

WILEY

HISTORICAL THEORY THROUGH A PERUVIAN LOOKING GLASS

Author(s): MARK THURNER

Source: *History and Theory*, DECEMBER 2015, Vol. 54, No. 4, THEME ISSUE 53: History and Theory in a Global Frame (DECEMBER 2015), pp. 27-45

Published by: Wiley for Wesleyan University

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24543135>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Wiley and  are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *History and Theory*

JSTOR

HISTORICAL THEORY THROUGH A PERUVIAN LOOKING GLASS

MARK THURNER

ABSTRACT

In this article for the theme issue on “Historical Theory in a Global Frame,” I argue that “Peru” is a “historical theory in a global frame.” The theory or, as I prefer, theoretical event, named Peru was born global in an early colonial “abyss of history” and elaborated in the writings of colonial and postcolonial Peruvian historians. I suggest that the looking glass held up by Peruvian historiography is of great potential significance for historical theory at large, since it is a two-way passageway between the ancient and the modern, the Old World and the New, the East and the West. This slippery passageway enabled some Peruvian historians to move stealthily along the bloody cutting-edge of global history, at times anticipating and at others debunking well-known developments in “European” historical theory. Today, a reconnaissance of Peruvian history’s inner recesses may pay dividends for a historical theory that would return to its colonial and global origins.

Keywords: Peru, Rome, India, Europe, globalization, historiography, historicism

“As a name and as a social fact Peru . . . was . . . born of blood and tears in an abyss of history, with a loud crash that shook the world.”¹ The Peruvian author of these words—Jorge Basadre (1903–1980)—grasped that although first imagined and configured as an antipodal, *heterotopian* mirror of the Renaissance historical imagination, “Peru” was better understood in historical terms as a mirror of and for its own making. Could this Peruvian looking glass be a portal into the global rabbit hole of historical theory?

Stepping through that glass and down its burrow, I have found that the enticing bottle of history or historicism is, *pace* the antihistoricist dogma of Anglophone postcolonial theory, in fact not filled with Europe’s colonizing “poison.”² Instead,

1. Jorge Basadre, *Meditaciones sobre el destino histórico del Perú* (Lima: Huascarán, 1947), 104-105.

2. My reference here is to the disagreement concerning the emergence or arrival of history and/or historicism in early modern and modern India. Some postcolonial scholars have argued that historical thought was not present in India (and perhaps for good reason) before the arrival of British colonial rule, whereas others have argued that a factual or unmythical historiography was well developed in early modern India. “Poison” is the “pragmatic” and no doubt polemical term of Velchuru Nara-yana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, the co-authors of *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600–1800* (Ranekhet, India: Permanent Black, 2001), who in “A Pragmatic Response,” *History and Theory* 46, no. 3 (2007), 427, write: “we are quite confident that it is far less easy to assert today than it was a decade ago that historiography itself was merely a poisoned gift of colonial rule.” However, as far as I am able to ascertain, it is not Dipesh Chakrabarty’s term or mood, although Chakrabarty seems to be the primary target here. Writing “in an anti-colonial spirit of gratitude,” Chakrabarty famously characterized “European thought” as “a gift to us all” [*Provincializing Europe*:

and as Alice dreamt, that bottle's potent elixir is a heady homemade brew that grants passage to the garden of history. But my purpose here is not to serve up Peru as exotic grazing grounds for "grand theory" cannibals.³ Instead, I will entertain the notion that "Peru" itself *is* a "historical theory in a global frame." Properly understood on its own shifting terms, this Peru not only provincializes Europe; it also provincializes Indian and European debates about history and its theory. In short, Peru suggests that modern history and historicism are neither Old World accretions (Oriental or Occidental), nor modern European exports, but instead ambivalent colonial inventions of global scope.

Before the early sixteenth century, "Peru" and "Peruvian history" could not exist. But of course one could say the same, and indeed it was said, about "modern history." A century later, the early modern world could not get enough of Peru. Although "Peru" was surely the collective product of a transoceanic exchange of bodies and anti-bodies, fluids and metals, for Basadre and many other Peruvian historians, the poetic fountainhead of "Peruvian history" was the bloody and tearful pen of an Andean "centaur." The illegitimate mestizo son of an Inca noblewoman and a Spanish hidalgo, Peruvian history's first son and father was born and baptized in Peru as Gomes Suarez de Figueroa (1539–1616), but he wrote his history in Andalusian exile under the venerable alias of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. Indeed, from a heterogeneous field of early modern chroniclers, "the Inca" son of a paternal exile would eventually emerge in the Spanish and Peruvian historical imaginations as an antipodal Herodotus, the New World's bastard father of history and lies.⁴

Widely considered a literary monument of the Spanish Golden Age, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *Los comentarios reales de los Incas* has long been the deserving object of immense erudition and wide-ranging meta-commentary.⁵ For my small part, I have simply pointed out that perhaps the Inca's key contribution to "Peruvian history" was his canonical exegesis of the "origin and principle of the name of Peru."⁶ To telescope a long and fantastic story, by poetic means "the

Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 255]. The point is moot in the Indies/Americas, however, where history is not reducible to the arrival and aping of the modern European model. I (and several other Latin American scholars) argued this point more than a decade ago. For an antihistoricist, postcolonial, Gandhian reading distinct from Chakrabarty's and that does indeed celebrate rather than lament the absence of historiography and historicism in India before the British, see Vinay Lal, *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

3. Social-science historians and historical sociologists have attempted to do this, in my view with mixed results. See Miguel Angel Centeno and Fernando López-Alves, *The Other Mirror: Grand Theory through the Lens of Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), and again, more recently, in *Peru in Theory*, ed. Paulo Drinot (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2014).

4. In his widely cited doctoral thesis on Peruvian historiography, *La Historia en el Perú* (Lima: San Marcos, 1910), José de la Riva-Agüero famously compared Inca Garcilaso de la Vega to Herodotus.

5. The *garcilacista* critical scholarship is too mountainous and treacherous to list here. Readers unfamiliar with this literature could consult with profit the following: Carmen Bernard, *Un Inca platonicien: Garcilaso de la Vega, 1539–1616* (Paris: Fayard, 2006); Jose Antonio Mazzotti, *Coros mestizos del Inca Garcilaso: Resonancias andinas* (Lima: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996); and Margarita Zamora, *Language, Authority, and Indigenous History in the Comentarios reales de los Incas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

6. There were and are competing versions of the origin and meaning of the name of Peru. The most oft-cited but problematic source is Raul Porras Barrenechea, *El nombre del Perú* (Lima: Villanueva,

Inca” of the pen turned the mirror of the anonymous “Indian” barbarian of the global colonial Renaissance imagination into the unlikely eponymous founder of Peru, thereby creating, in “an abyss of history,” a proper historical subject of its own ambivalent making, albeit one that moved at an accelerated pace that far exceeded millennial Rome’s.⁷ The exegesis of the name is key to Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s method and purpose, which is not only to found a Peruvian history of and for Peruvians, but to write an erudite and critical commentary on the practice of history-writing itself. The result of this double operation was that the Peruvian history of Peru was born global not only as proper history but at the same time as a colonial critique of history. This poetic and critical aspect of the *Royal Commentaries* reverberated strongly among subsequent generations of Peruvian historians, whose writing on Peru not only produced new Peruvian futures but also, as we shall see, instructive critiques of “European” historiography.

But Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s “Peru” not only outstripped “Rome” and modestly corrected the misconceptions of a linguistically ignorant and conceptually limited Old World historical thought. His Peru also eclipsed another key topos of the Renaissance historical imagination: ancient oriental “India.” Why India? The words of the brilliant Jesuit historian José de Acosta provide some faint clues. In his *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (1590), Acosta paused to explain what for Spaniards needed no explaining:

Among us [Spaniards] the name “Indias” is general since, in our tongue, when we say “Indias” we refer to far away and rich lands that are very different from ours. Thus we Spaniards call Peru and Mexico, China, Malaysia, and Brazil “Indias”; and if letters are sent from any part of these, even though said lands and dominions are very distant and diverse one from the other, we say that they are letters from the Indies. One can also not deny that the name “Indias” was taken from Oriental India, because among the ancients that other India was celebrated as a very remote and rich land so far away that it was taken

1951). The “origin and principle” of the name of Peru was canonically described by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega in these terms: “One [of the ships sent from Panama by Basco Nuñez de Balboa] sailed farther than the others down past the equator, navigating along the coast, and as it went on its way it caught sight of an Indian fishing at the mouth of a river like those many rivers that enter into the Ocean there. . . . The ship passed before the Indian. . . . By way of signs and words the Spaniards . . . inquired of him: ‘What land was this, and what was it called?’ By their facial expressions and gestures the Indian understood that they were questioning him, but he did not understand what they were asking him, and to those whom he understood to be questioning him, responded he with haste (before they could do him harm) by naming his proper name, saying ‘Beru,’ and then he added another [name], saying ‘Pelú.’ What he meant to say was: ‘If you ask me what I am called, then I call myself Beru, and if you ask me where I was, then I say I was in the river. . . .’ The Christians understood in accordance with their desire, imagining that the Indian had understood and so responded appropriately, as if he and they had spoken in Castilian [Spanish]. Ever since that time, which was in 1515 or 1516, the Spaniards—corrupting both names as they have almost all of the words they take from the language of the Indians of that land— . . . have called that rich and grand Empire . . . that the Inca Kings . . . had conquered and subjected, ‘Peru.’ . . . That is the origin and principle of the name of Peru, so famous in the world, and rightly so, for she has filled the world with gold and silver, pearls and precious stones.” Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Primera Parte de los Comentarios Reales de los Incas* (Lisbon, 1609), Libro 1, Capítulos IV-V. My translation.

7. The modern practice of writing histories that purposefully surpassed ancient Greco-Roman precedents and/or fulfilled Old Testament typology was common across the Atlantic World and beyond. See Donald A. Lupton, *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), and Sabine MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time: Rome, the Incas, Spain, and Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

to be the end of the earth. And so, those who reside at the ends of the earth are called “Indians.”⁸

Acosta’s words may have been intended to deflect criticism by imperial rivals of a supposed Spanish cartographic innocence, but that was very far from the truth of the matter. For us, his words dust off a new world-historical map that, uncannily written over by the most venerable names of history, nevertheless endured for more than three centuries. Why? As a name for the subcontinent and its effluents (the Indian Ocean) “India” appears to have been derived from the generic name for river, or Sindhu.⁹ But as a proper name, the ancient gloss acquired a fabulous appellative historical life of its own, and was now strangely disseminated everywhere for, as all Spaniards knew, Charles V had “pushed” universal empire beyond the Pillars of Hercules to all those “rich lands at the ends of the world” (Indias) that now crowded maps. Uncannily, that early modern *and* millenarian pushing of the name of India to every end of the earth summoned to the world stage of history many millions of newly named “Indians.” Although this newly omnipresent “Indian” was in some sense a fantastic “Other” drawn from a medieval Orientalist imaginary suddenly let loose, he could also be much more than that: in the case of Peru, the founder of an ambivalent and unprecedented history of loss and riches.¹⁰

The global dispensation of the ancient appellative India and Indian as *Indias* and *indios* was for many—including Indians, half-Indians, ex-Indians, and *indianos* or Creoles—the mark not of error or prejudice but of the “riches of the body and the soul.” To be “Indian” was not necessarily a bad thing. The wandering desire for fabulous riches could be millenarian (as in the case of Columbus and other learned souls who were convinced that they were closing in on the original Garden of Eden that, many argued, was likely located in the jungles of Peru), to be sure, but its eventual historical fruits could be very modern or open-ended if not “traumatic” in a creative, world-making sense, as Edmundo O’Gorman argued with respect to the “invention of America.”¹¹ Thanks mainly to the mining Indians of Peru and New Spain, by the eighteenth century (but surely before), the geographical referent of the name of India was no longer the subcontinent but instead the far-flung Occidental and Oriental Indies. The earliest entry for “India” in the Spanish *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1734) reads:

INDIA. Abundance and copiousness of riches and precious things. Said in resemblance to the Kingdoms of the Indies, where mines of gold and silver are found. Latin: *Divitiarum copia*. QUEV. *M. B.* [Don Francisco de Quevedo, *Life of Marco Bruto*]: “To praise the wind is in the Prince a wealth greater than mines, for it is better to be Indias than to seek them.” And *Mus. 6. rom. 25.* [Quevedo, *Spanish Parnassus, Muse VI*]: “Treasures poured

8. José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* [Seville, 1590] (Madrid: Dastin, 2003), 92-93. My translation.

9. The origins of the names “Iberia” and “Peru” were similarly derived from the native names for river.

10. On the “European” imaginary of barbarian others, see Roger Bartra, *Wild-Men in the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

11. Edmundo O’Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of its History* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1961).

into the fields, Indias spilled into the towns, and it was Spain's honor to be charged with the performance."¹²

In Spanish, to "be Indias" or "have Indias" was consonant with and then overshadowed by "having Peru" and, somewhat later, "having or doing America." Like the India of the past, Peru's "name resonated universally as a fascinating announcement of riches and well-being."¹³ In sixteenth-century Iberia, the very utterance of "Peru" could summon dizzying images of El Dorado (the gilded man and city). The proverbial *poseer el Perú* ("to have Peru") was applied to men of extraordinary material and spiritual wealth. Most exhilarating was the proverbial phrase *¡Vale un Perú!* ("That's worth a Peru!"), an exclamation that may still be heard in Spain, Peru, and neighboring South American countries.

