

*The Life of the Mind: When Class Overwhelms Race and Gender*

The 2018 Nachbahr Address

Thomas Ward

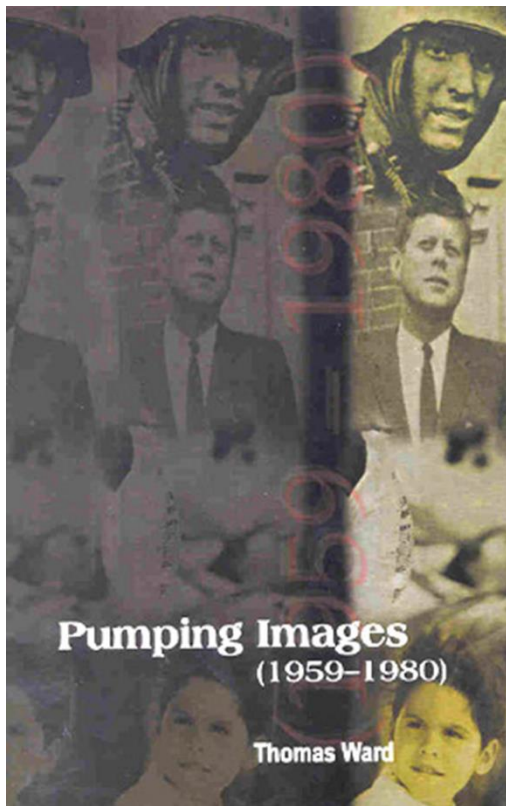
Loyola University Maryland

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Good afternoon to you all. First, I am incredibly grateful that you all did not get up and leave as I approached the podium. I promise to try to make this interesting, so you will not be thinking about the food they are going to serve after they award the Affiliate Teaching Award to Madame Catherine Savell. I think it is fitting that I am giving this address after so many brilliant student scholars this afternoon. I was thinking about how students might receive this lecture I am about to deliver, and I will try to stay away from obtuse profundity expressed in dense and jargon-laden prose.

I am extremely humbled to receive the Nachbahr Award for Outstanding Achievement in Scholarship by a Faculty Member in the Humanities. It is meaningful to me that several of my colleagues in the humanities chose me to be this year's recipient of the Nachbahr Award. I never met Bernard Nachbahr, even though he passed away five years after I arrived on campus. I suppose that was

because he was away, busy running one of Loyola’s first study abroad programs, the one at Catholic University in Belgium. But I do feel like I know him because I have benefited from the Center for the Humanities which he founded, and from the bits and pieces of his wisdom that float around in conversations, and on pages on the internet. One thought of his goes like this: “Teaching is to make room for wonder . . . to destroy what is taken for granted in search of truth . . . to lead from the known to the unknown.”<sup>1</sup> I will try to adhere to this advice, to let truth destroy that which is taken for granted, today, as I talk to you about how social class can



overwhelm notions of race and gender in someone’s mind. Since my talk is about the life of the mind, my mind, I have to add the subtext of bilingualism because that was an important thing that happened to me along the way.

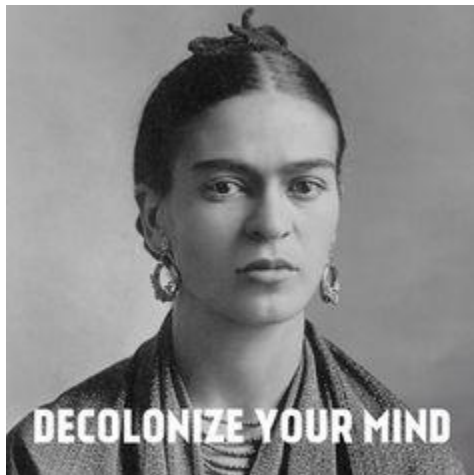
In 1973 I found myself in Spain as an arrogant nineteen-year old. As I recounted in my book *Pumping Images* (2000), there was an argument and a Spaniard asked me, “¿Por qué

matáis a los vietnamitas?” That is, why are you killing the Vietnamese? (p. 72) I

