

# MERCEDES LÓPEZ-BARALT

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## MESTIZO, I CALL MYSELF OUT LOUD: ON THE TEXTUALITY OF HYBRIDITY IN REAL COMMENTS BY THE INCA GARCILASO

"I also write to share the satisfaction and the truth that inspire me as a Caribbean man. A Caribbean man, native of Puerto Rico, from mulatto loins - with dark skin, thick lips, curly hair." Luis Rafael Sánchez, Humanist of the Year lecture, 1996.

*To my mother, Emma Cardona de López-Baralt*

The Inca Garcilaso was the first to say it. More importantly, to affirm it, to celebrate it. Simón Bolívar recognized it, though cautiously. In his Carta de Jamaica in 1815, responding to a gentleman from Kingston, he ventured to describe Latin American identity as *mestizaje*, the mixture of races: "We are neither Indians nor Europeans, but rather a middle species between the legitimate owners of the country and the Spanish usurpers." But the Liberator was affected by the colonial mentality, which led him to avoid the African race in his own back yard, his native Venezuela. Only the clear view of a Martian could reflect in the mirror of his words the many faces of a *mestizo* continent, when in "Our America," in 1891, he proposed the first accurate image of who we are:

"We were a vision, with the chest of an athlete, the hands of a dandy and the face of a child. We were a costume, with trousers from England, the pea coat from North America and the bullfighter's cap from Spain. The Indian, silent, circled around us and went to the peaks of the mountains to baptize their children. The black, watched over, sang in the night the music of their hearts, alone and unknown, between the waves and the demons. The *campesino*, the creator, circled, blind with indignation, against the disdainful city, against his birth."

Anyone with the courage to try to put his finger on the most urgent and still unresolved problem of the mixed-race Americas will say: "colonialism is still alive in the republic." I couldn't describe us better. Beyond seeing ourselves as societies still in the making, with a cultural hodgepodge that is the result of imprint of successive colonial masters, it names without palliatives the pain of *mestizaje*, whose violence is seen in the caste struggles and in the civil wars that have bloodied the southern continent, giving birth to the allegorical 32 wars of Colonel Buendía. The earlier vision of Martí paves the way to be traveled by Alejo Carpentier in basing his theory of magical realism precisely on *mestizaje* in the prologue of *The Kingdom of this World* in 1949:

*Because of the virginity of its landscape, because of its development, because of its ontology, because of the Faustian presence of the Indian and of the black, because of the revelation its recent discovery constituted, because of the fertile racial mixtures it favored, the Americas are far from having used up their wealth of mythologies. After*

*all, what is the history of the Americas if not magical realism?*

But today our topic is the first *mestizo* of our literature. Aurelio Miró Quesada considered Inca Garcilaso's *Comentarios reales* to be the most important work in Peruvian literature. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo called it the "most genuinely American book that has ever been written." Quoted by Cervantes himself in his *Persiles*, today, *Comentarios reales* has been blessed as the primary source for anthropology and history of the Andean world, as well as for Hispanic-American literature. Important Andean scholars trust it: anthropologists such as John V. Murra, Tom Zuidema and Pierre Duviols and historians such as Raúl Porras Barrenechea, Franklin Pease G.Y. and Juan M. Ossio A.; his prose is cited by writers of the caliber of José Durand, Aurelio Miró Quesada, José Juan Arrom, Enrique Pupo-Walker, Margarita Zamora, Roberto González Echevarría and Julio Ortega. But perhaps the greatest blessing comes from so many enthusiastic readers who keep alive – and, above all, keep young – the work of the Inca at the edge of his 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Garcilaso's adherence to the Renaissance ideal of harmony that he embraced, as the distinguished humanist he was, allows us sometimes to forget the deep pain that lashed him because of his *mestizo* condition. The Inca tried, in a balancing act, to give equal time to the Indians and the Spanish in his major works, celebrating at the same time – mission impossible – the Spanish invasion and the Incan empire. In the first part of the book – *Comentarios reales*, of 1609 – he pays homage to the memory of his maternal ancestors; in the second – *Historia general del Perú* – he celebrates, along with the Spanish conquest, the fame of Captain Garcilaso de la Vega, his father. But the symmetry of this fusion has cracks through which the anger bubbles. We immediately see more of the agony than the harmony in the *mestizaje* of our first writer.