Notably, these thrilling words may very well have been coined to evoke a picture in the mind's eye of an astounding and unprecedented event in the annals of history: Francisco Pizarro's fabulous "gift of Peru" to the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, Charles V. Notably, Pizarro's *translatio imperii* of the insignia of sovereignty from the Incas to the Emperor of Christendom was made possible by an even more fabulous gift that for many was and is grand theft: the unprecedented king's ransom reportedly rendered to Pizarro ca. 1533 by the captive Inca Atahualpa. In his commentaries on history, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega went to some pains to establish the true worth of that ransom, comparing it with the European kings' ransoms tallied by the French jurist Jean Bodin. The Inca concluded without exaggeration that the Inca's was "the greatest ransom the world had ever seen." This claim—which, given the unprecedented wealth that now flowed from Peru's mines into Spain and from there to Antwerp or Genoa and beyond, was quite credible to European readers—backed deeper and far more poetic claims: Peru's "Caesars" or the Incas were surely among the richest and wisest kings the world had ever seen. In turn, the critical upshot of that claim was that Peru's vast store of wealth now "revealed herself to be a cruel stepmother (*madrastra*) to her own sons, and the passionate mother of foreigners."¹⁴ Since Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's early reckoning, the exorbitant "king's ransom" of the Inca that left Bodin in the dust would also evoke the melancholy melody of a step-mothered subject of a colonial history of extraction whose author shared a similar fate. The *Royal Commentaries* were future repayment or eventual compensation for that founding colonial ransom, for Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's pen purchased in the world of letters a long-lived lease on the riches of the soul for future "Peruvians," to be paid not only at the gates of heaven (then fast approaching, now far away), but in the pages of an unprecedented mestizo history. As we shall see, for Basadre this

12. "INDIA. s. f. Abundancia y copia de riquezas y preciosidades. Dixose por semejanza a los Reinos de las Indias, donde se hallan minas de oro y plata. Latín. Divitiarum copia. QUEV. M. B. Dar valor al viento, es mejor caudal en el Príncipe que minas, quanto es mejor y más cerca ser Indias que buscarlas. Y Mus. 6. Rom. 25. Thesoros vertió en los campos, Indias derramó en los Pueblos, el que del honor de España tuvo a cargo el desempeño." *Diccionario de Autoridades*, Tomo IV (Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia Española, 1726–1739). My translation.

13. Basadre, *Meditaciones*, 104–105.

14. Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Segunda Parte de los Comentarios Reales de los Incas o Historia General del Peru* (Cordoba, 1617), Libro I, Capitulo XXXVIII, folio 31.

ransom paid in the coin of history-writing was a founding “wager for Peru” that would invite further wagers on that wager.

Los Comentarios reales is a neo-Platonist, providential dynastic history wherein the twelve Inca sovereigns of the Capac house or *panaca* serve as Indian “mirrors of princes” useful for the Spanish governing of colonial Peru but also, in time, for its overthrow and displacement. As the marvelous prelude to “Roman” *translatio imperii* or Christian “Spanish conquest,” the Inca’s narrative of “the Inca kings that were” inscribed “Peru” in the pages of that venerable tradition of Old World prophecy and dynastic history known as “The Book of Kings” (*Libro de los Reyes*).¹⁵ Notably, however, these wise Incas were not Petrarch’s bookish phantoms. The Peruvian antiquity of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s antipodal Renaissance imagination was intimately perched within earshot on the bloody edge of what was fast becoming a blurry global past. He talked to the Incas in the flesh and suckled “fables” at their knees, drawing heavily upon a precolonial dynastic or genealogical tradition that had served Andean elites as a means for claiming descent in the illustrious “Capac” lineage or lineages of solar descent.¹⁶ What this means is that if Inca Garcilaso was a “Peruvian Herodotus,” this Herodotus was modern in a global or “antipodal” sense heretofore unimaginable.¹⁷ In this sense, the Peruvian-Andalusian Inca of the pen surely surpassed the Greek “father of history and father of lies.”

Unlike Europe’s invented Greco-Roman past, Peru or indeed Mexico’s “antiquity” was more proximate and real. It had suddenly collapsed “in blood and tears” but by no means disappeared. For many, it was an antiquity with colonial survivors who lived and wrote in modern fashion. The sixteenth-century study of the blood and ink of this living antiquity gave rise not only to a historicist Spanish imperial administration and historiography, but indeed to the early modern science of anthropology that, two centuries later, became an enlightened ethno-history.¹⁸ As it were, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was also the father of “Peruvian” anthropology. At any rate, the ambivalent consequences of an unobliterated, living antiquity for colonial and national history are too complex to pursue here. Suffice it to say that what today we call colonial history could be and was readily understood to be “national” albeit in a boundless, genealogical sense that reached

15. Of Old Testament and classical circum-Mediterranean origins, this venerable historiographical tradition was refashioned by early modern imperial and colonial historians, and it endured in modified form into the nineteenth century. See Mark Thurner, “The ‘As If’ of The Book of Kings: Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo’s Colonial Poetics of History,” *Latin American Research Review* 44, no. 1 (2009), 32-52.

16. See Catherine Julien, *Reading Inca History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000).

17. Inca Garcilaso was fully aware of his new predicament. On the one hand, the author presents himself as a hearing subject from “the end of the world,” that is, as a listening “Indian Inca” (*Inca Yndio*) who had “suckled fables” at the knee of Inca royalty as a youth. On the other hand, this same author is a “Spanish Inca” (the resonant meaning of the pen name Inca Garcilaso de la Vega) writing subject. This older writing subject now dialogues, in an erudite Spanish language that nevertheless registers Quechua cadences, with his young aural self and thus with the native “fables” or oral histories that constitute the primary sources of the text. In short, the subject position of this new dispensation of history was that of a listening and writing “knowing subject” who stood on either antipode of the globe, and on both sides of the ancient/modern and oral/written divide.

18. See Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

across the Atlantic and into the Pacific. Colonial and imperial historians could and did imagine “Peru” or “Mexico” to be sovereign political subjects of ancient origin with fused genealogies, such that an Inca or Mexican trunk led upward via “the chain” of Spanish viceroys and monarchs (from the perspective of Peru these Spanish monarchs could be seen as “Peruvian emperors”) into a composite Hispanic tree of early modern political theology. It was thus that, at about the same time that Jean Bodin famously doubted its veracity, colonial Mexican and Peruvian historians quietly undermined the “Four World Monarchies” scheme of Old World “universal history” without anyone taking notice.¹⁹ The prophesied procession of universal monarchies had given way to a global composite monarchy with many trunks and diverse origins.

Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s Peruvian commentary on history became “fable” in the eighteenth century (as opposed to history), “literature” in the nineteenth century (as opposed to history), and “Eurocentrism” in the twentieth (as opposed to “indigenous history”). But those self-inflicted wounds of lingering ideological battles could not obliterate the global mestizo scars that marked its history-making writing. Written from the bloody antipodes of the Indies and Spain, the exiled subject-position of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s “Peruvian history” would use the old East-West referents of “universal history” only to abuse them and leave them behind in the ruinous wake of an unprecedented “Peru.” Was Peruvian history oriental or occidental, Indian or Roman? It was both, more, and in the end neither, since it would be the product of its own name, of its own ambivalent making. Indeed, it may be more interesting and fruitful to ask if the writing of Oriental or Western history or indeed all colonial history today is not, in some uncommon, retrospective mestizo sense, “Peruvian.” The key point here for the history of historical theory is that the early modern pirating of the East-West idioms of “universal history” opened another promising, colonial route of modern history-writing long before Dipesh Chakrabarty’s “hyperreal Europe” could close off its passages into the future. But not all Peruvian historians forgot those passages.

