even the obelisks and statues that once decorated the Eternal City.<sup>8</sup> Garcilaso owned at least two of these titles: Andrea Fulvio's *Delle antichità di la città di Roma* (1543) and another *antichità* which, given the generality of the title, has not been fully identified (Durand 256 n.122, 260 n.180; Migliorini et al. 167 n.180). The cataloguing nostalgia of these treatises, genuine verbal reconstructions of the Imperial City at its height, is by no means absent in Garcilaso, who invests a good deal of effort in his detailed accounts of Cuzco in the seventh book of the *Comentarios*. The key difference between Garcilaso's scrupulous reports and the *antichità* genre, however, is that the minuscule data El Inca provides depend on his personal memories of the city. Here are some examples:

Del cerro llamado Sacsahuaman descende un arroyo de poca agua, y corre norte sur hasta el postrer barrio, llamado Pumapchupan. Va dividiendo la ciudad de los arrabales. Más adentro de la ciudad hay una calle que ahora llaman la de San Agustín . . .

En mis tiempos vivían en aquel sitio, descendiendo de lo alto de la calle, Rodrigo de Pineda, Juan de Saavedra, Diego Ortiz de Guzmán, Pedro de los Ríos y su hermano Diego de los Ríos . . .

Volviendo a lo alto de la calle de San Agustín, para entrar más adentro en la ciudad, decimos que en lo alto de ella está el convento de Santa Clara; aquellas casas fueron primero de Alonso Díaz, yerno del gobernador Pedro Arias de Ávila; a mano derecha del convento hay muchas casas de españoles

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8. In order of published appearance, the authors of 16th-century *antichità* to which Garcilaso could have had access were Andrea Fulvio (1543), Giovanni Marliani (1548), Pirro Ligorio (1553), Andrea Palladio (1565), Sebastiano Serlio (1566), Etienne du Pérac (1575), Vincenzo Scamozzi (1583), and Girolamo Franzini (1588).

A las espaldas de las tiendas principales están las casas que fueron de Diego Maldonado, llamado el Rico, porque lo fue más que otro alguno de los de Perú: fue de los primeros conquistadores. (294–95)

While the *antichità* describe Rome with respect to buildings, objects, and geographical features, Garcilaso tends to reconstruct the city of Cuzco on the basis of its demographics. Yet the strategy is the same: an almost obsessive attention to the particular details of both cities, as though both the *antichità* and the *Comentarios* intended to recreate their cities through diligent and precise archival displays. Certainly, more than one reader could have distinctly recognized the echoes of the Italian *antichità di Roma* in the exhaustive enumerations of specific houses and neighbors living in Cuzco that Garcilaso provides when evoking his early years in the city. El Inca thus recreates his own personal *antichità* of Cuzco—his “antiguallas,” as he had tellingly called the history of the Incas in the *Dialoghi*’s address to the King.

Let us summarize the trajectory that we have followed so far. Through the examination of the textual strategies of key passages in Garcilaso’s writing, we have discussed, sequentially: the features of Ebreo’s Neoplatonism; the larger historiographic project that Garcilaso announces in the introduction of his translation; the relationship between Cuzco and Rome; the metaphysical attributes of the Imperial City; and the material substantiation of “Neoplatonic Cuzco,” modeled on the *antichità di Roma* genre and based on the author’s own memories. I would like to highlight the analytical structure of this recapitulation—from a large philosophical lucubration through its particular materialization in concrete cities and to the specific exercise of Garcilaso’s own memory—because this movement indicates the powerful interplay that, for the purpose of Garcilaso’s project, exists between his individual agency and the larger significance of Cuzco and the Incan Empire. These dynamics take us to a more intimate Classicalization, for just as Rome is instrumental to the representation of Cuzco, another Classical motif will supply Garcilaso with a model for his own individual role within the history of the Empire: the Roman politician, general, and historian Caius Julius Caesar, author of the *Comentarii rerum gestarum*.

### *The Caesarian Inca*

The connection drawn between Garcilaso and Julius Caesar, based primarily on the obvious similarities between the titles of El Inca’s *Comentarios* and

Caesar's *Comentarii*, is not new. In fact, this association is at the heart of a long debate on the difficult lexical sense of the title Garcilaso chooses for his treatise. In a recent article which reviews the various meanings attributed to each component of this title (to wit, *comentarios*, *reales*, and the complement *de los Incas*), José Antonio Rodríguez Garrido reminds us that the idea of the *Comentarii* as a model for the *Comentarios* has often been belittled and almost dismissed, since “[m]ás allá . . . del título, el cuidado estilístico y la importancia concedida a los elementos autobiográficos, no ha sido posible encontrar en la estructura y la organización de ambos textos mayores paralelos” (299). In effect, while Durand rejects the role of Classical paradigms in Garcilaso's writing to favor more contemporary models (Rodríguez Garrido 229), Margarita Zamora complains about the critics' disregard for the significance of the term “commentary” in the Renaissance—one which she considers associated primarily with the field of philology rather than that of history (53). Much more emphatically, Christian Fernández remarks that the connection Aurelio Miró Quesada and Carlos Daniel Valcárcel once proposed between Garcilaso's and Julius Caesar's treatises “no está basada en un análisis textual de la retórica o el estilo en ambas obras sino en una lectura superficial, en las meras menciones y en la expresada y abierta admiración que en sus obras hizo el Inca hacia la obra y figura del historiador romano” (26).

