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Caroline Egan

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FROM EYE TO TONGUE: *LENGUA* IN THE
EARLY WORKS OF EL INCA GARCILASO DE
LA VEGA

Caroline Egan

University of Cambridge

ABSTRACT A central feature of the narrative authority El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega constructs for himself in the *Comentarios reales* is his linguistic knowledge. As a native speaker of Quechua, Garcilaso is able to act as an interpreter—that is, a *lengua*—between the Andean and Spanish traditions to which he is heir. This article analyzes the forging of this authority in the first two works published by Garcilaso: his translation of the *Dialoghi d'amore* by Leone Ebreo (1590) and his history of the expedition led by Hernando de Soto to La Florida (1605). Although they pertain to very distinct genres, both of these works consider the nature and capacities of *lenguas* (the tongue, the interpreter), especially in relation to the eye. While in both philosophical and historiographical terms, the eye is the privileged organ, Garcilaso subtly refines this corporeal hierarchy and begins to shape the authoritative tongue that will become crucial in his later works.

Introduction

In the first book of his posthumously published *Historia general del Perú* (1617), El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616) comments on “Felipillo,” the indigenous intermediary who accompanied the Spanish during their infamous encounter with Atahualpa in Cajamarca in 1532. Garcilaso emphasizes, in particular,

cuán mal declaró este faraute a Atahualpa los misterios de nuestra fe católica, así por no entenderlo él como por faltar vocablos al lenguaje que

significasen lo que había de decir; también se prueba lo que dijimos de Hernando de Soto y Pedro del Barco, que por no entender lo que Huascar Inca les dijo, no quedaron con él y causaron su muerte. De manera que podremos decir que la falta de buenos y fieles intérpretes fue la principal causa de la muerte de estos dos poderosos reyes. (*Historia general* 67; bk. 1, ch. 36)

These two powerful rulers, half-brothers Atahualpa and Huascar, had been locked in a struggle for control of the Incan realm since the death of their father, Huayna Capac.¹ When the Spanish met Atahualpa and his followers in Cajamarca, the internecine Incan conflict became entangled with the Iberian incursion. The exact nature of the encounter that took place at Cajamarca became the subject of numerous and divergent retellings,² but somehow, the interpreted conversation between the Incan and Spanish contingents led to a Spanish attack and the imprisonment of Atahualpa, who would later be executed.

In the passage above, Garcilaso sees the role that Felipillo played in the capture and death of Atahualpa reflected in the fate of Huascar as well, an episode he relates earlier in the *Historia general*. When the Spanish emissaries Hernando de Soto and Pedro del Barco reached Jauja, they found Huascar imprisoned by Atahualpa's captains, but did not recognize the danger he faced. Huascar begged for their protection and promised riches in return, but "lo que hablaron no se entendió por entonces por falta de intérprete, sino fué lo que pudieron decir por señas." Failing to understand the pleas of Huascar, the two conquistadors left him to his fate: "ahora quedaba del todo desconfiado de su vida y certificado que por haberlos visto y hablado le habían de apresurar la muerte, como ello fué" (*Historia general* 60; bk. 1, ch. 31). For Garcilaso, then, both Huascar and Atahualpa died after their meetings with Spanish conquistadors because they lacked capable interpreters. In this way, the outcome of the Incan encounter with the Spanish, and the subsequent history of Peru, truly depended on the limits of language.

The inadequacy of Felipillo is crucial for the historiographical project in the *Historia general* and its precursor, the *Comentarios reales de los Incas*

1. María Rostworowski de Diez Canseco studies this conflict in detail in *Historia del Tahuantinsuyu* (153–97).

2. For two overviews of the way this episode was told and retold in early modern accounts, see the studies by Antonio Cornejo-Polar and Patricia Seed.

(1609): in some ways, Garcilaso fashions himself as the foil to Felipillo in these monumental works,³ retrospectively interpreting and explaining the encounter of the Incas and the Spanish, at Cajamarca and beyond. Indeed, Margarita Zamora has argued in her seminal study on the *Comentarios reales* that the historiographical project of Garcilaso can be seen as “an act of translation,” one that draws on the centrality of language to both the intellectual milieu of Renaissance Humanism and the military and religious aims of the conquest (3–4). In contrast, as Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel has pointed out, Garcilaso gestures frequently toward the limits inherent in translation, as well as the loss of his own knowledge of his mother tongue, having departed from Peru as a young man (110; 114). Nevertheless, Garcilaso does explicitly take on the role of interpreter in the preliminaries to the *Comentarios reales* when he clarifies that he does not intend to contradict Spanish historians who had previously written on Peru, “sino servirles de comento y glosa y de intérprete” (8). With the clarification “y de intérprete,” Garcilaso not only emphasizes the modesty of his interventions, but also characterizes them in terms of linguistic dexterity.

Another term Garcilaso might have used to describe his role is *lengua*. In the early modern period, the term *lengua* had a number of meanings, as seen in the 1611 *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* compiled by Sebastián de Covarrubias. It could refer to a particular language (“el lenguaje con que cada nación habla”), to the figure of the interpreter (“el intérprete que declara una lengua con otra”), and of course, to the bodily organ (“*lingua, pars corporis nobilissima voci formandae*”) (1178–80).⁴ Analyses of Garcilaso’s use of language to construct his narrative authority in the *Comentarios reales* tend to deal with the first two of these acceptations, emphasizing his abilities in Quechua and Spanish and his capacity to mediate between these two tongues and traditions. At the same time, it is worth noting that there is a marked physicality to the unique *lengua* that Garcilaso forges for himself—his is clearly a “*pars corporis nobilissima*,” to use the words of Covarrubias. We see this physicality each time Garcilaso reiterates the idea that his linguistic capacity and knowledge of the Incas is something “que mamá en la leche,” a formulation that appears no fewer than six times in the *Comentarios reales*.