"Medium in size and skin tone and very measured in his thoughts": thus was the Inca described by Iñigo Córdoba Ponce de León, who knew him well. Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was born Gómez Suárez de Figueroa on April 12, 1539, in Cuzco, the capital of the Incan empire until the beginning of the Spanish conquest in Peru in 1532. The name was given in honor of one of his paternal uncles. The son of the Spanish Captain Garcilaso de la Vega and the Incan princess Isabel Chimpu Ocllo, the future author of *Comentarios reales* came from illustrious lineage on both sides. Captain Garcilaso was related to various standouts of Spanish literature: the Marquis of Santillana, Jorge Manrique and the poet from Toledo who shared the same name and was the brother of his father. Isabel had royal Incan blood in her veins, as she was the granddaughter of Tupac Yupanqui, niece of Huayna Capac, and cousin of the last Incas, the brothers and rivals Huáscar and Atahualpa.

Inca's first language was Quechua or Runasimi, which he learned in his home in Cuzco, where he heard the impassioned stories of his maternal relatives about the past Incan splendor. As a boy, he observed the Incan rites and ceremonies, and as a youth he admired its royal past in the embalmed mummies shown him by Polo de Ondegardo. Heritage is childhood: the close relationship he maintained in his early years with the world of Chimpu Ocllo was key to his future work. As an adult, he proudly declared himself Incan and preserved for posterity the Incan past in his *Comentarios reales*.

His father was no less important in his formation. Captain Garcilaso provided him with a European education, along with the oral teaching he received from his mother's side. The mixed-race child studied both Spanish literature, through Juan de Alcobaza, as well as Latin, and would learn, with other students, of the canonical Juan de Cuéllar. Very early on, however, the young Garcilaso suffered a terrible humiliation that he could never forget and that would quite possibly be the motivating factor for writing his *Comentarios reales*, in which he valued his maternal line. He was 10 years old when his father left his Incan princess in 1549 to marry a woman of Spanish lineage, Luisa Martel de los Ríos, with whom he had two daughters, Blanca de Sotomayor and Francisca de Mendoza. Isabel Chimpu Ocllo married

shortly thereafter – probably in a marriage arranged by Captain Garcilaso de la Vega – with a modest trader, Juan del Pedroche. Two half-sisters to Garcilaso were born from this marriage, Luisa de Herrera and Ana Ruiz. After the rejection of his mother, the *mestizo* boy remained in his father's house, where he served by writing letters. As an adult, Garcilaso would evoke the bitterness of the situation, but depersonalizing it, however, with his typical reserve, in the second part of the *Comentarios*.

Garcilaso's resentment toward his father did not tarnish the admiration he always felt toward him and that led him to write the *Historia general del Perú* to vindicate his memory, shadowed by his participation in the civil wars of the conquest. After the death of his father, Garcilaso traveled to Spain in 1560 to appear before the Royal Indies Council and claim what he believed his father was due for his role as conquistador. But he encountered a disappointment that would make him defiant about his condition as *mestizo* and would later make him an author. His requests to the Indies Council failed in 1563 with a rejection by its chairman, Lope García de Castro, who raised accusations of treason that Captain Garcilaso had been subjected to because of his actions at the Battle of Huarina, when he surrendered his troops to Gonzalo Pizarro. This act had been seen as disloyalty to the crown by the historians López de Gómara and Agustín de Zárate, and, some years later, Diego Fernández el Palentino. The bitterness the Inca felt about the shadow cast on the memory of his father was intense. In 1590, rereading Gómara, he would note painfully in the margins of the pages that referred to the participation of his father in the Battle of Huarina: "This lie has stolen my appetite." Though with his habitual stoicism, he would add, "maybe that is for the best." In 1563, he would change his name, dropping the one given to him at baptism, of Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, for that of his father, in clear homage to him. But the greatest amends he would offer his father is the *Historia general del Perú*.

After his disappointment, Garcilaso returned to Montilla and settled there in the home of his paternal uncle. He participated – the ironies of life – in the war against the Moors in Granada and later dedicated himself to raising horses and writing. He started the arduous task of translating the neo-Platonic work of León Hebreo. In 1586, he finished his translation of *Dialogues of Love*, which is still considered the best Spanish version of the text, and which spread his reputation. In 1590, *The Translation by the Indian of the Three Dialogues of Love by León Hebreo* was published. He moved to Córdoba in 1591 and worked for the church shortly thereafter. *La Florida del Inca*, which he had been working on since 1589, was released in 1605. Garcilaso insisted, with defiant pride, in signing his works as "Indio" or "Inca." Since 1601, he had appeared as "Garcilaso de la Vega Inca" in the baptismal records of the son of a friend. And in 1609, the *Comentarios reales* appeared in Lisbon with the second part, the *Historia general del Perú*, competed in 1612 and published posthumously, after his death in 1616.