Although nearly always torn by raucous and wounding debate, some of the best Peruvian historical writing registered and explored the promising echoes of those early colonial passages, in part because of a repeating perception that Peruvian history was the singular invention of its own abysmal name or origins. For some this name and origin was cursed and forlorn, and for others it was promising and open-ended, but for the more perceptive thinkers it was both. In the few pages that remain I will briefly sketch only a few of the many ways in which the writings of Peruvian historians could mine rich “Peruvian” (it should be clear by now that by “Peruvian” I do not refer to a provincial or merely national historical imagination) veins of historical theory (for others, fool’s gold).

Despite the deafening scholarly claims to the contrary, perhaps most early modern and modern “Latin American” historical writing, colonial or postcolonial, could not possibly be, or indeed ever thought of itself as, “Europe’s

19. On the Four World Monarchies scheme and Bodin, see Anthony Grafton, *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and for a wider discussion, Donald Kelley, *Faces of History: Historical Inquiry from Herodotus to Herder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

offspring.”²⁰ Indeed, in many cases no urgent need was felt to copy “national history” or “historicism” from “Europe,” in part because most if not all of historicism’s key elements—as classically described, for example, by Friedrich Meinecke in his interwar rescue of *Historismus*—were already present in the colonial historical and philosophical imagination and lexicon of the Indies/Americas.²¹ The elements of historicism were present on both sides of the eighteenth-century Atlantic and beyond because historians working in what we now so lazily call “Europe” and “Latin America”—more or less contemporary, facing mirrors or *mise-en-abyme* of intersecting historical imaginations—drank from the same circum-Mediterranean textual well, albeit with contrasting emphases, readerships, and points of view. But there are also quite reasonable grounds for the suspicion that in certain ways not-yet “Latin American” historical thinkers were “ahead” of their not-yet “European” counterparts.

An argument can be made that modern national history is not a nineteenth-century European invention subsequently exported to the colonies, but instead an early modern colonial invention that emerged first or at any rate more decisively in the Indies/Americas, and then later morphed into an anti-imperial republican history. Ancient “Indian” and colonial “Indo-American” genealogies provided not-yet Latin American historians with sovereign national origins and dynamics (in particular, accelerated progress in civilization) that could easily exceed those of the Old World empires and thus be turned against them. Moreover, in the case of the New World, the horizon of modernity and the direction of history were readily imagined to be moving in the other direction, not back east toward old Europe. This is part of the reason why, strictly speaking, recognizable national or patriotic histories were written in Peru and Mexico before modern “Europe” raised its head north of the Pyrenees and the Alps and then, under the continental banner of Napoleonic France, proceeded to plunder the “despotic” peninsulas of Italy and Iberia. And when, as François Hartog claims, this new Europe “saw itself as the locomotive of the modern world and cast itself as its ultimate tribunal,”²² Peruvian and Mexican historical thinkers were standing ready to turn the tables.

In 1791, for example, the editor of Lima’s *El Mercurio Peruano* announced that the primary task of his journal would be to counter “foreign” and principally European ignorance of Peruvian history.²³ It is important to note that for the editor and his Peruvian and Spanish colleagues, “Europe” did *not* then include Spain, Portugal, most of Italy, or Greece. Moreover, and since at the time Spain and the Spanish Indies formed one global “nation,” Spaniards were not “foreigners.” Spanish and Peruvian historians alike were similarly called fellow “national historians.” Given the rising importance of (northern) European opinion in the

20. The infelicitous “Europe’s offspring” phrase is from *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, Volume 4: 1800–1945*, ed. Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maiguashca, and Attila Pók (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

21. See Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1936).

22. François Hartog, “The Future of a Very Old Name.” Keynote address to the Inaugural Congress of the International Network for Theory of History, Ghent, July 2013. I wish to thank the author for sharing with me his unpublished draft.

23. Jacinto Calero y Moreira, *El Mercurio Peruano*, January 2, 1791.

age of vernacular newsprint and serial histories and novels, however, it was now necessary to combat the damages inflicted upon the image of Spain and the Indies, most of it based on misinformation or simple ignorance. This European wrecking-ball had gone so far as to obliterate the very existence of the “Peruvian” or native origin of the founder of the Inca dynasty, Manco Capac. Because of the influential writings of, among others, Raynal and, later, the celebrated Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, the founder of the Inca dynasty was increasingly seen in Europe to be either of white European (as Voltaire speculated) or, more likely, Oriental origins. Manco was the cornerstone of the accepted genealogy of Peruvian sovereignty and the key figure in the Inca’s narrative of the accelerated rise of Inca civilization, which had neatly outstripped the achievements of millennial Rome in a mere two hundred years. In short, the new European critiques threatened “Peruvian” (and by implication, Spanish imperial) dynastic sovereignty in its very origin. The Peruvian “Book of Kings” now tottered on its Inca foundation.

To the rescue of Manco Capac and the deep history of Peruvian sovereignty came many Peruvian historians, but the most brilliant defense was elaborated by José Hipólito Unanue. Taking Montesquieu’s experimental method to other shores and another conclusion, Unanue observed that the particular “genius” of circum-equatorial “American genius” was the sensory product of diverse “influences” exercised on the nerve endings by the splendid Andean clime, where an unparalleled range of vertical or altitudinal gradients mediated the effects of the blazing and otherwise enervating equatorial sun.²⁴ As a consequence of the variable environmental influences of the Andean clime, the “imagination” of Peruvians was more rapid-firing than the comparatively dull European mind, which Unanue characterized, in accordance with the dark and damp European climes of the north, as relatively slow to act and inclined to monotony. Based on controlled experiments, statistics, and field observations, Unanue argued that Manco Capac must have been “Peruvian,” for only a talented native son of genius with hyperactive nerve endings could have grasped the nature of the Peruvian world in such a clear way as to launch Peru on its accelerated climb to the heights of world civilization.²⁵

Unanue’s experimental and “physiological” proof was a defense of Inca Garcilaso’s thesis of the Inca dynasty’s acceleration of history inaugurated by Manco Capac. This rapid rise made Cuzco superior to Rome, except in one sense: Cuzco lacked the written word. Inca Garcilaso’s purpose was to remedy that absence in exemplary historical fashion, thereby surpassing, via a critical, retrospective gesture, *The Commentaries* of Julius Caesar. Key to that gesture was the metahistorical or commentary-on-history nature of *The Royal Commentaries of the Incas*, which permitted the Inca Herodotus of modern global history to assume a critical position vis-à-vis classical universal history. Now, Unanue assumed a similar position vis-à-vis the dubious historical judgments of enlightened “Europe.” Unanue

24. José Hipólito Unanue, *Observaciones sobre el clima de Lima y sus influencias en los seres organizados, en especial el hombre* [1805], 2nd ed. (Lima, 1815).

