

Travelling Concepts, Transformation of Values, Opening of New Ways – The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega as Transcultural Translator

A. The Process of Translation.

“Denkt man über das Übersetzen nach, dann denkt man gleichsam an eine lange Reise in die Unmöglichkeit.” Translated into English, this sentence would mean something like: “To think about the process of translation is like thinking about a long journey into impossibility”. With this sentence, I made an experiment on a web page in the internet (www.babelfish.yahoo.com): a so-called ‘translation machine’ was to translate these words into different languages. After Portuguese (“Se pensa-se à tradução, então pensa-se como se haver d' uma longa viagem em l' impossibilidade”) and Spanish (“Si se piensa la traducción, después se piensa como si para tener d'un viaje largo en l'imposibilidad”) amongst others, I finally let the machine translate it into German. And it has turned into a sentence very different than before: “Wenn die Übersetzung denkt, später denkt sie als ob, um zu haben; eine lange Reise in die Unmöglichkeit”¹, in English approximately: “If the translation thinks, then it thinks as if, in order to have; a long journey into impossibility”. This short experiment indicates that every translation from one language into the other involves an extremely complex process full of errors and shifts of meaning, full of incompatibilities. And this applies even more to processes of cultural and transcultural translation, as we will see further on. Of course, an internet machine does not have the sensibility of a translator of flesh and blood, and in the cited example “only” randomly chosen words were translated, rather than complex cultural concepts. Nonetheless, what we see paradigmatically manifested in merely linguistic errors above, can be observed as well in every cultural translation: during any process of translation we find always concepts² travelling from one context to the other (just as in the example the words travel from one language to the other) and because of that, the meanings and values of that concept start transforming (see the change of the subject in the sentence above), being transferred into another cultural context. Therefore, new ways of interpretation are opened even in a random case such as in the sentence above (in which all of a sudden “translation” itself is turned into a “thinking subject”).

¹ The translated sentence is invented by me and translated on the page <http://de.babelfish.yahoo.com>.

² See the term of the “travelling concepts” of James Clifford, 1997.

In the case of cultural translation, new constructions of identity, of cultural memory, of a whole history of a country are produced constantly.

In my essay I would like to examine these steps of cultural translation and its results in the example of the cultural translator Garcilaso el Inca de la Vega. This historical and literary personality is seen as “essential symbol of mestizaje and colonization [...] in the New World“, as “one of the most admirable and discussed figures American historiography and literature has produced,”³ as Pupo-Walker comments. Born in 1539 in Cuzco, de la Vega dies in 1616 in Córdoba, in the south of Spain, where he lived since he was twenty years old. His father is the captain Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega, a noble Castilian, while his mother, Isabel Chimpu Ocllo, is an Inca princess descended from the Inca monarchy⁴. This short biographical information already suffices to indicate that already in his life the role of translator of the Inca Garcilaso is prefigured, since he always moves between different worlds: Peru and Spain, the Quechuan and the Spanish language, the culture of the Incas and European culture. In this context, it deserves mentioning that the Inca obviously attaches special value to the work of linguistic and literary translation in his text. Not only does he translate as first literary work the *Dialoghi de Amore*, a prestigious text about theories of love from the Jewish Portuguese León Hebreo, but also innumerable key words of the Incas from Quechuan into Spanish in his most important work, the *Comentarios reales*. In any case, he always treats the field of linguistic translation as a priority. Nevertheless, I would like to limit my essay to the translation the Inca Garcilaso realizes between different cultural concepts, known as the “cultural translation”⁵ that plays an important role in the *Comentarios reales*. But first, I would like to introduce this term that I already mentioned several times, indicating the context of recent investigations and theories of cultural translations.

Since the “translational turn” in the cultural sciences, set out very clearly in the book *Cultural Turns* by Doris Bachmann-Medick,⁶ a new approach has been formulated concerning what translations are and what they represent, an approach very different from what “normally” was considered being a translation. Now, a much wider term of translation is being used that implies a new vision of the contact between cultures. Translation in this sense entails concepts like “cultural representation”, “transformation”, “exoticism”, “displacement”, “difference” and “power”.