The Inca could never forget his hybrid condition. "Spanish in the Indies, Indian in Spain: this is the dilemma of Garcilaso," Porrás Barrenechea said at the time. *Mestizaje* engendered painful contradictions in his person. The very name "Indio," which he took on with pride time and again in his works, necessarily invokes a paternalistic attitude toward his maternal race. Because neither then nor now do Andean men or women call themselves "Indians," a word that was only used by Spaniards and Westernized Peruvians. They call themselves "*runa*," which in Quechua means human beings, people. The psychiatric effects of being *mestizo* are also seen in the fact that after being dismissed by the Indies Council, Garcilaso soon went to fight in favor of the Spanish empire against others who were marginalized as he was, the Moors. Miró Quesada cryptically alludes to this problem, without examining it, by saying that the Moorish rebellion "could carry certain echoes from his native land..." There is also a pathetic ambiguity in the claim by the Inca for the rights of his father before the Royal Indies Council. He asked for land. To become like his father, he had to be the ruler of his mother's people.

The terrible ambiguity of the Inca: fight the Moors and meanwhile celebrate the

dialogues of León Hebreo. We could understand the latter as something that came from his soul, although he issued his translation of *Diálogos de amor* as if it were a whim of “undisciplined recklessness.” Miró Quesada himself, perplexed by Garcilaso’s choice, avoids the true root of the Inca’s affinity for León Hebreo by proposing that perhaps what motivated him to translate the book was his appreciation for the intellectual subtlety the two shared. But it is about something much deeper, the course of two writers who share in some way the marginality that racial otherness and cultural *mestizaje* presume. Luis E. Valcárcel was one of the first to relate the Inca’s social situation with that of the Spanish converts. “Our Garcilaso was an Indian, a man of color, a non-believer, of the same rank as a Moor or a Jew.” Germán Arciniegas directly addressed the relationship between the two, affirming that translating a Jew born in Portugal, the son of Isaac Abravanel, expelled first from Portugal and then from Spain, and making this translation a gift to the king of Spain, defender of the faith, is an example of extremely subtle irony, a lesson in tolerance and reconciliation. Further, “it was like saying to someone who felt he had lost his language: Don’t worry, you can also speak in Spanish. He returned to the Jew his lost voice...” But the Inca’s translation would be punished. Published in 1590, it was caught up in the Inquisition in 1593. Garcilaso made efforts to prevent it from being banned and to allow a corrected reprint of the book, but was unsuccessful. In 1612, the book joined the hated banned list.

Garcilaso made a display of his *mestizaje* from 1586 on, when he first called himself Inca. He raised his racial condition to his status as an author, making it part of the titles of his books: *The Translation by the Indian of the Three Dialogues of Love by León Hebreo*, *La Florida del Ynca*, *Part One of the Commentarios Reales... Written by the Inca Garcilasso de la Vega, Native of Cuzco and His Majesty’s Captain...*, *General History of Peru... Written by the Inca Garcilasso de la Vega, His Majesty’s Captain...* He also did it with the shield he proudly included in the first edition of *Comentarios reales*, and whose details Miró Quesada described thusly: “on one side of the shield, split in thirds, are the arms of the arms of the Vargas, fig leaves of the Figueroas, and, in the parted band, those of the Sotomayors and the de la Vegas with the ‘Ave María.’ On the other side, the imperial arms of the Incas: the sun, the moon, and under them, the *llautu* and the *mascaypacha* bitten by two crowned serpents.” Miró also pointed out the fact that the shield paid homage to the poet Garcilaso, citing his saying, “with the sword and with the pen.”