25. José Hipólito Unanue, “Idea General de los Monumentos del Antiguo Perú e Introducción a su Estudio,” *El Mercurio Peruano*, March 17, 1791.

further argued that Manco Capac's founding "laws" had been sagaciously adopted and duly updated by the remarkably historicist sensibility of the Spanish jurists, who had based the *Laws of the Indies* in part on Islamic and Roman law, and in part on insights culled from early Peruvian chronicles and researches, chief among them those of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega.²⁶ Improving upon that earlier literature, Unanue now argued in great detail that there was nothing in the world (in terms of climate, soil, landscape, flora, and fauna) that Peru lacked. Likewise, Peru's human diversity defied and obviously far exceeded contemporary European classification schemes, which were poor in comparison. The Europeans had foolishly attempted to fix a people's historical or civilizational potential based on imaginary racial types (ancient Greek) and climates (temperate). Peru and many other lands proved that this was sheer nonsense. Indeed, the inability to grasp the native "genius" of Peru revealed the European mind's slowness to react "to the vicissitudes of history." In contrast, Unanue argued, the "other three-quarters of the globe" were home to diverse and benevolent climates, and these had given rise to the great civilizations, ancient and modern. The civilization of "Europe" itself was a gift of Arab learning. That learning made its way north thanks to the Arab centers of knowledge located in the southern reaches of Spain and Italy. Peru also received this gift via Spain, and as a result had no debt to "European civilization." Launched from Peru in the name of "the other three-quarters of the globe," Unanue's critique vigorously denied Europe's rising pretension as the "Tribunal of History," and it anticipated the "headless" or postcolonial-republican histories that would soon be written in independent Peru and elsewhere in the Americas.

In his finely illustrated *Peruvian Antiquities* (1851), mining engineer Mariano de Rivero y Ustariz, founding director both of Colombia's and Peru's national museums, pronounced that "Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome are not the only empires worthy to serve as nourishment for a generous imagination."²⁷ This "generous" historical imagination was cultivated by a new generation of republican historians, chief among them the philosopher and historian Sebastian Lorente (1813–1884), the Spanish-born occupant of Peru's first chair in History of Peruvian Civilization at its oldest university, San Marcos, founded in 1551.²⁸ Lorente's amenable histories offered Peruvians a positive and persuasive historicist narrative of Peru's homemade colonial modernity and its ancient, village-based "national unity," the basis for its contemporaneity as a sovereign political subject that had boldly entered "the age of revolutions" and "the people."²⁹

Working for the most part within contemporary, transatlantic historicist concepts, Lorente's philosophical history of Peruvian civilization is notably immune to Chakrabarty's postcolonial critique, which claims that historicism

26. In this regard, it is notable that Juan de Solórzano Pereira's historicist treatise on the laws and customs of the Spanish Indies in *Política Indiana* (1647) anticipated by more than a century many of the theses of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* (1748).

27. Mariano de Rivero and Jacob von Tschudi, *Antigüedades Peruanas* (Vienna: Imprenta Real, 1851), II, iii.

28. See *Sebastián Lorente: Escritos fundacionales de historia peruana*, ed. Mark Thurner (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2005).

29. Sebastián Lorente, *Curso elemental de filosofía para los colegios del Perú* (Ayacucho and Paris: Imprenta Liberal and Rosa y Bouret, 1854).

was a European invention that “came to non-European peoples in the nineteenth century as somebody’s way of saying ‘not yet’ to somebody else.”³⁰ It is probably true that historicism did come in this way for some (indeed, no small number of Peruvian historians swallowed such views in the twentieth century), but as a rule Chakrabarty’s claim does not hold for Peru and the rest of the Americas. Instead, and as Lorente’s histories make abundantly clear, broadly historicist concepts such as “soul” and even “progress” could underwrite a discourse of colonial and postcolonial political modernity that ran parallel to, or possibly ahead of, developments in “Europe.” Schooled in Spain and drawing eclectically on Vico, Kant, Herder, Michelet, and Guizot, among others, Lorente developed a critical philosophical history of Peru that both incorporated in critical fashion Peru’s early modern chronicle tradition and anticipated the main lines of historical writing that would dominate twentieth-century Peru.³¹ Lorente displaced Inca Garcilaso’s thesis of an Inca-led acceleration with a democratic or headless republican narrative “from below” of the communal “soul” and “progress” of “Peruvian civilization.”

Although subsequently forgotten by a new generation of Peruvian historians with other axes to grind, Lorente’s republican histories raised important questions about the universality of the received “epochs” of world history developed by European historians. The principal divisions of “Universal History” in Lorente’s day, which are reviewed in Lorente’s textbook primer on the subject, corresponded to the accepted four major epochs or ages of the Old World: ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary. This scheme had displaced the old fearsome four-some of the Four Monarchies and it remains, with regional variations, more or less invariable today. “Ancient history,” Lorente noted, “extends from the origin of peoples to the dissolution of Roman society” and it has “three divisions”: Oriental, Greek, and Roman. “Medieval history” concerns itself with the progression of events from the end of ancient history to “the discovery of America.” “Modern history” runs from “this transcendental discovery to the French revolution.” Finally, “contemporary history” extends “from that great revolution down to our day.” Universal History’s relation of the career of civilization begins in the Orient and runs through Rome to Spain, for Spain was “the vanguard of Europe” and she made that “transcendental discovery” that opened “the Modern Age.” Centuries later, the people of France announced the arrival of “the contemporary age” and “the end of colonialism” by proclaiming “the death of the king.”³² But there are several catches to this universal history when Peru is duly considered. For example, for Lorente “ancient civilization” arose not only in the Orient but also independently in Peru. The Eastern origin narrative of “universal” or “Western”

30. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 8.

31. Juan Maiguashca argues that South American historians trafficked “between Centre and Periphery” in ways that not only “imitated” but “created” new narratives and reflections on history. Lorente could be construed as one such example, although the late twentieth-century concepts of “center and periphery” surely do not apply to him or his work. See Juan Maiguashca, “Historians in Spanish South America: Cross-References between Centre and Periphery,” in Macintyre, Maiguashca, and Pók, eds., *The Oxford History*, 463–487.

32. See Mark Thurner, “After Colonialism and the King: Notes on the Peruvian Birth of ‘Contemporary History,’” *Postcolonial Studies* 9, no. 4 (2006), 393–420.

history (as, for example, in Vico, Leibniz, or Hegel) was incomplete or limited in one key sense since it could no longer claim to cover the genealogy of civilization everywhere, although this fact did not negate its utility as a heuristic device for historical instruction elsewhere.³³ And there was another serious problem with the periodic sequence of universal history. Peru, Lorente argued, had passed directly from its own independent “ancient” age to the “modern” age of global history under the aegis of Spain: there was as a result no “medieval” New World.³⁴

Lorente’s vision of the present or contemporary age and its pending future was global and multipolar, and it included Asia and Africa. He noted that in India under British rule, “Calcutta and other great centers of culture boasted handsome educational and social establishments.” Looking with approval at the Indian Mutiny of 1857, whose result in his view was to check the worst abuses of the Company (“the despotism of Company rule made things intolerable”), Lorente noted that the mutiny had likely failed because of religious divisions and the monarchist clamoring of those who wished to restore an “aging Mogul” to the throne. Although he had little patience for constitutional monarchy disguised as “liberalism,” Lorente noted that the Queen’s rule in India promised progressive economic reforms and a measure of justice. In India as elsewhere in Asia and Africa, the coming of the republic and the contemporary age of the people was more a question of timing and truth than “development.” Indeed, the “progress” of the world was “guaranteed” by the ancient history of civilization among the peoples of the world.³⁵ In this last point Lorente echoed Unanue: all the world was capable of civilization, and none needed Europe to achieve liberty and democracy.