3. In a similar vein, Margarita Zamora calls Garcilaso an “anti-Felipillo” (133–34).

4. For more on the range of meanings associated with *lengua* in the era, see Roland Greene’s study of the terms “tongue” and “language” in *Five Words*.

While the relationship postulated between breast milk and language was an ancient one, the fact that Garcilaso employs this turn of phrase so often—twice as much as his oft-studied comparison between Cuzco and Rome, which appears only three times—says something about its particular significance.⁵

Even in the episodes analyzed above, where the exchanges described by Garcilaso are clearly concerned with interpreters (*lenguas*), corporeality also plays a significant role. In the deaths of Huascar and Atahualpa, bodies prominently enable or impede communication. In the absence of interpreters, the conquistadors misunderstand Huascar “por señas,” that is, through gesture. Felipillo’s inadequacy, meanwhile, is metonymically concentrated in his stammering tongue, as Garcilaso suggests when he relates the frustrated exclamation of Atahualpa prior to the encounter in Cajamarca: “¿Qué anda éste tartamudeando de una palabra en otra y de un yerro en otro, hablando como mudo?” (*Historia general* 43; bk. 1, ch. 20). The onomatopoeic verb *tartamudear* and the construction *hablar como mudo* equate Felipillo’s interventions with a paradoxical spoken silence: he generates noise, but not meaning. In this sense, Felipillo fails to unite two contemporary valences of the term *lengua*: the physical tongue and the role of the interpreter.

There is a significant corporeal dimension to the acts of interpretation at stake in the *Comentarios reales* and the *Historia general*. But the forging of this extraordinary tongue goes back to Garcilaso’s early writings: *La traducción del indio de los tres Diálogos de Amor de León Hebreo* (1590, hereafter referred to as *Traducción*), a Castilian translation of a Neoplatonic treatise on love (the *Dialoghi d’amore* by Leone Ebreo); and *La Florida del Inca* (1605), an account of the expedition led to the titular region by Hernando de Soto. In both works, *lenguas* are endowed with critical importance. This is remarkable insofar as both texts belong to broader discursive traditions in which the principal bodily organ is not the tongue, but the eye. In the *Traducción*, the tongue is a secondary sensory organ, taste being an inferior faculty to sight. In *La Florida*, in turn, the eye is superior for a different reason, namely, its association with the credibility of the *testigo de vista*, or eyewitness. Their convergence in examining the relationship between eye and

5. José Luis Rivarola studies the widespread use of this trope in Renaissance thought on the vernacular, as well as its roots in Christian and Classical traditions, while Carmen Bernard summarizes the significance of this notion for Garcilaso (296–301).

tongue, and subtly emphasizing the latter, constitutes one of many features that draw these two texts together. Indeed, despite the significant generic and rhetorical distinctions between these works—one a translated philosophical treatise, the other a (purportedly) transcribed history—Garcilaso characterizes each as a “servicio” in the preliminaries of the *Traducción*, addressed to Felipe II and Don Maximiliano de Austria (16; 22). He even emphatically draws his whole body of published works together, describing his wish to “acabar de tejer las historias de la Florida y urdir la del Perú” (*Traducción* 22). Likewise, in *La Florida*, he calls his writerly endeavors “pretensiones y esperanzas de mayor contento y recreación del ánimo que las de la hacienda,” adding that once the *Traducción* had been published, “di en escrebir esta historia [*La Florida*], y con el mismo deleite quedo fabricando, forjando y limando la del Perú” (746). These repeated references weave together works that, despite their generic, rhetorical, and geographic distinctions, constitute a single and self-referential whole.⁶

Beyond the unity that Garcilaso establishes in his body of work, a number of scholars have shown that Ebreo’s Platonic philosophy had a profound impact on the way Garcilaso would later portray Peru and himself in the *Comentarios reales* and the *Historia general*, and that the protagonists and arrangement of the Floridian narrative provided models crucial to the Peruvian histories. Doris Sommer, for instance, describes the imprint left by Ebreo in the “characteristic shuttling and weaving” of Garcilaso’s style (413). In *Un Inca platonicien*, Carmen Bernard explores the biographical and geopolitical concomitances between Ebreo’s and Garcilaso’s hybrid identities and their shared participation in Renaissance intellectual trends. José Antonio Mazzotti suggests that some Cabbalistic aspects of the treatise by Ebreo bear a striking resemblance to Andean mythologies, a correspondence that Garcilaso would have found compelling (“Otros motivos”). Germán Campos-Muñoz has proposed that the philosophical voracity of Neoplatonism is sublimated in the *Comentarios reales* in the “Classicalization” of Cuzco as Rome and Garcilaso himself as the inheritor of Julius Caesar. In relation to *La Florida*, Mazzotti notes how the circumstances of the death and burial of Soto render him and his company heroic figures, potentially inaugurating

6. The sense of unity with which Garcilaso imbues his works culminates in the reproduction of prefatory matter from his first published work, the *Traducción*, in his posthumously published *Historia general*. As José A. Rodríguez Garrido notes, this inclusion serves to highlight the fact that Garcilaso has realized the aims set out at the beginning of his career (85).

a New World dynasty that is, like Garcilaso, both Christian and indigenous (“*La Florida*”). Similarly, Mercedes López-Baralt argues that the desire expressed in the preface of *La Florida*—to narrate equally the feats of both Spanish and Amerindian protagonists—provides a structural model that will apply later to the *Comentarios reales*. Analyzing the complex portrayal of *lengua*—in its multiple meanings—in each work adds to these studies by demonstrating that, across his early writings, Garcilaso forges an exceptional embodied tongue, one that subtly displaces the eye from its position of authority in two distinct frameworks—one philosophical, the other historiographical.