The quoted phrase appears divided: on the paternal side, “with the sword,” and on the maternal, “with the pen.” It should be noted that the *mascaypacha*, or the royal crown of the Incas, is nothing more than the *amaru*, the mythical serpent with two heads that also has the role of a rainbow, mediating between the earth and the sun. We can read this shield from this Andean point of view, considering the spatial symbolism that gives ethical values to the positions of *hanan* (high) and *hurin* (low), of which Garcilaso himself speaks in the chapter of *Comentarios reales* dedicated to the foundational myths of the imperial city of Cuzco. If we look, not from the perspective of the Renaissance person, who sees the image and the left and right sides as corresponding to his body, but rather from a medieval perspective, which is what Guaman Poma does in his drawings, we see that the paternal side falls on the right of the vertical dividing line of the shield. This corresponds to the ritual space of *hanan*, privileged and dominant. The maternal side is on the left and corresponds to the *hurin*, the subordinate space. With this shield, the Inca not only affirmed his pride as *mestizo*, but also subliminally communicated the reality of the defeat of his people at the hands of the Spanish conquistadors. Coherently, the portion of the saying by the poet from Toledo that has to do with arms is on the paternal side, and that which has to do with the pen is on the maternal side. If the arms destroyed the Incan empire, the pen will have to restore the memory.

As Margarita Zamora points out, by taking on his condition as a *mestizo* with pride – by *calling himself out loud*, as Garcilaso himself said – he is tied to his role as a narrator of the Incan civilization to a European audience. The figure of the *mestizo* is thus converted into a metaphor for the translator as mediator between two languages, two cultures and two worlds,

the Old and the New. There are many textual projections of Garcilaso's *mestizaje* in the *Comentarios reales*, more than the shield and the division of the book into two parts. The Inca lived between two worlds and he saw his duty as reconciling them. For cultural reasons, for his Renaissance training, which so valued the ideal of harmony. But also for a historical reason, not so hopeful. Garcilaso writes from a Spain divided after the defeat of the Muslims, the expulsion of the Hebrew speakers, and the constant persecution of those who decided to stay on their land, forced by the Inquisition to become converts. Censorship forced him to be careful with all he said, and speak between the lines, use the silences, irony and sometimes flattery... We should not be fooled by the serenity with which Garcilaso conciliates opposites. Behind it beats a very intense pain that comes out rotten in his pages.

Garcilaso's painful sense of *mestizaje* can be seen beyond his vehement protests of faith, his admiration for the classic world and his explicit adherence to the imperial plans, in his Indian pride and in a cryptic anti-imperialism that would take on a blunt tone at the end of the *Historia general del Perú*. Anti-imperialism that emerges in eloquent passages: "...forced by a natural love for my homeland, I went to work writing these *Comentarios*..." , " ...what I do by pointing the finger from Spain to the principles of the language [Quechua] to sustain its purity, because it is surely a shame that it is lost or corrupted, being an elegant language"; "I, as an Incan Indian;" "And having this imposed on them [the name "Peru"], the name did not escape the mouths of the native Indians of Peru, even seventy-two years after the conquest..."; "We exchanged ruling for servitude"; "I suspect the name is corrupted because the Spanish corrupt everything they take in their mouths."

*Mestizaje* can be seen behind the intention of the *Comentarios reales* as a response, an intention that links the text, beginning with the title, to the works of other historians who were equally dissatisfied with the official Spanish version. Writing back to other historians, like Guaman Poma and Garcilaso did, led them to produce what Lezama Lima called art of the counter-conquest. That is what the author of *Paradiso* called the Baroque art of the first indigenous or African sculptors in our colonial Americas, such as the Quechua Indian Kondori, who inserted Incan symbols of the sun and moon, as well as faces of Indians on the angels carved on the plaster of the Jesuit buildings; or black artist Aleijadinho, who transformed the baptismal basins and pulpits of the Oro Preto churches with his hallucinatory art. This Baroque, *mestizo* art, which aspires to leave the mark of its difference from the Spanish, opposes the conquest subliminally, affirming the creation of something new and original. In a similar way, our historians wanted to leave their own vision for posterity, both of the indigenous past and the conquest that tried to obliterate it.

Let's talk about the title of the book: *Comentarios reales*. Impregnated with the ambiguity that marks the work, his two words support more than one reading. "Real" alludes to royalty, the monarchy and the lineage of the Incan kings, but can also be read as "realistic" or "truthful." Commentaries presume footnotes that accompany another text, but in this one the complementary parts are questioning, criticism and contradiction. In this possible second meaning of the words is a statement that is not implicit but no less important. But we are interested now in the first part of the title. All commentaries or footnotes invoke an earlier text. Some studies agree that this title, fundamentally, pays homage to *Commentaries on the Galician Wars* by Julius Caesar. This may be so, but there is another contemporary text that more dramatically impacted Garcilaso to defend his honor: the previously mentioned *Historia general de las Indias* by Gómara. In the opinion of Miró Quesada, the true origin of *Comentarios reales* is found in the notes in the margins of the pages of Gómara: "These notations, written in a clear, tranquil and rounded hand, but with clear emotion behind them, can be considered the germ of an idea and the anticipation of the *Comentarios* and mark an important point in his vocation and decision to be a historian."