Republican historical narratives like those elaborated by Rivero and Lorente were challenged both within and outside of Peru. Many critics questioned the viability of the Hispanic American Republics (*repúblicas hispanoamericanas*), and some conspired unsuccessfully to return them to European monarchies. Many of these critics employed historicist narratives to argue that “the republic” was alien to Peruvian or Mexican history, if not modern history at large. The errant and ungovernable ex-colonies were kidnapped “babes” who should and must return to the European breast of imperial monarchy, to the long arms of the Vatican or, failing that, at the very least follow the example of the transplanted and naturalized Portuguese monarchy that now ruled from Brazil. Because any “return” to monarchy for republicans meant going back in time, in Peru and Mexico the “national question” was always a “postcolonial question” in the sense that for many it was an existential question of either being “contemporary” and free or being a “slave” and “pupil” of backward European monarchy’s *colonialismo*.

As stillborn republican revolutions in Europe gave way to terror and then “liberal” imperial restorations, many Peruvian and Hispanic American republicans blasted “Europe” as a backward, retrograde force in history. The invention of the

33. The possible, very distant Oriental origin of the first “Indians” in “America” (migration via the Bering Land Bridge) was another question, wholly unrelated to the history of civilization.

34. Sebastián Lorente, *Historia antigua del Perú* (Paris and Lima: Masias, 1860) and *Historia de la civilización peruana* (Lima: Benito Gil, 1879).

35. Sebastián Lorente, *Compendio de Historia Contemporánea* (Lima: Benito Gil, 1876).

name “Latin America” was a sign of this retrograde force, since it emanated from the imperial Europe of Napoleon III and Isabel II, and was aided by Mexican, Peruvian, and Brazilian monarchists and racialists. Once again, Peruvian historical thinkers were standing ready to denounce and debunk European pretensions. In Peru, perhaps the leading although ultimately losing voice in an intellectual chorus that protested against the name and concept of “Latin America” was Carlos Lisson, Lorente’s colleague at the University of San Marcos, and today considered “the father of Peruvian sociology.” Lisson anticipated Ernest Renan³⁶ by two decades when he argued that the “new American race” of Peru and Hispanic America at large was a “confused mix of all the known races of the world” unknown to European “ethnolinguists.” The preposterous notion that Peruvians now belonged to “the Latin Race” (and were thus “Latin Americans”) was a figment of an imperial and racial imagination reminiscent of “the slavery of Rome of 2000 years past.” Lisson deployed the now familiar trope of Peruvian acceleration to point out that “the Republic [of Peru] had [in three short decades] achieved more than Spain had in three hundred years of colonial rule.” Why would Peruvians now wish to return to “the Latin Race” represented by “Roman slavery,” French despots, and Spanish demagogues?³⁷ Although ailing and under siege, the republics of America were clearly the vanguard and hope of world history, and indeed Peru’s victory over the Spanish fleet at the Battle of Callao (Lima’s port) in 1866 was a key moment in that history of democratic vanguardism.³⁸

As Elías Palti has pointed out, the “national question” was a burning one among Latin American historians at least two decades before Lord Acton articulated it.³⁹ The occasion of this early raising of the national question was the long crisis that had beset the early Hispanic American republics (civil wars, uprisings, military dictatorships, foreign invasions), in the post-independence decades of the 1840s–1860s, although in Peru it was raised somewhat earlier, during and in the wake of the wars that created and then dissolved the short-lived Peru–Bolivia Confederation (1835–39). The Peruvian “national question” was notably raised by Bartolomé Herrera, although Unanue anticipated many elements of his polemical position in the 1790s. Renan’s ostensibly novel contention that “the nation

36. Ernest Renan, “*Q’est-ce q’une nation?*” delivered at the Sorbonne, March 11, 1882. For a published English translation that mistakenly takes Renan’s ideas about the nation to be novel, see *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 8–22. Renan’s famous question was raised in response to the calamities of the Franco-Prussian War and in the face of the rising tide of European “ethnography” and “national” racist thought. Later, Renan would be useful as fodder for Peruvian debates on the new national question that emerged after the War of the Pacific with Chile (1879–1884). On these twentieth-century debates, see Mark Thurner, *History’s Peru: The Poetics of Colonial and Postcolonial Historiography* (Gainesville; University of Florida Press, 2011), chap. 7.

37. Carlos Lisson, *La Republica en el Perú y la cuestión Peruano-Española* (Lima: Imprenta Liberal, 1865), 13–40 and *passim*.

38. See Mark Thurner, “After Spanish Rule: Writing Another After,” in *After Spanish Rule: Postcolonial Predicaments of the Americas*, ed. Mark Thurner and Andres Guerrero (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 12–27. For a survey of similar developments across Hispanic America from an Atlanticist perspective, see James Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

39. Elías José Palti, *La nación como problema: Los historiadores y la “cuestión nacional”* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003).

was a spiritual principle” was made here four decades earlier, albeit for rather different reasons. One of those reasons was that—and this was the case with Mexico’s Lucas Alamán as well as Herrera—Catholic notions of divine providence and sovereignty were in the minds of some patriotic historical thinkers antithetical to the (for them, divisive) republican concept of popular sovereignty but not alien to independent nationhood. Such thinkers insisted on the unifying “spiritual principle” of the nation, manifested in the people’s collective adherence to the rites and graces of Catholicism, and indeed Herrera traced this notion back to Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Bartolomé de las Casas, who had argued that ancient “Peruvians” were purer “Christians” than those contemporary Europeans who called themselves Christians.

Another, rather different reason for the early appearance of the national question in Latin American historical thought was the presence of a notion that “History” or indeed “headless history” was a sovereign force that could guide “the nation” on its own path into the future. Such a notion was not necessarily an “import” from revolutionary France or reformist Germany—as many of the critics of popular sovereignty held—and indeed many of the actors and historians of Peruvian independence emphatically declared that their republican revolution owed nothing to France or Europe. In Peru, the notion of a headless history was also homegrown, and sometimes in the most unlikely “colonial” minds. A century before republican political independence was declared in Peru, the Creole polymath and University of San Marcos Rector, Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo, freed “History” from “the Prince,” thereby bringing into Peruvian view the modern concept of a headless political horizon driven by the knowledge of deep historical and poetic forces. Strangely—and in part for this reason, modern professional historians missed the argument—Peralta did so in a history and idiom that ostensibly served to defend and “vindicate” Spain and Spanish empire.

If Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was the mestizo Herodotus of Peru who surpassed the Greek father of history and lies by founding a new global history of colonial origin, Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo (1673–1743) was her unsung Creole Vico.⁴⁰ It is doubtful but not impossible that Peralta had access to the writings of Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), whose work seems not to have circulated beyond small circles until Michelet translated *The New Science* into French in the nineteenth century (Lorente, for example, read Vico in Michelet’s French translation). Instead, as contemporaries working in cloistered, late baroque university settings in far-flung corners of the Spanish empire, it is more likely that they developed similar approaches to history. In 1734, an aging Vico was appointed royal historiographer by Charles III, then King of Naples and the Two Sicilies, later King of Spain and Emperor of the Indies. At about the same time, Peralta was “Cosmographer and Engineer of the Realm” at the Viceroyalty of Peru. Both men made critical, enlightened readings of the historians and poets of antiquity

40. It seems necessary to clarify that in calling Inca Garcilaso de la Vega “the Herodotus of Peru” and Peralta “the Vico of Peru,” I am not implying that the Peruvians were derivative figures nor that Peruvian historiography be read merely as a mirror of the Western canon. Instead, what I am suggesting is their significance as pioneers in a global history of colonial origins that included Vico and retrospectively annexed Herodotus.

informed by a renewed interest in classical theories of rhetoric and discourse, although it is clear that the Neapolitan's library, academic community, patronage, and scholarship were in most ways richer than those of his Limean counterpart.⁴¹ But if Vico blazed the trail of a "new science" of history inspired in a critical and poetic reading of classical antiquity and moving forward in spiral fashion toward what in the nineteenth century would be called "philosophical historicism,"⁴² Peralta pioneered another poetic trail back not only to Noah (for Spain) but also in Mestizo and Creole fashion to Manco Capac (for Peru), and forward toward what would become a headless, ex-colonial or postcolonial history after Spanish rule. As the first and perhaps only colonial American subject to write a history of Spain and Spanish antiquity, Peralta was a pioneer. He also wrote a poetic history of Peru entitled *Lima fundada o Conquista del Peru* (1732), an erudite "heroic poem" that updated and transposed the prosaic content of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's history of the Incas and Spanish conquest.

Peralta's *Historia de España vindicada* (1730) is ostensibly a defense of Spain and her empire, intended to deflect European and particularly French attacks. But as we shall see, he wrote his Spanish history in a critical and comparative spirit that opened up new vistas for the Peruvian historical imagination. French historians had charged that Spain was a mongrel empire of Asian, African, and Indian elements that lacked the cohesion afforded by a venerable antiquity or genealogy, and so would soon disappear from the face of the earth, leaving little mark on history. Peralta's defense is brilliant but one must keep in mind that it and others like it failed to exercise much influence in northern Europe, where, by the nineteenth century, Spanish Empire was indeed excised from the master narrative of Western history, where for the most part it remains.⁴³ Indeed, modern historiography is what it is today in part because Peralta failed to convince its European masters that Spain and Peru were vanguards of world history.

Peralta's forgotten history countered the European charges with a deep genealogy that traced in detail and with abundant footnotes "the name and political ship of Spain" all the way back to Noah's Ark. True, Spanish Hapsburg imperial historians had written similar "mythic" genealogical histories in the sixteenth century, but they had done so with rather less rigor. Moreover, those Spanish imperial chroniclers were susceptible to the Enlightenment's favorite slight that such "official" history was tainted by patronage and *amor propio* or "self-love." But as a colonial subject far removed from European rivalries, Peralta could present himself as free of those vices that dogged either side of the European debate, for he was neither a French hypocrite nor a Spanish zealot. His comparative researches led him to conclude that Spain was indeed the most ancient and singular empire the world had seen, for she was the only empire in world history

41. On Peralta's working conditions, see Jerry Williams's preface to Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo, *Historia de España vindicada* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2003), xi-lii.

42. Karl Werner, *Giambattista Vico als philosoph und gelehrter forschter* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1881).

43. For a probing account of this vibrant but ultimately failed defense as it was mounted in eighteenth-century Mexico and Spain, see Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001).

to “unite two worlds.” Notably, however, Peralta’s history also unites the two worlds of Peru and Spain in a defense that puts Peru in the driver’s seat of world history or, rather, puts History in the driver’s seat of Peru.

Peralta’s was a bold enterprise of *translatio studii* (transfer of “the studio” or laboratory of knowledge from Spain to Peru) that addressed the “ancient history” of Spain from the perspective of a Peru that was now Spain’s light and future, for Spain was to ancient Rome what Peru was to Spain. Once an outer western province of Rome, Spain had subsequently outstripped Rome when she “united two worlds.” In turn, Peru and in particular the city of Lima had exceeded Spain’s achievement by “making of two empires, one.” That is, although Spain had united the Old World with the New and thus opened the gates of modern global history, Peru, led by the “City of the Kings of Peru” (*Ciudad de los Reyes del Perú*) founded by Pizarro, had united the Inca and Spanish Empires, thereby producing the next (and last?) hybrid step in the history of world empires. Peralta’s Lima was the “Political Phoenix” of its own modern mestizo empire, her City of Kings a new “study” or “seat” of global historical knowledge. That seat of knowledge now duly aspired to a poetics of history that “imitated” but also clearly surpassed, as it must and should, Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Thus Peralta sings Pizarro, the founder of Lima, as the Aeneas of the New World. The consequence of Pizarro’s feat is that Peralta as historian of Peru must also rise to the historical moment and be more than Virgil.

But Peralta did far more than praise and then respectfully surpass Virgil, as history dictated that he should. By sophisticated poetic or rhetorical means and an array of philosophical arguments, Peralta frees “History” from “the Prince” by making History the Prince of the world, and therefore the true guide and “inheritance” of any and all princes. The result is that Peruvian history could now become the product of its own making (as a “political phoenix”) if only she listened carefully to History. Peralta’s brilliant project is to reclaim the rhetorical arts of the ancient historians and poets and to place them at the service of a modern Lima that would lead the world in the brave new future of hybrid empires ruled not by any prince but by the Prince of princes, History itself. “History” thus became available to the Peruvian imagination as the sovereign “Head” or agent of its own future, as the maker of its own lineage or, as Peralta put it, its own “Inheritance.”

Peralta’s poetics of history have been described as retrograde and bombastic but in its own way his writing anticipated later developments in German discourse described by Reinhart Koselleck as world-historical. A half-century before German debates reworked the unpromising word *Geschichte* into a “collective singular noun” and arch-concept of modernity, Peralta had executed a similar transformation in the concept of *Historia*. Koselleck argued that *Geschichte* came to collapse the Latinate concept of inquiry and writing (*Historie*) with the succession of events denoted by the German verb *geschehen*, infusing the new hybrid concept with the empowering notions of prognosis and acceleration.⁴⁴ As we have

44. Reinhart Koselleck *et al.*, “Geschichte, Historie,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Bd. 2 (Stuttgart: Klett, 1975), 593-718.

seen, in the late sixteenth century, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega had endowed Peruvian history with an Inca-made acceleration that left millennial Rome in the dust. Now, Peralta turned *Historia* (inquiry and writing of history but also the “inheritance” of that history understood as historical self-fashioning made possible by the knowledge that History is the Prince of the world) into an all-encompassing concept of modern prognosis and progress, manifested in the phoenix-like career of Lima, the enlightened “study” and “head” of “two empires made one.”