A Genealogy of Tongues

In 1590, Garcilaso published his Spanish translation of the *Dialoghi d'amore*, a dense treatise by the physician Leone Ebreo. In this tripartite text, the love-stricken Filón pursues Sofía, the object of his desire. Their dialogues, in which Filón is both lover and teacher, Sofía both beloved and student, deal primarily with the nature and origins of human and divine love, but the conversation spans a fantastic array of topics, from exegesis to cosmology. Within this range of themes, the human body figures prominently. In each of the three dialogues, in fact, Filón makes specific pronouncements on the relative importance of different body parts, especially the sensory organs. And while these pronouncements closely follow the Classical hierarchy of the senses, in which the eye reigns supreme, we will see that the tongue comes to occupy a unique position of philosophical and metatextual significance in the *Traducción*. In effect, even as he insists on the primacy of the eye, Filón expounds on the importance of the tongue as an organ that mediates and reproduces, not only receiving external stimuli through taste, but also reproducing sounds for the benefit of the ear. These mediating and reproductive capacities are especially significant insofar as they mirror, on a metatextual level, the particular role that Garcilaso takes on as translator of Ebreo's work. Thinking of the tongue and the translator as agents of reproduction allows us to consider, in turn, the subtle genealogical dimension of the *Traducción*; that is, its significance as the “offspring” of an Italian original.

In the first dialogue, Filón likens the eye to human understanding, pointing out that both surmount their corporeal limitations with the aid of light:

Que así como el ojo, que aunque de suyo es claro, no es capaz de ver los colores, las figuras y otras cosas visibles si no es alumbrado de la luz del sol, la cual, distribuida en el propio ojo y en el objeto que se ve y en la distancia que hay del uno al otro, causa la vista ocular actualmente, así nuestro entendimiento, aunque de suyo es claro, está de tal suerte impedido en los actos honestos y sabios por la compañía del cuerpo rústico y de tal manera ofuscado que le es necesario ser alumbrado de la luz divina[.] (58)

The physical eye depends on the presence of sunlight just as human understanding is capable of ennobled thought through the intercession of divine light. The association of the eye with light, moreover, makes it a privileged sensory organ. In the third dialogue, for instance, Filón tells Sofía that light allows humans to observe the physical and celestial worlds, and that such observations lead to inquiry and knowledge (245–46). Garcilaso made more than one thousand marginal comments in his translation (Bacich 366), and in the third dialogue especially, a number of those comments highlight the significance of the eye and the faculty of sight; for example: “Razón por qué amamos más a los ojos que a los otros sentidos” (*Traducción* 247).

The primacy of the eye as described by Filón echoes Classical hierarchies of sensory perception. Plato, in the *Timaeus*, presents vision as the impetus for human inquiry into the principles of the universe (106). For Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics*, sight is the sense that “best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions” (3). The *Dialoghi d’amore* reflects these well-known ideas (Summers 33). When the question is limited to sensory perception alone, the tongue occupies a decidedly secondary place within the hierarchy. It enables taste, which, as Filón tells Sofía, is one of the material senses, along with smell and touch, while sight and sound constitute spiritual senses (*Traducción* 297). When Sofía raises the point that touch and taste “son más necesarios a la vida del hombre,” Filón concedes that this is true in terms of physical sustenance, but insists on the primacy of vision as the sensory counterpart to human intellect (*Traducción* 123). And yet, while maintaining that the gustatory capacities of the tongue are indeed subordinate to the visual abilities of the eye, Filón grants the tongue an exceptional role in the hierarchy of sensory organs overall, but through a subtle shift—not so much on account of its capacity to perceive taste, but rather, its ability to produce speech.

Filón expounds on this dimension of the tongue when he describes the

relationship between the spiritual senses, the eye and the ear, wherein the latter “ayuda al conocimiento de las cosas, no tomándolo de las mismas cosas, como el ojo, sino tomándolo de otro conociente, mediante la lengua; la cual o las ha conocido por la vista, o entendido del que las ha visto” (241). Thus, even when the tongue is not engaged in perception, it does not cease to be intimately entangled within the world of the senses, as it relies on sensory knowledge that it then reproduces for the benefit of the ear, enabling aural perception. This associative, “intersensory” capacity is what renders the tongue unique. While taste may be inferior to sight, the tongue itself is exceptional in its capacity to mediate and reproduce knowledge within the sensory hierarchy. In fact, by calling the tongue “otro conociente” here, Filón emphasizes that its sensory, mediating, and reproductive capacities are all conflated in the same organ.