Writing back imposed a form of dialogism, which is seen in both open and hidden conflict. Bernal Díaz writes against the same Gómara that so made Garcilaso suffer, openly

accusing him of praising Cortés and of writing without understanding for never having been in the new Spain. Guaman Poma dedicates a chapter of his *Nueva crónica* to the "chronicles of the past," which he aims to refute, including those of Oviedo, Zárate, Acosta, Palentino, Cabello Balboa and Martín de Morúa. The Inca Garcilaso, meanwhile, maintains in his *Comentarios reales* a hidden polemic against the three authors who stain the memory of his father: Gómara, Zárate and Diego Fernández el Palentino. Hidden, because although he names them, he says he admires them and quotes them profusely. He does not attack them head on or immediately in the *Comentarios*. Delicately, he criticizes some interpretations of the Incan past, without letting us know that they constitute one of the most powerful motivations for his writing. It is not until we get to *Historia general del Perú* that the reader can infer the reason for the obsessive presence of the three writers in the *Comentarios*. By treating them with serene objectivity, he had paved the way for being able to discount them and their interpretation of an episode in the civil wars of Peru, specifically the Battle of Huarina, when the time arrived. The hidden became open.

In *Buscando un inca*, Alberto Flores Galindo suggests yet another target for our author's act of writing back. Garcilaso wrote his *Comentarios* in opposition to the view of Peru spread by the historians of Toledo. The Viceroy Francisco de Toledo, who put down the armed resistance of Vilcabamba by capturing and trying Tupac Amaru in 1572, enlisted Sarmiento de Gamboa to write his *Historia índica*, published the same year, which presented the Incas as tyrants and usurpers. Toledo tried to use it to justify the conquest and contradict Las Casas. The Inca would respond to this negative vision of his ancestors by converting the Incan tyranny into the utopia of a peaceful welfare state.

If a footnote implies a dialogue with a previous text, it also has connotations of humility. A footnote is not only subordinate to the other text, but is also brief and concise. It is obvious that Garcilaso was not merely showing the false modesty that was so in vogue in the literature of the era. In a time of conflict in Spain that has been so well studied by Américo Castro, in which violence against minority converts was rampant, in which any intellectual could be suspected of heterodoxy, and therefore, in which every book could be subjected to the norms of the Inquisition, they had to create protective strategies to say what they thought. Irony served well Cervantes, Fernando de Rojas and the anonymous author of *Lazarillo*; also the silences. Humility would be useful to the Inca. Thus, in his "Author's Protest about History," he would say:

*...and I will not write new things that have never been heard, but rather the same things that the Spanish historians have written about that land and its Kings and use the same words when appropriate [...] I will only comment to declare and expand on many things that they began to say and left imperfect, because they lacked a full account; many others will add what is missing from their histories, and happened in truth, and some will remove what is excess, due to false witness they were given, for not making distinctions of times and ages, and divisions of provinces and nations: or, for not understanding the Indian or for not understanding this or that difficulty of the language.*

When he first alludes to Gómara, he was very careful: "I would like to add this little that was lacking from the account of that historian, who, writing far from where the events occurred, was informed by those who came and went, and they told him many things, but imperfectly..." "We do not say anything new," he insists, as if it were not his intention to rewrite all the history of both the Incan past and the conquest, "but rather, as an Indian born in that land, to expand and extend in the same way that the Spanish, as foreigners, cut short..."

The Inca's caution in being able to contradict the official Spanish historiography is huge. It is seen not only in the false humility with which he presents his notes, but also in the willingness to raise his voice from the beginning based on four criteria. He knew well that

being *mestizo* and a bastard he was at a social disadvantage to other authors and had to present his credentials. Therefore he outlined an irrefutable argument to overcome the accounts that had preceded his: his indigenusness ("as a native of the city of Cuzco, forced by a natural love for my heritage"). This argument implied another, one that would serve to devalue those who were written by Spaniards who had never been in the New World, which was the case with Gómara: he was an eyewitness to many of the events he narrated or the facts he described, as he would point out time and again throughout the length of the work. The third argument that legitimized Garcilaso's voice was that he had "no other interest than to serve the Christian republic." His protests of faith as a Christian are also reiterated insistently in the *Comentarios*. Finally, the Inca inserts himself in the tradition of Spanish historiography ("we will not say anything not backed up by the same Spanish historians"), both to cover up his criticisms as well as to be a serious scholar who can not ignore his antecedents.