Peralta’s poetics of history were imbued with a characteristically ambivalent form of colonial critique in which, as the imagined Prince’s tutor and double, “History” was not merely a “mirror of princes” but instead the mimetic author of all princes, the true sender and addressee of the answer to the prince’s ponderous question of how to rule. As the “animated reason” of “the Prince,” “History” was “truer than life” and so could stand in a prophetic position vis-à-vis both the past of the Spanish Empire and the distant Spanish prince it would now tutor, and this was precisely the position of Peralta’s Lima vis-à-vis Spain and the Spanish monarchy. “History” thereby made itself available to Peruvian political and aesthetic projects, including those revolutionary ones that would later decapitate “the King” in the name of a “destiny” and “nation” that “History” itself had made imaginable and irresistible. Stated another way, this beheading in the realm of politics could proceed efficaciously only whence the “head” of “the nation” could be imagined to be not “the Prince” but that “headless Prince” known as “History” itself.

In the case of Peru, then, headless history need not be understood as a modern European invention. In addition, “historicism” in Peru is also not readily understood as a poor imitation of a European invention that supposedly arrived in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the first historians to raise “the national question” were not Lord Acton or Ernest Renan but quite likely Creoles who, again, were critical heirs to deep colonial dynastic traditions of patriotic history-writing. I will now further suggest that the “crisis of historicism” also need not be understood as a specifically “European” phenomenon.

In Europe and in particular Germany, the interwar years of the second and third decades of the twentieth century were the occasion for the “crisis of historicism.” Dilthey, Heidegger, Meinecke, Husserl, Spengler, Ortega y Gasset, and many others were implicated in critical debates on the nature and significance of European history and science, reshaping historical theory in Europe in the process.⁴⁵ Critical reflections on the theory of history and the practice of historicism were produced in Peru and Mexico at about the same time, and in some cases earlier, and continued well into the middle decades of the twentieth century. Peru’s crisis of historicism began after the disastrous War of the Pacific (1879–1884) and continued for decades leading—as it did in Meinecke’s Germany—to a renewal of historicism that may be called “finalist.”⁴⁶ The long-lived Mexican Revolution triggered Mexico’s crisis of historicism.

45. For an overview of the European crisis, see Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

46. For a discussion of this finalist historicism, see Mark Thurner, “Jorge Basadre’s ‘Peruvian History of Peru,’ or the Poetic Aporia of Historicism,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 88, no. 2 (2008), 247–283.

Among the critical Latin American reflections and polemics that responded to Mexican and Peruvian wars and national crises, perhaps Edmundo O’Gorman and Jorge Basadre penned the most acute. Both men were widely read in European philosophy and history, and both had close family connections to Europe (Ireland and Germany, respectively). Both dedicated themselves to the critical study of the historical worlds they inhabited, struggled with, and loved: “America,” “Mexico,” and “Peru.” As Guillermo Zerméño argues in *La cultura moderna de la historia*,⁴⁷ O’Gorman’s trenchant critiques of professional Mexican historiography opened up a wide polemical horizon that ignited acute reflection. O’Gorman’s writings infused Mexican modernity with a lively and precarious sense of its own historical and political being as a vulnerable mestizo subject born of colonial “trauma” and subject to the contrasting mode of historical dynamism that characterized the expanding United States. Like many of his Spanish colleagues in Mexican exile, O’Gorman was inspired by Dilthey and in particular by Heidegger. His Mexican brand of “historiology” developed a strong critique of what he saw as professional Mexican historiography’s uncritical adoption of French and German “historical science.” His philosophical reflections on the “invention of America” and the “trauma of Mexican history” raised the colonial and national questions in ways that demanded a critical rethinking of historical theory. For O’Gorman, Rankean “historical science” was akin to a “Prussian dog” that hounded “historical truth” into hiding. Truth was not “an eternal and passive possession” of arid history books but “a demanding lover that, in effect, requires of us a continuous effort of adherence so that she will remain ours; it requires not only an initial acknowledgment (*conocimiento*) but constant re-acknowledgment (*re-conocimiento*).”⁴⁸ As the rigorous re-acknowledgment of historical truths, the history of history was both indispensable to the pursuit of historical understanding and a grave threat to the truth claims of professional historiography. In a word, the history of history was professional history’s worst enemy, but it was the only means to a vital form of historical being-in-the-world.

Basadre was not the trenchant critic of historicism that O’Gorman was. Indeed, the Peruvian strongly defended historicism as “relativist humanism,” but in the process ironically pushed historicist thought to its “finalist” limits. In the end he revealed its founding aporia to be the abyss of the proper name of the collective historical subject, for it was only within the historical domain of that name that the knowing and writing subject (the historian) could discover the truth of his own historicity. In Basadre’s case, the governing name of his own historicity was none other than “Peru” itself, which had been born “in an abyss of history.” Although the Peruvian philosophical historicist surely recycles dialectical and developmentalist tropes and language found in European historicism (his lexicon is particularly indebted to Dilthey and Croce), his narrative framing of the historical subject named “Peru” is not evolutionary or “developmentalist,” as Chakrabarty claims all historicism is. Instead, Basadre’s finalist historicism is an affirmative, second-

47. Guillermo Zerméño, *La cultura moderna de la historia: Una aproximación teórica e historiográfica* (Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico, Centro de Estudios Historicos, 2002).

48. Edmundo O’Gorman, *La idea del descubrimiento: Historia de esa interpretación y crítica de sus fundamentos* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1951), 379-380.

order “wager” on a possible future that is itself the consequence of past affirmative wagers for “Peru” made by “Peruvian” predecessors such as Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Peralta, and Unanue. Moreover, the chain of “wagers” grants Peru its own “historical reason” for being and becoming, and so this reason must be distinct from that of modern European nations, since it is the product or posterity of Peru’s own historical mode of becoming what “Peru” itself, as the cumulative name of a series of wagers, proposed it should become. For Basadre, then, to be “historical” is to make wagers on those past wagers that were made on us (or on the name to which we belong as collective subjects) before we lived, thereby affirming our own historicity as subjects within the master subject that names us and governs our being. As the enveloping name that held the aspirations of all such historical wagers, for Basadre it was clear that “Peru” was a “theory” of historical becoming.⁴⁹

It is unlikely that the name of Peru will ever come to displace the names of Greece, Germany, France, or Europe as a master sign of history or the home of historical theory. If, on the other hand, modern world or global history is understood to be colonial in origin, and if “History” is understood to be a narrative wager on the poetics of knowledge and the proper name,⁵⁰ then “Peru” could find itself once again in a noteworthy position as an illuminating portal into the global rabbit hole of historical theory. But since historical theory has assigned Peru to the role of the tortoise in the race down the hole, I know it will be a long haul.

University of London

49. Basadre’s historicist thought is on display in *Perú: Problema y posibilidad. Ensayo de una síntesis de la evolución histórica del Perú* (Lima: Librería Rosay, 1931); *Meditaciones sobre el destino histórico del Perú* (Lima: Ediciones Huascarán, 1947); *La promesa de la vida peruana y otros ensayos* (Lima: Mejía Baca, 1958); and in his seminal introduction to *Historia de la República del Perú, 1822–1933* (Lima: Editorial Universitaria, 1968), xxxv–xlvi.

50. See Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).