He most fully expresses the theoretical importance of the tongue when he describes the harmonious reflections between celestial and human bodies, including the way the tongue corresponds to Mercury, the Roman messenger god, as well as the penis, another generative organ. Filón notes that the seven planets correspond not only to the seven sensory organs (the eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth), but also to major organs of the male human body (the heart, brain, liver, spleen, kidneys, testicles, and penis). Mercury corresponds to the tongue and mouth and, in turn,

la verga es proporcionada a la lengua en la manera de la postura y en la figura y en el extenderse y recogerse y estar puesta en medio de todos y en la obra; que así como moviéndose la verga engendra generación corporal, la lengua la engendra espiritual con la locución disciplinal, y hace hijos espirituales, como la verga corporales, y el beso es común a entrambos, incitativo del uno al otro. Y así como todos los otros miembros sirven a la lengua en el conocimiento, y ella es fin de la aprehensión y de la salida de ese conocimiento, así todos los otros sirven a la verga en la generación, y en ella consiste el fin y salida de ella. (123)

In this explanation, the tongue occupies a unique place of superiority (“todos los otros miembros sirven a la lengua en el conocimiento”), finality (“fin de la aprehensión”), and mediation (“y de la salida de ese conocimiento”). And so, while in the broader context of this passage, the eyes correspond to the sun and moon, heart and brain, thus retaining their general primacy, the

tongue, as a correlate of Mercury and the penis, comprises a unique site of mediation and reproduction.⁷

The nature of the tongue in this treatise—subordinate to the eye in terms of perception, but at the same time exceptional in its mediating and reproductive capacities—is not particularly remarkable in itself, rather reflecting the influence of Classical and contemporary thought on the theories expounded by Filón in counterpoint with Sofía.⁸ But the specific attributes of the tongue take on a striking metatextual importance when situated in relation to the *Traducción* itself. That is, the fact that the *Dialoghi* offer a detailed consideration of the exceptional properties of the tongue—even while maintaining its sensory inferiority to the eye—gains new meaning when presented in a translation, the very foundation of which is linguistic dexterity. In effect, Garcilaso himself mirrors the tongue and the two qualities attributed to it by Filón: as a translator, Garcilaso mediates between Italian and Spanish, and the work he creates is not a production, but rather, a reproduction.

It becomes symptomatic, in this light, that in the dedicatory passages, Garcilaso refers to his translation as “primogenitura” and likens it to an “hijo propio” (13; 20). Both of these terms associate written production with reproduction and inheritance. Again, this is not an uncommon idea in the era. But in the context of a translation (a work in which a *lengua* mediates between two *lenguas*), the use of these expressions becomes particularly charged, reflecting the reproductive capacity Filón ascribes to the tongue and its ability to produce “hijos espirituales” (123). Daniel Mesa Gancedo has pointed out that these prefatory lexical choices are an early example of “la conexión entre engendramiento y escritura” that will continue to characterize the writings of Garcilaso (91). The (male) writer fathers a text just as the speaker produces “hijos espirituales,” and in the context of a translation, *lengua* is the decisive instrument for both acts of reproduction.

To draw on the pithy formulation offered by Valeria Finucci in *Generation*

7. For more on the presentation of Mercury in the *Traducción*, see the study by Christian Fernández, which analyzes the conjunction of Amaru and Mercury in the snakes represented on Garcilaso’s coat of arms (111–27).

8. In the *Tetrabiblos*, for example, Ptolemy asserts that “Mercury [is lord] of speech and thought, the tongue, bile, and the buttocks” (321). In *El pequeño mundo del hombre*, Francisco Rico points out that in Renaissance thought, the tongue and the hand, associated with human nature and creativity, gained greater appreciation (145).

and *Degeneration*, genealogy is built on the conjunction of *genitus* and *logos*, or reproduction and the word (9). And in the case of the *Traducción*, both of these are located in the speaking, generative tongue that is theorized in the dialogues and reflected metatextually in Garcilaso's role as translator. With this in mind, we can turn to the subtle way in which Garcilaso manipulates the genealogical nature of the tongue in order to make an ideological claim about his work, one that may be seen to respond to the contemporary animus toward members of Jewish communities—like Ebreo himself, the author of the *Dialoghi*. As we will see, Garcilaso does not disavow or suppress his indebtedness to Ebreo, but he does establish distance between his translation and the possibility of a Hebrew forebear in terms of *lengua*, by arguing that his *Traducción* is based on an Italian original.

Leone Ebreo, born Judah Abravanel in Portugal, was the son of the influential Isaac Abravanel. Political upheaval in the late fifteenth century caused the Abravanel family to move from Portugal to Spain (Burgos Núñez 30). After the Catholic Monarchs issued the Edict of Expulsion in 1492, the family fled again, this time to the Italian peninsula. Ebreo spent the remainder of his life there, and is believed to have died before 1535, the year in which the *Dialoghi* were printed in Rome (Bernand 39). Garcilaso does not say much about Ebreo in his *Traducción*: he calls him a “doctísimo maestro” in the preliminaries, and again, at the close of the third dialogue, he adds: “Así acabó su obra este preclarísimo varón; obra más digna de que su autor le diera fin con su ambigua promesa, que no de que el tiempo se lo dé con sus calamidades” (*Traducción* 504). This “ambiguous promise” refers to the one made by Filón to Sofía at the end of the third dialogue: to explain the effects of love in a subsequent encounter. Since the death of Ebreo left the *Dialoghi* incomplete, the promise went unfulfilled. Overall, despite the paucity of references Garcilaso makes to the man, it is clear that he held Ebreo in high esteem.