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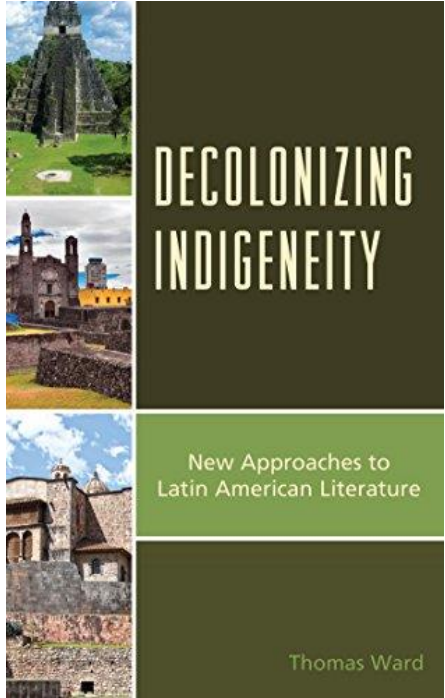
<sup>1</sup> Bernard Nachbahr, as quoted in Fred Rasmussen, “Bernard Nachbahr, 63, taught philosophy at Loyola College,” *Baltimore Sun* (September 21, 1993), <[articles.baltimoresun.com/1993-09-21/news](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1993-09-21/news)>

stupidly responded, “to get rid of the communists”, to which the Spaniard offered the riposte: “So, if someone thinks differently about economics than you do, you should kill them?” I had never heard this kind of logic before. Of course, you should not kill people because of the way they think. It blew up my brain into fragments that can be rearranged –to paraphrase Jimi Hendrix– as I assimilated new knowledge into this labyrinth we call life.



This kind of basic-questioning-logic paradigm, free from political ideology, evolved in my mind until I came up with a paradigm of decolonial reasoning. In Professor Nachbahr’s words, truth destroyed what is taken for granted.

Decolonial reasoning can be helpful to understand people like Frida Kahlo, pictured here, or organizations like Black Lives Matter or Occupy Wall Street, but it can also serve in the study of Latin American literature, especially literature written during the Renaissance when colonialism was reorganizing life in the Americas.



I have developed this kind of reasoning into a theory, decolonial theory, and published a book which features four varieties of decolonial reasoning and applies it to five different authors' work. That book, *Decolonial Indigeneity: New Approaches to Latin American Literature*, was published by Lexington Books in 2017. Fortuitously, it just was released in paperback this week. Decolonial thinking was one of the effects bilingualism had on me.



Today I am going to talk about another bilingual person, an early seventeenth-century historian. He was from Cuzco, Peru, the seat of the Inka Empire, and because of colonialism, ended up living in Cordoba, Spain. He changed his name a few times, but the last and most symbolic version

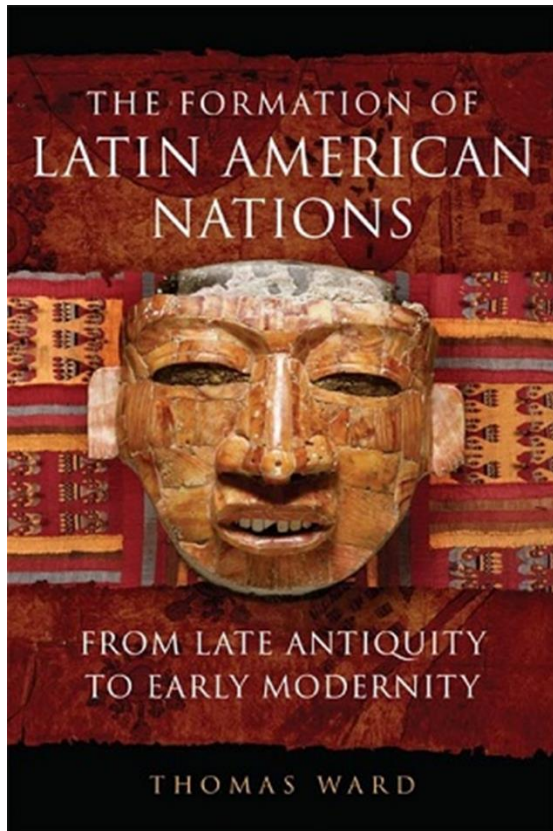
was Inka Garcilaso de la Vega. Who was the Inka Garcilaso de la Vega?



To locate him in time, we can take note that he died in 1616, the same year as two other great luminaries of the Renaissance, Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare.

Now we come to the race part, although race as a concept was not very clear at that time and race theory didn't get invented until the nineteenth century. People at that time thought about different kinds of people as nations, early modern nations. Garcilaso's father, Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega was from the Spanish nation and his mother, Isabel Chimpu Oollo, from the Inkan nation. He was the first Peruvian to say, "I am a mestizo." He was of the mestizo nation called Peru. He was of both worlds, the Spanish and the Inkan, but he was also of neither. Thus, he is a remarkably interesting historical subject when we try to understand the

concept of nation, what a nation is, because if Garcilaso didn't have a concept of race, he did understand what a nation was, even if his concept was pre-modern or early modern.



I have studied Garcilaso and other mestizo chroniclers of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century to ascertain their views on the nation in my new book, due out in a couple of weeks. In Chapter 3 of book, *The Formation of Latin American Nations*, to be published by the University of Oklahoma Press, I studied the relationship between language and nation in Garcilaso's *Royal Commentaries*, published in Lisbon in 1609.