The common gesture of these critical interpretations is to understand the connection between Garcilaso's *Comentarios* and Julius Caesar's *Comentarii* in terms of literary genres. In this light the comparison becomes easily refutable, because the perspective, textual composition, and thematic structure of both texts present fundamental differences: one is the victorious account of a conquest reported by the conqueror himself almost at the same time of his achievements; the other is the tragic history, narrated retrospectively, of an empire whose grandiosity was destroyed by stronger forces.<sup>9</sup> I would like to argue, however, that these problems in relating the *Comentarios* with the *Comentarii* are the consequence of the point of comparison used to understand their relationship. If we evaluate their textual composition in terms of literary genres, the contrast is evident: there are too many differences to admit that Garcilaso is writing his *Comentarios* following the model of the

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9. See Raúl Marrero Fente (192–93) for an elaboration on the different narrative perspective of each text.



Latin *Comentarii*. A much more productive comparison occurs, however, if we relate the writers—Julius Caesar and Garcilaso—as authorial personae. As early as 1950, Rafael Martí-Abelló was already foregrounding the importance of this Classical paradigm in Garcilaso by citing the following fragment from *La Florida del Inca*:

[Yo] quisiera alcanzar juntamente la facundia historial del grandísimo César para gastar toda mi vida contando y celebrando [las] grandes hazañas [de los conquistadores españoles], que cuanto ellas han sido mayores que las de los griegos, romanos y otras naciones tanto más desdichados han sido los españoles en faltarles quien las escribiese, y no ha sido poca desventura la de estos caballeros que las suyas viniesen a manos de un indio. (Garcilaso, *Florida* 330; Martí-Abelló 104)

The identification that Garcilaso traces here between his own role narrating the conquest of Florida and Julius Caesar’s “facundia historial” is quite clear, in spite of the self-diminishing final line. But it becomes much more symptomatic when related to an often (unduly) ignored text written by El Inca, which he once intended to incorporate into his *Florida*: the genealogical study “Relación de la descendencia de Garci Pérez de Vargas.” In this document, Garcilaso traces his own ancestry to the ancient nobleman Garci Pérez de Vargas, about whom King Ferdinand III of Castile (“The Saint”) had written, and whose famous deeds were associated with the recuperation of Seville from the Moors in 1248. In reporting these events, Garcilaso quotes a popular Sevillian poem that commemorates the achievement:

Hércules me edificó,  
Julio César me cercó,  
De torres y cercas largas,  
El Rey Santo me ganó  
con Garci Pérez de Vargas. (232)

Garcilaso must have found this little poem particularly compelling, inasmuch as Garci Pérez de Vargas, the starting point of his own prestigious lineage, is associated through the *reconquista* of Seville not only with Ferdinand the Saint, but also with Hercules and Julius Caesar. Even more telling is the next reference to the Roman general: in commenting on the relatively contemporary erection of two statues of Hercules and Caesar in Seville, Gar-

cilaso designates the Roman with a peculiar adjective: “Julio César, mi aficionado” (232), that is to say, “the one for whom I feel predilection.” As one would guess from this opinion, Julius Caesar’s *Comentarii* was among the titles in Garcilaso’s personal library (Durand 245 n.25). The question is, then, why and how is Julius Caesar Garcilaso’s “aficionado”?

Garcilaso responds to this question in one of the three textual sites in which the parallelism between Cuzco and Rome is explicitly drawn (indeed, in the continuation of one of the fragments cited above):

[E]l Cuzco, en su Imperio, fue otra Roma en el suyo, y así se puede cotejar la una con la otra porque se asemejan en las cosas más generosas que tuvieron. La primera y principal, en haber sido fundadas por sus primeros Reyes . . . La cuarta, en los varones tantos y tan excelentes que engendraron y con su buena doctrina militar criaron. En los cuales hizo Roma ventaja al Cuzco, no por haberlos criado mejores, sino por haber sido más venturosa en haber alcanzado letras y eternizado con ellas a sus hijos, que los tuvo no menos ilustres por las ciencias que excelentes por las armas . . . y no sé cuáles de ellos hicieron más, si los de las armas o los de las plumas, que por ser estas facultades tan heroicas, corren lanzas, parejas, como se ve en el muchas veces grande Julio César, que las ejerció ambas con tantas ventajas que no se determina en cuál de ellas fue más grande. (290)