Nevertheless, Garcilaso does seem to take care to distance his translation from the possibility of an original Hebrew text, preferring instead to situate his work as the “offspring” of another Christian tongue: Italian. In order to make this argument, Garcilaso draws on the fact that the original language of the *Dialoghi* was a matter of some debate (Pescatori 8–9; Soria Olmedo 17). In his prefatory address to Don Maximiliano de Austria, Garcilaso raises this point:

En qué lengua se escribiesen estos diálogos no se sabe de cierto, porque aunque Alejandro Piccolomini, aquel caballero senés, digno de todo loor,

en la *Institución moral* que compuso hablando de la amistad, reprende al traductor, que él dice que lo tradujo de Hebreo en italiano sin decir quién es, a mí me parece que lo hace por reprender en tercera persona al mismo autor[.] (21)

For Garcilaso, Piccolomini's thesis—that the *Dialoghi* are an Italian translation of a preexisting Hebrew text—is merely a way to levy indirect criticism on Ebreo.⁹ Garcilaso, in contrast, asserts that the original language must have been Italian. In support of this thesis, he cites the authority of “los que entienden la lengua hebrea” and the features of the language itself:

Por todo lo cual me parece que aquel doctísimo varón escribió en italiano; porque si bien se advierte a las galas de su manera de hablar, y a los muchos consecuentes que calla, y a los correlativos que suple, y a toda la demás destreza, artificio y elegancia que muestra en su proceder, que cualquier curioso podría notar, con otras muchas lindezas que hay en el italiano, que yo no me atrevo a decir en compendio, se verá que no se pudieran hacer tantas sutilezas tan galanas en traducción de una lengua a otra. (21)

Here Garcilaso forecloses the possibility that the *Dialoghi* may have been originally composed in Hebrew by arguing that the stylistic qualities of the Italian could not be the result of translation. While Garcilaso treats this as a scholarly question, it is also bound up with issues of identity, ideology, and a growing intolerance toward Jewish communities in the sixteenth century.

While Ebreo and his family had been highly respected in courtly and bureaucratic circles, his Jewish ancestry was still controversial enough that the second and third editions of the *Dialoghi* (1541, 1545) carried the loaded title *Dialoghi d'amore composti per Leone medico, di nazione Hebreo, et dipoi fatto christiano*, the last two phrases recognizing his Jewish origins but also emphasizing a conversion to Christianity (Soria Olmedo 15). When Garcilaso published his translation in Madrid in 1590, these concerns would have been no less pressing.¹⁰ *Conversos*, people of Jewish ancestry who had converted to

9. Rossella Pescatori notes that Piccolomini simply alluded to an alteration in the language of the work (8). Pescatori provides an overview of competing theories about the original language, as does Sommer (395–96n5).

10. In fact, the *Index Tridentine* specifically mentions Ebreo, and his entire body of work was forbidden by the General Inquisitor of Spain, Gaspar de Quiroga (Bernand 166).

Catholicism, were viewed with suspicion in the Counterreformation, and even translating from Hebrew texts could prove a dangerous activity, as demonstrated in the arrest and trial of Fray Luis de León.¹¹ And while Garcilaso does not shy away from translating the work of Ebreo or praising the man himself, he carefully stresses that the precursor of his Castilian *Traducción* is another Christian tongue. Both erudite and savvy, this claim draws on the reproductive—and therefore genealogical—nature of the translating tongue in order to provide the *Traducción* with a linguistic *limpieza de sangre*.

In his translation, then, Garcilaso imbues the exceptional qualities of the tongue with heightened significance: its status as a reproductive organ echoes the nature of the work itself, not the *Dialoghi d'amore*, but specifically, *La traducción del indio de los tres Diálogos de amor de León Hebreo*, a title that critically foregrounds his role as linguistic mediator. This understanding of *lengua* reworks the Classical hierarchy of the sensory organs from within, maintaining the primary importance of the eye, but at the same time, carving out a unique position for the embodied tongue. Moreover, Garcilaso takes the opportunity to situate this reproduction in a Christian genealogy, not by disavowing Ebreo, but rather, through *lengua*, by rejecting the notion of an originally Hebrew text. The associative nature of these correspondences—from the corporeal nature of the tongue philosophized by Ebreo to the role of Garcilaso as a translator to the linguistic lineage of his *Traducción*—would certainly have resonated with the intellectual proclivities of El Inca, and with the central and intertwined roles that *lengua* and genealogy would play in his Peruvian historiographies. The terms of the ideological tension might then shift from Old to New World orthodoxies, and the object of study from love in the abstract to Andean history, but again, Garcilaso would frame his particular intervention in terms of *lengua*. In postulating a tongue possessed of mediating and reproductive capacities, which, in turn, carry genealogical and ideological implications for the act of translation, the *Traducción* provides Garcilaso with an instrument he will deploy brilliantly in the *Comentarios reales* and the *Historia general*.

11. Julio Ortega points out the chronological proximity of the arrest and trial of Fray Luis by the Inquisition and the publication of the *Traducción*, and sees the phrase “la traducción del indio” embedded in the title as “una formulación tensa y casi insólita” on account of its transatlantic implications (347). In her study, Zamora situates the *Comentarios reales* within the kind of Humanist philological inquiry undertaken by Fray Luis.