These strategies were important to ensure that the *Comentarios reales* were printed without any problem, with the approval of the Inquisition. This is in marked contrast to the case of Guaman Poma, who vociferously launched criticisms in his *Nueva crónica* against conquistadors and missionaries and represented the abuses of the conquest in drawings with a violent sexuality. That is very possibly why his account, also a letter to the king, was not published at the time. It was lost until it was recovered for history in 1908 by German researcher Richard Pietschmann. And in the Americas, censorship was particularly effective. Felipe II used various means to order it. In 1556 he issued one of the dispositions in the Compilation of Indies Laws, reiterated in the royal order of 1560, ordering judges in Spain and the Americas not to consent to printing or sale of any book about the Americas without a special license from the Indies Council. The same king signed the permits to send books to the New World. In the case of the extraordinary anthropological work of Bernardino de Sahagún in México, Felipe II issued a decree in 1577 prohibiting him from continuing to write the *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España* and ordering him to send to the crown what he had already finished. As a result, Sahagún's manuscript was not disseminated until two centuries later.

The Inca's *mestizaje* is the motivation for writing back that has its greatest expression in irony, between lines, the silences, the rhetoric of false modesty and the apparent humbleness. But the undeniable tension between the opposites of *mestizaje* that Garcilaso tries to harmonize in his work – his vindication of the Incan world and the celebration of the Spanish conquest – turns into another discursive strategy. I am referring to certain passages that display what we could call an alternating point of view. This refers to a single sentence in which the Inca assumes two different perspectives. At times he identifies with his Quechua people, only to distance himself from them, and distancing himself from the Spaniards. "Therefore, forced by a natural love for my homeland, I gave myself the task of writing these *Comentarios*, in which, clearly and distinctly, will be seen what was in that republic before the Spanish, both in the rites of religion and in the government that its kings had in peace and in war, and all the rest that those Indians can say..." At other times, keeping the Spaniards at a distance, he alternates between the first person and third person perspective to allude to his people (while he alludes to the Spaniards in third person): "I was born eight years after the Spanish took my land and, as I have said, I lived there until I was twenty years old, and so I saw many of the things the Indians did in their kindness." This distancing that Garcilaso seems obliged to state, perhaps as a protective strategy for avoiding censorship, alternates in a dance throughout the work with his insistence in declaring himself an Indian. The tension is obvious, and costs him much pain; pain he could not calm by embracing the ideal of harmony.

But as Eduardo Galeano said several years ago, speaking about the Uruguayan singer Alfredo Zitarrosa, the true artist turns his pain into illuminating light for others. There is no melancholy complaint or victimization in the Inca's pages, but rather pride that translates into

the erection of a verbal monument with which he ensured forever the enduring memory of his culture. The affirmation gives birth to the Andean utopia that Alberto Flores Galindo tells us about in *Buscando un inca*. It is in the second part of his *Comentarios reales*, the *Historia general del Perú*, that Garcilaso calls the decapitation death of the last leader of the Incan resistance, Tupac Amaru, at the orders of the Viceroy Toledo in 1572, as the greatest tragedy to occur in Peru. With this brave affirmation, our Inca has done nothing less than declare the illegitimacy of the Spanish conquest. It should little surprise us that in 1780 the *Comentarios reales* were banned by Carlos III, who believed that they served as inflammatory reading for the followers of the uprising by Tupac Amaru II. Garcilaso's anti-imperialist posture had been subtly unveiled in *La Florida del Inca*, as Raquel Chang-Rodríguez sharply noted. Despite his exhortation to his fellow people, urging the retaking of the land covered by Hernando de Soto in his disgraced expedition – parallel to the insistent adherence to the Spanish conquest expressed in the *Comentarios* – Garcilaso tells the story from the beginning as a total disaster, closing the book with a chapter enumerating deaths of Christians in an undertaking fatally marked by discord among the conquerors.