The strategic analytical movement described in our previous section, from the transcendental qualities of Cuzco to its materialization in Garcilaso’s memory, is replicated here in a subtle way. Through the enumerative substantiation of the equipollences between Rome and Cuzco, Garcilaso shifts from the parallelism of both cities to the parallelism of arms and writing, finally arriving at his own role within these dialectics. Three gestures articulate the process. First, Garcilaso diagnoses the crucial distinction between his city and Rome as the lack of writing in the former. Second, the figure of Caesar emerges as the outstanding paradigm of the synthesis of arms and letters. The third gesture is implicit, yet the most important: inasmuch as Garcilaso’s regret for the lack of writing in the Incan Empire is articulated *through his own writing*, he emerges, ironically, as the solution through which the difference between Cuzco and Rome finally vanishes. In this manner, Garcilaso’s identification with Caesar becomes instrumental to the consolidation of the parallelisms between Cuzco and Rome. The very chronicle in which the lack of writing is lamented is ultimately the evidence and reminder

that an Inca with the “facundia historial” of Caesar is finally fulfilling the long-desired transformation of memory into history through writing. In fact, Garcilaso will immediately proceed, in an oft-cited passage, to state his own role in the preservation of Incan history. Through a series of associative movements, Rome and Cuzco, and Caesar and Garcilaso himself, end up entangled in an intricate web of conceptual reflections and rhetorical reciprocities, all of them consolidated in the authorial persona of El Inca as a neoclassical amanuensis of the imperial legacy of the Incas.

This could explain why Garcilaso seems to prefer Julius Caesar to the noteworthy examples of the trope of soldier/writer that emerged from the Spanish invasion—in fact, reports as illustrious as those of Alonso de Ercilla and Hernán Cortés were already paradigmatic texts in the time of the composition of the *Comentarios*. But this does not mean that El Inca was not sensitive to the role of the soldier/writer trope in his own epoch. Garcilaso himself, in the address to the King of Spain included in his translation of the *Dialoghi*, had reminded Phillip II that “en mi juventud gasté en la milicia parte de mi vida en servicio de V.S.M. . . . [Es mi deseo] que el sacrificio que de todo el discurso de mi vida a V.R.M. ofrezco sea entero, así del tiempo como de lo que en él se ha hecho con la espada y con la pluma.” This latter locution, “con la espada y con la pluma,” is precisely the motto of El Inca’s coat of arms. Garcilaso clearly perceived this trope as belonging to his own cultural horizon, yet he was also concerned with projecting the contemporary value of the soldier/writer compound back to Classical antiquity, instrumental for his material and transcendental characterization of the Incan Empire.

In fact, the transversal historicity created through the connection between Garcilaso and the Incan Empire on the one hand, and Caesar and Rome on the other enables a suggestive reading of Garcilaso’s “Relación de la descendencia de Garci Pérez de Vargas”—one in which the soldier/writer trope plays a genealogical function. As mentioned above, the text begins by identifying Seville as the site where the mythic Hercules, the Roman Julius Caesar, King Ferdinand “The Saint,” and Garci Pérez de Vargas converge; this is also the moment when Garcilaso deems Caesar his “aficionado.” The core of this incipit is, however, Garcilaso’s panegyric to his ancestor, the great Garci Pérez de Vargas, “cuyas hazañas están escritas muy a la larga en la crónica del Rey Don Fernando” (232). This written materialization of Pérez de Vargas’s military prowess introduces a large and noble lineage that also includes great poets, such as Garci Sánchez de Badajoz—who, Garcilaso indicates, had poetically fought against those who preferred Italian metrics to the Spanish

meter, and was superior to Petrarch himself (233). More telling, however, is Garcilaso's reference to his illustrious homonym, the Toledan poet Garcilaso de la Vega, characterized, almost in a Quixotic fashion, as “espejo de caballeros y poetas, aquél que gastó su vida tan heroicamente como todo el mundo sabe, y como él mismo lo dize en sus obras. Tomando ora la espada, ora la pluma” (236). This “espejo de caballeros y poetas”—with the term *espejo* resonating with special intensity in the pages of a Neoplatonist—sets up a textual and specular pivot through which the deeds of Garcilaso himself become validated as part of a genealogical and metaphysical trait. It does not seem accidental, therefore, that his “Relación” starts with a declaration of affection for Caesar. Through a soldier/writer lineage that begins with Garci Pérez de Vargas, Garcilaso leads himself to the *reconquista* of the very Seville that the great Roman once fortified.