Conflicted Bodies

The next work published by Garcilaso, anticipated in the preliminaries to his translation of Ebreo, is *La Florida del Inca* (1605). This work narrates the fortunes of the expedition led by Hernando de Soto between 1539 and 1543. Generically, *La Florida* is quite distinct from the *Traducción*. The translation reaches back to a prestigious Classical form—the dialogue—to deal in abstruse terms with questions of the universe and the soul. *La Florida*, in contrast, chronicles a specific historical event and attempts to describe the sheer novelty of the Americas, and a little-known region at that. The tradition and abstraction of the philosophical treatise seem (and in some ways are) a world apart from the newness and the narrative focus of the Floridian text. At the same time, there are clear similarities between the two works. We have already seen how Garcilaso characterizes his writerly output in unified terms. In addition, both the *Traducción* and *La Florida* constitute reproductions: the former, of course, is a translation, while the latter is allegedly a mere transcription. The main source that Garcilaso claims to rely on is an unnamed participant in the Soto expedition, now considered to be Gonzalo Silvestre, a man whose itinerary in the New World included both La Florida and Peru. Silvestre, Garcilaso tells us early on, was an eyewitness to all that he related. This matter, the eyewitness status of Silvestre, offers another point of comparison with the *Traducción*: once again, the eye occupies a distinctly privileged position. In the *Traducción*, this stems from Classical notions about sensory perception, while in *La Florida*, it relates to the credibility of the eyewitness. But once again, Garcilaso works from within convention in order to destabilize it, pointing out the limitations of the eye and giving the tongue a central role.

Gonzalo Silvestre had witnessed firsthand the events he related to Garcilaso. As El Inca knew well, eyewitness accounts of the New World, from La Florida to Peru, wielded substantial authority. Narratives of Spanish exploration and conquest often based their credibility on the fact that their writers had seen the events recounted. We see an example of this in the first published Spanish chronicle about Peru, *La conquista del Perú llamada la Nueva Castilla*, printed in Seville in 1534 (Porrás Barrenechea 45). The anonymous author of the account, which focuses primarily on the imprisonment and execution of Atahualpa, concludes by declaring “de todo esto yo hago fe y testimonio como testigo de vista que a todas estas cosas me halle presente con el muy magnifico y esforçado caballero Francisco piçarro” (101). For the

conquistador who composed this chronicle, these claims fulfilled the dual function of shoring up his credibility and foregrounding his contribution to the enterprise. Similarly, Pedro de Cieza de León—one of the interlocutors cited by Garcilaso in the *Comentarios reales*—describes the effort of composing his *Crónica del Perú* as analogous to the effort expended in the expansion of empire:

Quién pensará o podrá afirmar los inopinados casos que en las guerras y descubrimientos de mill y seyscientas leguas de tierra les han sucedido? Las hambres, sed, muertes, temores, y cansancio? De todo esto ay tanto que dezir, que a todo scriptor cansará en lo screuir. Por esta causa de lo más importante dello, muy poderoso señor, he hecho y copilado esta hystoria de lo que yo vi y traté: y por informaciones ciertas de personas de fe pude alcançar. (7)

For Cieza de León, recording the difficult and precarious nature of discovery is, in itself, an exhausting act. In this way, both participating in conquest and later writing about it constitute physical services rendered to the imperial project.

Garcilaso, who had no firsthand experience of La Florida, claimed to depend especially on the eyewitness testimony of Silvestre. He describes Silvestre as “mi autor,” and characterizes his own role in writing the text as that of a scribe (*La Florida* 876; bk. 2.1, ch. 27).¹² But the accounts of a participant like Silvestre were also susceptible to criticism on the grounds of self-interest. If conquistadors who wrote about their exploits could claim a doubled service to the imperial project—one military, the other textual—the obverse of that claim was their potentially dubious motivation, the desire to present themselves in the best and most rewarding light possible. Classical and contemporary treatises on historical writing considered such matters at length. The ancient satirist Lucian, for example, in *How to Write History*, suggested that the historian “should for preference be an eyewitness, but, if not, listen to those who tell the more impartial story, those whom one would suppose least likely to subtract from the facts or add to them out of favour or malice” (61). This suggests a distinction between partial and impartial

12. Carmen de Mora points out that the term “autor” here refers simply to the importance of Silvestre as the source of the narrative (291).

observers, a point sharpened by the Spanish historian Luis Cabrera de Córdoba in his *De historia, para entenderla y escribirla* (1611). While first noting that “a los que interuiniéron en las expediciones . . . se les ha de dar más crédito,” Cabrera de Córdoba later makes the critical caveat that firsthand knowledge of events may be undermined by the lingering prejudices of eyewitnesses, especially when their testimony is provided shortly after the event they recount (45). In order to produce a fair historical account, the essential element is time, which has the power to soothe the passions of immediate experience:

Que no sea suficiente sólo para la verdad el hallarse presente a los hechos, muestra Xenofonte; . . . Al contrario los que escriuieron después que acae-cieron los hechos, son tenidos por más verdaderos, diciendo en su aprouación que se hallauan más libres de pasiones, el juicio menos perturbado para deliberar y elegir lo más prouable, y osar dezir. El escriuir las cosas a su tiempo tiene peligro y dificultad, por la irritación de los ánimos que lleua aquí y allí el amor de los suyos, el odio de los enemigos, de quién nacen las perturbaciones, que son ciegas y se fingen para impedir el juicio recto y no ver lo que conuiene y lo que es honesto, por más que guarde de igualdad y neutralidad. (73)

The formulations of Lucian and Cabrera de Córdoba illustrate a central problem in polemical New World histories: the tension between claiming direct knowledge of events as a source of credibility, and at the same time disavowing any intention to manipulate the truth. Rolena Adorno has studied the complex nature of the eyewitness in New World histories, pointing out that the credibility of firsthand accounts depended on the broader trustworthiness of the narrator as established by juridical norms (“History, Law, and the Eyewitness” 156–57). A classic example studied by Adorno is that of Bernal Díaz del Castillo and his *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (first published in 1632). In this work, the soldier-turned-historian recalls a discussion he had with two licentiates concerning the credibility of his history. The assertion of one of the licentiates, that an individual cannot be witness to his own actions, pithily dramatizes the conflict between firsthand knowledge and the potential for bias.