Language is important to the notion of the nation and, as Garcilaso realized, in the Andes there were hundreds of languages spoken and many of the language groups considered themselves as nations. The Inkakuna (or Incas as you might say in English) were a nation and in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they conquered many of the local nations surrounding Cuzco. Some of these were “Qanas, Kanchis, Qollas, Lupaqas, Pacajes, Qarankas, Killaka-Asanaqui, and the

Charka confederation.”<sup>2</sup> In fact they conquered nations as far north as present-day Colombia, and as far south as present-day Chile. Thus, the relationship between the Inkakuna and the subordinated nations is an extremely interesting topic for nation studies, and for decolonial studies. We find out from our reading of Garcilaso that the term “Indians” tells us extraordinarily little about that time and place. This brings us back to Bernard Nachbahr, because by reading Garcilaso we “destroy what is taken for granted in [our] search of truth” and the truth that rises to the surface helps us to decolonize our minds with respect to pre- and early modern Andeans.

Garcilaso was born in the midst of what I like to call the Forty-Year War defined by civil wars among the Inkakuna, wars between the Inkakuna and other ethnic nations, wars between the Inkakuna and Spaniards, sieges of both Cuzco and Lima, and the Spanish civil wars in Peru. The period ran from 1532 with Pizarro’s execution of the Inka king Atawallpa and the execution of the last Inka sovereign Thupaq Amaru in 1572. Garcilaso was born in 1539 and he grew up in the midst of all these conflicts.

As I mentioned, Garcilaso’s father was Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega and his mother, Isabel Chimpu Ocllo. He spoke Spanish in the public sphere and he

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Ward, *Formation of Latin American Nations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018, forthcoming), p. 133 (galley proofs).



spoke Qheswa in the private sphere. Yet this is not some clear-cut duality that informs his thinking because the views of one side reach in and touch the views of the other side. He was not alone in this duality. The bicultural and

hybrid cultures that arrived were an object of colonial scrutiny, such as was the case with a study the Viceroy Amat commissioned in 1770. In this painting, one of many, we see what happens when a Spaniard reproduces with a “Mountain Indian.” The result is a mestizo.

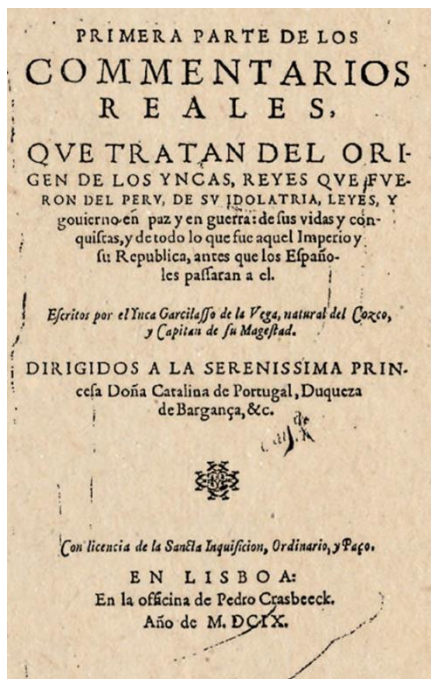


This kind of analysis was not surprising. People were aware of skin-tone difference and they were aware that architecture was



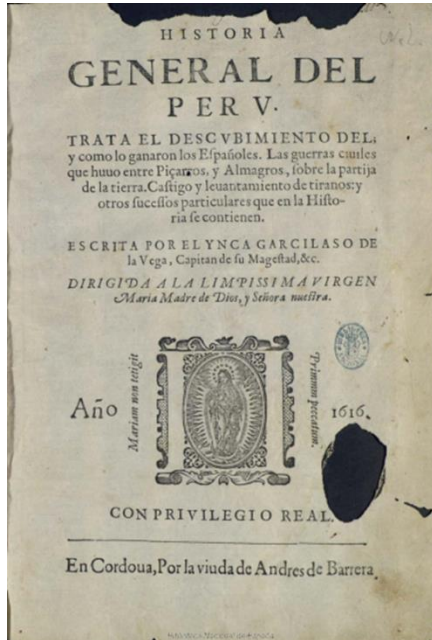
bicultural, because it was so obvious. Take a look at this picture from Cuzco, Peru, the capital of the Inka Empire. You can see the Spanish Church of Santo Domingo constructed on the foundation of Inti Kancha, the Temple of the Sun, located in the Qorikancha, the Plaza of the Sun, that was able to survive in this hybrid manner.