Remembering the Inca Garcilaso here, in Puerto Rico, at a distance of four centuries, may appear to be a purely literary exercise, the result of the interest – undoubtedly legitimate – of a scholar of colonial literature. But beyond the beauty of his work, which is forever youthful, we feel (I dare think that there are many of us) a particular brotherhood with this universal Peruvian. I refer to the *mestizaje* we share. A study was recently done by the Biology Department at the Mayaguez campus of the University of Puerto Rico, under the direction of Dr. Juan C. Martínez Cruzado, about the origins of mitochondrial DNA in Puerto Rico. Because mitochondrial DNA is inherited only from the mother, this kind of experiment enables a study of the migrations of women throughout the world. A total of 800 people participated as volunteers in the project, and the results were as follows: 61% of them showed mitochondrial DNA of indigenous origin, 27% of African origin and 12% of Caucasian origin. "This implies," citing the conclusions of the study, "that the migration of women to Puerto Rico over the course of our 500 years of history has been minimal, in comparison to the women who already existed in Puerto Rico. Additionally, it means that approximately two African women were brought to Puerto Rico for each Caucasian." Although a recent census of public opinion shows the lamentable refusal of many Puerto Ricans to accept it, the reality is that our *mestizaje* is, well, convincing.

*Mestizaje* that is not just racial, but also cultural. What a framework – and now I return to speaking as a scholar of literature – for all that we write. *En puertorriqueño*, to allude to the famous epigraph with which our Luis Rafael Sánchez preceded a series of memorable essays. In his previously quoted 1996 Humanist of the Year lecture, the author of *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* confirmed that, inevitably, Puerto Ricanness motivates his work:

*In this sense, in the act of being Puerto Rican without trauma or compunctions, without ceding one bit to the dangers of victimization, extending hands of patriotism when needed but speaking against jingoism when necessary, I have sought, until I found them, the materials to build my work. A work that has repeatedly been centered on dialogue, without circumlocution, with my accidental tribe. The dialogue has taken place in what a distinguished man of Puerto Rican letters, Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, calls the continuity of observation. That is, endless observation, to the depths of obsession, of my Puerto Rican nation. The nation that accompanies me everywhere. The country whose song, sweet or bitter, I inevitably want to sing.*

I have made mine, with the distance of rigor and an unshakeable admiration, the spirit that beat behind the words of our writer. Distance, because I work in a different role, that of a critic. Several years ago, in 1997, Josefina Berta Gómez de Hillyer asked me to comment on

my work for a series of lectures sponsored by the Carnegie Library, which she then directed with her usual generosity. When I was wracking my brain to think of a title for that essay, it occurred to me to borrow a little something from Juana Inés de la Cruz, using “the Baroque curiosity” with which Lezama Lima defined the way of our first poet. I titled it “*The Baroque Curiosity: Toward an Hispanicism Without Borders.*” Because I realized, looking over my books, that I had dived into whatever I wanted, with an excessive zeal, like the good coastal person I am. Borges said it and my brother Arturo Echavarría Ferrari reminded me: We Latin Americans write from the margins and like old hunger we want to do it all today. From there we take on the mission of the rescuers of the southern continent, freed from the bounds of the plantations to the beat of “Tear down the fences!” to propose a Hispanicism without borders where gates are not placed on the country, a Caribbean place without limits.

From the Taino mythology to Guaman Poma, the Inca Garcilaso, Galdós, Arguedas, Pedreira, Palés and contemporary Puerto Rican literature: the authors and topics to which I have dedicated my attention make up a multicolored mosaic that is not far from the literary *mestizaje* that characterizes our literature and that Federico de Onís talked about in an essay in 1952. But in my case — and also in that of my sister, Luce, which reaches from the Moors and San Juan de La Cruz to Luis Rafael Sánchez and José Hierro with complete ease — there is a common denominator among nearly all these objects of loving study: cultural resistance, marginality and *mestizaje*.

*Mestizos* first and aborigines second, Moors and Tainos, were marginalized by the Spanish imperial policy and resisted through translated manuscripts and oral legends. Cultural *mestizos* or converts, like San Juan de la Cruz, who suffered prison in Spain, and Américo Castro. Guaman Poma and the Inca Garcilaso resisted marginality through their brave writing, which cost the former not being able to publish his work for three centuries and the second from being able to publish his in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Galdós — of the Canaries, an islander like us — suffered the disdain of Valle Inclán, who called him “don Benito the garbanzo man” for what we recognize today as one of his essential contributions, his extraordinary colloquial Madrid discourse. Nor did he receive support for his candidacy for the Nobel Prize in Literature. His everlasting compassion had brought him too close to socialism in the last years of his life. Palés and Luis Rafael Sánchez rescued the forgotten voices of the original African and the street mulatto. Pepe Hierro — today duly blessed as the most important poet in Spain — in prison during the Franco regime. And Pedreira himself, despite his foolishness with the triad of our *mestizaje*, writes — I refer to *Insularismo* — a frankly anti-imperialist book.