In *La Florida*, Garcilaso reframes and complicates such questions about the potential prejudice on the part of the eyewitness by going back to an

inquiry of the senses, focusing here on the physical limitations of the embodied eye. Anticipating criticisms that might be raised about an eyewitness source, Garcilaso points not to any potentially self-serving calculation, but rather, to the sheer physical difficulty of fighting and observing at the same time:

Y si alguno dijere lo que se suele decir, queriendo motejar de cobardes o mentirosos a los que dan buena cuenta de los particulares hechos que pasaron en las batallas en que se hallaron, porque dicen que, si pelearon, cómo vieron todo lo que en la batalla pasó, y, si lo vieron, cómo pelearon, porque dos oficios juntos, como mirar y pelear, no se pueden hacer bien, a esto se responde que era común costumbre, entre estos soldados, como lo es en todas las guerras del mundo, volver a referir delante del general y de los demás capitanes los trances más notables que en las batallas habían pasado. Y muchas veces, cuando lo que contaba algún capitán o soldado era muy hazñoso y difícil de creer, lo iban a ver los que lo habían oído, por certificarse del hecho por vista de ojos. (*La Florida* 742–43)

The problem outlined here by Garcilaso echoes the one described by Díaz del Castillo, but the way in which Garcilaso phrases this problem highlights its corporeality: the eyewitness conquistador must be able to “mirar y pelear” at the same time, activities that place different and competing demands on the body. In fact, such divided attention could give rise to questions about the credibility of the eyewitness that could only be resolved through wider consultation.

This qualification, made in the “Proemio al lector,” raises the question of how Garcilaso establishes his narrative authority in *La Florida*, an issue that has elicited differing scholarly perspectives. Zamora, for instance, draws a distinction between *La Florida* and the *Comentarios reales*, arguing that the former is based on eyewitness testimony while the latter is constructed on language (44). The precision of this distinction, however, overlooks the qualifications made above, which acknowledge certain reservations about the credibility of the eyewitness. Adorno, in contrast, has argued that the vital source for *La Florida* is not the historical accounts provided by participants like Silvestre, but rather, the contemporary written tradition regarding the region, and in particular, the popular *Naufragios* penned by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the wandering survivor of the disastrous Floridian expedition led by Pánfilo de Narváez in 1527, a decade before that of Soto (*Polemics*

279–301). These differing perspectives demonstrate that the question of narrative authority in *La Florida* remains unsettled. It is therefore significant to note the ways in which the destabilization of eyewitness authority in *La Florida* ultimately privileges the capacity of the tongue. Interpreters (*lenguas*) are already major historical actors in the narrative, but their particular interventions also mirror the role that Garcilaso defines for himself in the composition of the text (especially when considering the problems outlined above). That role, in turn, draws on the unique capacities of the tongue as set forth in the earlier *Traducción*. A closer examination of this dynamic suggests that the importance of *lenguas* in *La Florida* does not differentiate it from the *Comentarios reales*, but rather unites the two works.

In historical terms, it is unsurprising that linguistic mediators—*lenguas*—frequently shape the fortunes of the Soto expedition. One particularly significant figure in this regard is Juan Ortiz, the native of Seville who had been taken hostage by the *cacique* Hirrihigua, along with three companions, when they went to his territory in search of Narváez. When Soto hears news of Ortiz, “le pareció sería bien enviar por él, así por sacarlo de poder de indios como porque lo había menester para lengua e intérprete de quien se pudiese confiar” (*La Florida* 806; bk. 2.1, ch. 5). This endeavor, occasioned in part by the need for a *lengua*, gives rise to the alliance between Soto and Mucozo, the ruler to whom Ortiz had fled to escape Hirrihigua. Mucozo is a magnanimous prince, often praised for his virtue in *La Florida*. While the *lengua* Ortiz draws Soto and Mucozo together in alliance, *lenguas* are also potentially dangerous. In a later episode, the conquistadors meet Vitachuco, a *cacique* who plots to destroy Soto and his men by luring them into a trap. Vitachuco chooses to reveal his plan to four indigenous interpreters accompanying Soto. While at first they agree to keep the secret, these four interpreters soon reconsider their decision and reveal everything to Ortiz, who passes the information to Soto, thus ensuring that the Spaniards prepare for and emerge victorious from the subsequent attack (*La Florida* 858–64; bk. 2.1, ch. 22–23).

Episodes like these illustrate the way Garcilaso “authorizes the position of the interpreter” throughout *La Florida*, as Lisa Voigt has argued (150). She notes that this authorization redounds on Garcilaso himself, the native Quechua speaker who published *La Florida* while also developing the *Comentarios reales*, a work in which his own linguistic capacities would be vital. It is also crucial to consider the extent to which Garcilaso acts as a “metatextual” *lengua*—that is, a linguistic mediator—in the composition of *La Florida*

itself. After outlining potential criticisms about an eyewitness conquistador and his questionable ability to “mirar y pelear” simultaneously, Garcilaso alludes to his own editorial role in handling information for the composition of *La Florida*: “Y no le ayudaban poco [al que me daba la relación], para volver a la memoria de los sucesos pasados, las muchas preguntas y repreguntas que yo sobre ellos y sobre las particularidades y calidades de aquella tierra le hacía” (*La Florida* 743). The pleonastic “preguntas y repreguntas” serves, uncharacteristically, to highlight rather than minimize the agency of El Inca in shaping the text.