In this genealogical context, the cultural polyvalence that the denomination *Garcilaso de la Vega* already possesses becomes exponential with the adoption of the title *Inca*, which renders his name's writerly value now applicable to his Andean history. By certifying his Incan rank, Garcilaso combines his origins from Cuzco (the other Rome) and his rhetorical, cultural, and quasigenealogical kinship with Caesar, writer of the *Comentarii*, to certify that his *Comentarios* are fully *reales*—royal not only in an Incan sense, but also as part of an illustrious genealogy that dates back to Classical antiquity. The result is the prolific authority that converges in the name *Inca Garcilaso de la Vega*, a name that validates Garcilaso's *mestizaje*, in accordance with the multicultural impetus of Neoplatonism, as an epistemological mechanism of a privileged order. As a *mestizo* historian, Garcilaso becomes the embodiment of the writing he delivers, and of the Greek, Roman, Renaissance, Spanish, and Andean codes he administrates; as multicultural subject, he presents himself as the *pontifex* that articulates the conversation of the New, the Old, and the Classical Worlds. Ebreo had split the word *philosophia* to create an almost schizophrenic, introspective dialogue between Filone and Sofia; Garcilaso, no less analytical, relies on his vertiginous Neoplatonism to create the two interlocutors that will coexist, as roots of the same voice, throughout the *Comentarios*. One is called El Inca; the other, Garcilaso.

### Conclusions

The long textual and philosophical trajectory which, on the basis of his Platonic and Neoplatonic reading, allows Garcilaso to navigate efficiently

through Cuzco and Rome, and through his illustrious genealogy and Julius Caesar, leads us to describe Garcilaso's self-description as an exercise of "classicalization." Through this process, El Inca adopts the rhetorical authority of Classical paradigms by evoking their literary, historical, and philosophical values. The ironic corroboration of the strategic flexibility that Garcilaso strived for is the manner in which his works and persona would be historically instrumentalized to support the most diverse, even contradictory, claims. The history of his reception bears witness to this: widely read and translated, both praised and criticized, always suspicious in the eyes of the colonial authorities, eventually banned (through *Reales Cédulas*) in 1729, 1741, and—with particular hostility—during the aftermath of Túpac Amaru II's 1780 revolution (Vargas Martínez 44); conveniently reappropriated in the early nineteenth-century Latin American Age of Revolution, and fully metabolized within the nationalist rhetoric of Latin American early Republicanism, Garcilaso efficiently fulfilled his role of cultural hinge in key moments of the history of Latin America, never compromising his self-attributed authenticity. Even when, in the early twentieth century, Guamán Poma's *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* was rediscovered, Garcilaso was still considered the most reliable native source because of his alleged access to "undefiled fountains of native tradition" (Means 397). José de la Riva Agüero, in the aforementioned 1909 commemoration of El Inca—a text that is still used as a prologue to the *Comentarios*—would claim that El Inca Garcilaso "es el más perfecto representante y la más palmaria demostración del tipo literario peruano" (xli). But the same reading that typifies Garcilaso as "the most manifest demonstration of the Peruvian literary type" also reminds the audience that

La inteligencia peruana lleva ingénitas muy definidas tendencias al *clasicismo* . . . Nuestras aptitudes, por conformación y coincidencia espirituales, mucho más que por derivación de sangre, se avienen sorprendentemente con la tradicional cultura mediterránea que denominamos *latinismo* . . . Casi todas las producciones que son legítimo orgullo de la historia literaria latinoamericana, tienen alma y temple clásicos. (xli–ii)

The explicit, obsequious classicalization of Garcilaso by Riva Agüero, proclaimed exactly three centuries after the original publication of the *Comentarios*, confirms the success of Garcilaso's self-imposed, multicultural, quintessential (and as such, paradoxical) *mestizaje* created on the basis of a careful appropriation of Classical elements. Of course, given the pervasive-

ness of the Classical tradition in early colonial writings in the Americas, the phenomenon I deem self-classicalization could hardly be exclusive to Garcilaso's work and authorial persona. There still remains, in fact, the vast task of exploring the extent to which the reading of ancient Greek and Roman texts, as well as their historical epigones, has critically informed some of the most crucial foundational narratives of the Americas. The fact that such a hypothetical project would include a series of coeval titles as important as *La araucana* by Alonso de Ercilla and *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* by José de Acosta, as well as the lesser-known *Origen de los Indios del Nuevo Mundo* by Gregorio García or the *Parnaso antártico de obras amatorias* by Diego Mexía de Fernangil, only bears witness to the exigency of critically reconsidering the highly sophisticated appropriation of the Classics by early Latin American authors.

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