Marginality, *mestizaje* and cultural resistance. Are we not speaking, at a basic level, about Puerto Rico? Marginal to the colonial power, which resides, to our misfortune, in Washington. *Mestizaje* both racial and cultural. Collective resistance, no less heroic for being anonymous, seen in the simple fact that we still speak Spanish and produce a pointed literature: the only case in Latin America, as Juan Gelpí has observed, of a solid national literature in a country that has not achieved legal nationhood. *I write in Puerto Rican.*

I would like to close with these lines remembering another *mestizo*, this time from Andalusia: the unforgettable Carlos Cano, who in 1992 wanted to leave the mark of the marginalized on the official celebration, both in Spain and in our Americas, of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what was then called euphemistically “the meeting of two worlds.” With genial irony and a generous dose of solidarity with those disrespectfully called *sudacas*, Cano opportunistically issued the disc titled *Mestizo*. In it he included musical forms from *habaneras* to *cuecas*, from *rancheras* to the Cuban *son*. Three voices inject themselves in ironic humor into the sexy drumming that opens the disc, that of the crazy Spaniard off to conquer lands and mulattoes, the Andalusian, and the South American, who mix their bloodlines to Puerta de Tierra, which is repeated time and again in the walled cities of the Antilles. Thus sings Carlos Cano, converting the sea into a bridge that unites us. The same sea that, in a different way, the

Inca Garcilaso crossed to Montilla more than four centuries ago. From the Caribbean, the Andes do not look so far away.

Mestizo

by: Carlos Cano, del disco *Mestizo* (1992)

*Moreno, pardo, de cobre,  
criollo, morisco y zambo  
cambujo, lobo y coyote  
soy mestizo, soy mulato.  
Y en mi corazón guajiras,  
habaneras y guapangos,  
colombianas, chacareras  
bambucos, cuecas y mambos.  
Mestizo, soy mestizo,  
mulato, soy mulato.*

*Y al compás de los tambores  
con el vaivén de los barcos  
los indios con sus plumones  
los cholos con sus tangazos  
los negros con sus tangones  
las negras con sus culazos  
tanto labios como flores  
así lo están pregonando.  
Mestizo soy mestizo,  
mulato, soy mulato.*

*Por grandes que sean los mares  
triquitriquitrán  
nunca podrán separarnos  
que tú me lleva' en tu sangre  
y yo te tengo en mis labios  
salineras salineras  
triquitriquitrán  
triquitriquitrán.*

*Las murallitas de oro  
las caballitas de plata  
aunque no entre por tu puerta  
yo salgo por la ventana  
comiendo azúcar y oliendo albahaca.  
Ay niña María ábreme la puerta  
que tengo en la boca azúcar morena  
qué dulce, qué buena,  
son pellizquitos de amores  
que le pego a la canela  
qué dulce, qué buena,  
y vámonos  
que nos vamos a Puerta de Tierra.  
Con la sal de la bahía*

*los tambores africanos  
al compás de Andalucía  
así nacieron los tangos  
vinieron como guajiras  
se fueron como fandangos  
por la ruta de la sangre  
amores de contrabando.  
Mestizo soy mestizo,  
mulato, soy mulato.*

*Babalú de la guayaba  
bastón de cocomacaco  
garabato, filigrana  
y vámonos que nos vamos  
y vámonos que nos vamos  
yambambé del zorumuco  
con los ojos como platos  
ese son cantaba un negro  
que del susto quedó blanco  
Mestizo soy mestizo,  
mulato, soy mulato.*

*Y hasta en los guirís soñando  
con un daiquirí en La Habana  
un mojito en Floridita  
en la playa una rumbita  
y una mulata en la cama.  
Ya viene la Nochebuena  
tortilla de camarones  
a Belén pastores  
a Belén pastores  
con la niña recordando  
a los coristas famosos  
esto es primoroso,  
esto es primoroso.*

*Ay niña María ábreme la puerta  
que tengo en la boca azúcar morena  
qué dulce, qué buena,  
son pellizquitos de amores  
que le pego a la canela  
qué dulce, qué buena.*

*A La Habana yo me voy de tarambana  
yo me voy pa' la conquista americana...  
Mestizo soy mestizo,  
mulato, soy mulato...*