Garcilaso, moreover, does not limit himself to describing this process, but actually dramatizes it. After narrating the failed attack by Vitachuco and the exceptional valor of certain men who fought for him, Garcilaso includes a chapter titled “Donde responde a una objeción,” where he anticipates that some readers might not be convinced of the honorable conduct of the vanquished. After declaring his own impartiality and assuring the reader that he has not altered the story “porque soy indio,” Garcilaso records the conversation he claims to have had with Silvestre, in which “le dije: ‘Según la representación universal en que los indios están, no han de creer que son suyas estas razones,’” and Silvestre responds, reiterating his claims and reassuring Garcilaso (*La Florida* 878; bk. 2.1, ch. 27). This description and dramatization of the “preguntas y repreguntas” through which *La Florida* was composed bring back the secondary but mediating and ultimately reproductive nature of the tongue as outlined by Filón in the *Traducción*.¹³ The anecdote strategically interspersed in this account reminds the reader that, over the course of oral conversations between Silvestre and El Inca, the latter has always acted as a mediator between the conquistador and his own memories of the Floridian expedition. While maintaining that Silvestre (the eye) constitutes the primary source of credibility for *La Florida*, Garcilaso (the tongue), as a skillful interviewer, poses questions and more questions, calling forth the remembered observations of the eye and shaping the narrative. The dialogic process through which Garcilaso claims to have created *La Florida* compensates for the divided attentions of the eye through the concerted effort of the tongue.

13. Mesa Gancedo also alludes to this parallel, suggesting that Garcilaso constitutes the “incitador–escribiente,” a masculine force, while Silvestre is the “poseedor de la relación,” a feminine one (92–93n9).

In *La Florida*, Garcilaso outlines the problem of eyewitness credibility in a subtly corporeal way, highlighting the divided attentions of the conquistador-turned-narrator, and then hints at the role of the tongue in retrospectively bridging that gap. The difficulty of simultaneously “fighting and observing” suggests a body divided, and this is a problem Garcilaso is especially interested in addressing. It is worth noting briefly, in this regard, that in contemporary religious discourse a similar criticism about incompatible bodily inclinations had been raised about mestizos like Garcilaso himself. José de Acosta, one of the major sources cited by Garcilaso in his histories, articulates this concern in his *De procuranda indorum salute*. In this treatise he suggests that while mestizo Christians would be ideally suited to aid in the project of evangelization, their capacity as interpreters is too often impeded by their corporeal connections to Amerindian customs and beliefs: “Porque de ordinario mantienen los resabios de la condición y costumbres de los indios, con cuya leche y trato se han criado” (69).¹⁴ In the *Comentarios reales*, Garcilaso will turn this condemnation of indigenous breast milk on its head, insisting that his bodily connection to the Incan past is what allows him to “servirles de comento y glosa, y de intérprete” to previous Spanish historians who have written on Peru. In *La Florida*, following a logic already explored in the *Traducción*, we see the shaping and probing of his indigenous tongue as a corrective to the eye. It is not the tongue that is divided against itself, but rather, the mestizo tongue that comes to supplement, order, and verify the credibility of the divided eye.

Conclusions

Comparative examination of the two earliest publications by El Inca reveals a fascinating genealogy that critically refines two distinct corporeal hierarchies—one Classical, the other historiographical—that privilege the position of the eye over the other sensory organs. “Refining” is the key term here, as both texts challenge, without inverting, those hierarchies. The result is a critical nuancing that recalibrates the role of *lengua* in philosophical and narrative discourse. There is, moreover, a certain rhetorical logic in the textual trajectory from his first to his second work. In the *Traducción*, the

14. On the context in which Acosta was writing, see the study by Larissa Brewer-García.

mediating and generative capacities of the tongue act as a metonym for Garcilaso himself, rendering the text his progeny. Through this synthesis, and by insisting on the Christian predecessor of that offspring (again through the figure of the tongue), Garcilaso constructs a unique textual form of *limpieza de sangre*, a linguistic genealogy that shields itself from accusations of heterodox origins. In *La Florida*, in turn, Garcilaso interrogates the sensory hierarchy underpinning narratives of conquest, which privileges the eye for a different reason: the credibility of the eyewitness. In assessing this form of textual validation, Garcilaso foregrounds its limits in uniquely corporeal terms, as the eyewitness's credibility becomes a liability when considering the physical difficulties of "seeing and fighting" at the same time. As the eye is destabilized, the tongue comes to the fore, not only in the Floridian encounters, but also in the process of composing and narrating *La Florida*. In this way, the metaphysical and sensorial shifts theorized in the *Traducción* become historiographical, but are also still sensorial, in the context of *La Florida*. In claiming the veracity of his work, Garcilaso's role as mediator—a role assigned by Filón to the tongue in the *Traducción*—coaxes and reshapes the narrative recalled from the eye.

By problematizing the relationship between the eye and the tongue, Garcilaso refines the mechanisms through which his own authorial and mediating agency metabolizes first- and secondhand accounts, oral and written evidence, and memory and interpretation. In terms of his larger project, these realignments prove crucial, inasmuch as the subtle displacement of the eye in favor of the tongue will become the defining quality of the two parts of the *Comentarios reales*. In these final and most renowned works, Garcilaso will foreground his knowledge of Quechua, a knowledge that, as he admits, may have rusted from lack of practice and his displacement from Cuzco, but nevertheless remains embodied in his inherited linguistic knowledge and self-ascribed role of interpreter, or *lengua*.

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