The dualities can exist not only between languages, but between languages and concepts. Garcilaso speaks beautiful Renaissance Spanish, but he retains pre-conquest views of his fellow Andeans who were subjugated to the Inkakuna. His view of Andean nations was as a pre-contact Inka, that is to say, they were colonialist. But he lived in an Hispanic society that considered him as well to be a colonial subject. Thus we have coloniality superimposed over coloniality.



In the *Formation of Latin American Nations*, I discuss how Garcilaso viewed non-Inka people through an Inkan lens. He viewed non-Inkan people as barbarians who needed to be civilized through the transmission of the Qheswa language, which was also a lens. In his delightful book *The Royal Commentaries*, he writes, “It makes them sharper of mind and more docile and more able to learn

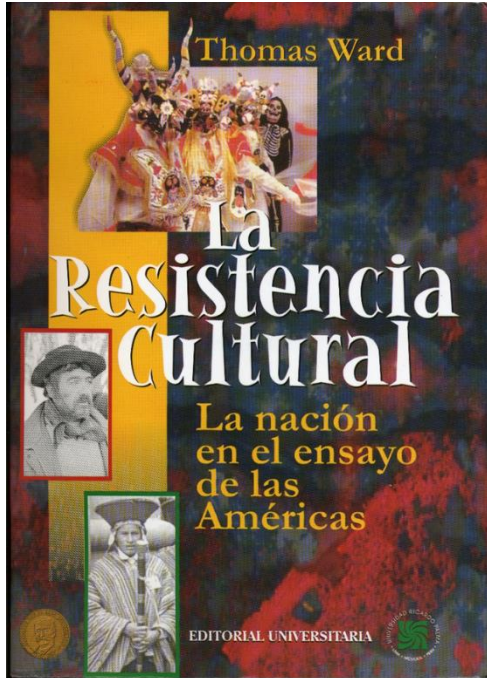
whatever it is that they want to learn; from barbarians they are turned into men who are more political and urbane.”<sup>3</sup>.



The first part of the *Royal Commentaries* is an excellent text for getting to the ideas that show the coloniality of pre-contact Inkakuna over other Andean peoples. Likewise, the second half of the *Royal Commentaries*, sometimes called the *General History of Peru*, is great for understanding how the coloniality of Spaniards over the Andean people got into Garcilaso’s brain.

This brings us back to the question. How does class overwhelm race in Inka Garcilaso’s mind? Non-Inkakuna are classified as barbarians. If Garcilaso had had a concept of race he might have viewed non-Inkan Andeans as inferior to Spaniards. Whether viewed in terms of race or nation, his Inka class overwhelmed any notion of pan-Andean solidarity. And this brings us to the other question; How does class overwhelm gender in Inca Garcilaso? Garcilaso chose to write in Spanish not Qheswa. He wrote in his father’s language not in his mother’s. Indeed, because he was exiled or self-exiled to Spain, he abandoned his mother in Cuzco.

<sup>3</sup> Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Primera parte de los Comentarios reales* (Lisbon: Pedro Crasbeek, 1609), book VII, ch. iv. My translation.



Why do I say this is about class when I say it overwhelms race or nationality? Because Garcilaso was interested in maintaining the privileges of the Inka class over the mass of everyday Indians, a term he sometimes used. Why is Garcilaso important? In a book I published in 2004 at Ricardo Palma University whose title could be translated as *Cultural*

*Resistance: The Nation in the Essay of the Americas*, I started to explore how Inka Garcilaso's influence could be felt in a nineteenth-century intellectual, Clorinda Matto de Turner. With more than a dozen editions of his works, his views were emitted through time.

In the end, my thesis that bilingualism breeds a more open mind with my “basic-questioning-logic” may be true in some cases, but it was not the case in Garcilaso de la Vega. If I had had more time today, I would have also showed you that neither was it the case with Clorinda Matto de Turner. Getting to a decolonial position in the mind is not a binary process or a simple equation that can be resolved. Bernard Nachbahr's simple proposal “to destroy what is taken for granted in search of truth . . . to lead from the known to the unknown” is a

multifaceted process with multiple pushes and pulls occurring with only minor progress at a time.

Yet I am not done exploring this topic. I published an article on the topic at the Americas Society in New York and my very next book will delve deeper in Inca Garcilaso and into the manner in which twelve different nineteenth and twentieth century literati received him.<sup>4</sup> This study will take into account what he means for the nation, in terms of race, of gender, and of class.

I hope you found my research interesting and I hope you will see the value of just asking the most basic questions to move closer to the truth in our understanding of the order of the world. Thank you for your time and your interest.

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<sup>4</sup> Tentatively titled, "Inca Garcilaso's Footprints: The Re-appropriation of Tradition in Republican Peru."