³ Pupo-Walker 2008: *Comentarios Reales*, p. 13. (The translation of this and all following quotations are mine.)

⁴ Pupo-Walker 2008: *Comentarios Reales*, p. 15.

⁵ See the term that uses Bhabha 1997, *The location of culture*, p. 212-235.

⁶ See Bachmann-Medick 2007: *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, pp. 238–283.

This means that translation is no longer seen as merely linguistic discipline, where – as in the initial example – one word of one language changes into a word of the other language. Instead, studies of translation processes are open for concepts of a “cultural translation” which increases in importance also to cultural and social sciences. If we follow the line of argument of Bachmann-Medick, the space of translation could represent the so-called ‘in-between space’ of Homi Bhabha⁷, where hybrid cultural identities are negotiated and where conflicts as well as integrations between nationalities and ideologies take place. But, very importantly, translation in this sense does not represent a bridge between cultures that works in a harmonizing way, but a transformative process (I would say: a journey) that takes into consideration exactly the differences that sometimes cannot be translated, that are somehow untranslatable⁸. Yet even though being untranslatable, they nevertheless have to be translated in some way or another, to be mutually related. That way, a new situation is created, for because of the different contextualization, we receive a very different result than before the translation. What often is seen as something deficient -- the changes and displaced associations that have been produced during the translation process -- could be considered, within the new concept of cultural translation as something creative: a creation of different meanings, a new construction of sense.

If we understand the process of translation in this sense, it is important not only to look into our actual world but to consider the whole history and every cultural contact in it as a never ending process of translation, full of power constructions and staging of identities. The interpretation of history during many centuries was a history dominated by discourses of the centre that spread and were superimposed onto the periphery (and perhaps this is still the case). With the *Comentarios reales* of the Inca Garcilaso, a new vision of history is opened to us, a vision in a way “translated” into his cultural context, and this will be of our interest in the following paragraphs.

⁷ See Homi Bhabha 1994, *The location of culture*, p. 1.

⁸ See Bachmann-Medick 2007, *Cultural turn*, p. 254–255.

B. The Construction of a New World View

1. The Translator. Towards the Construction of a Transcultural Identity

In his *Comentarios reales*, the Inca Garcilaso tells us the story of the empire of the Incas, he talks about the origin of that people, of the beliefs and the political organization that they had, of the cultural rituals and the celebrations they made. As educated humanist and chronicler, and at the same time as man of letters, he tries to give detailed information about historical facts, but not without mixing them permanently with fictitious episodes, legends and indigenous narrations. The translation he is performing can be observed on different levels: the linguistic translation (from Quechuan into Spanish), the translation of media (from the orality of the history of the Incas to the Spanish scripture) and the semantic or cultural translation (revelation of analogies and differences between the two cultures)⁹. As already mentioned, I will limit myself here to the latter one.

1.1. Connection of Two Worlds

Without a doubt, the summarizing informations the Inca gives us in this book about the culture of his country are meant to preserve it in the cultural memory of his audience, and, simultaneously, to convince his European readers that the Incas are friendly people that are a subject worth delving into. The Inca puts it like this: “Yo, incitado del deseo de la conservación de las antiguallas de mi patria, esas pocas que han quedado, porque no se pierdan del todo, me dispuse al trabajo tan excesivo [...] escribir su Antigua república hasta acabarla [...]”¹⁰. Based on one hand on the stories his family told him about the kingdom of Peru, and on the other on various Spanish texts about the “discovery” with which he was familiar, Garcilaso gives us a new vision of the Inca history: an interpretation “from the inside”, as it were. With his version, the Inca affirms that he does not intend to contradict the Spanish chroniclers that told the situation in America from the European angle, but servirles de comento y glosa, y de intérprete en muchos vocablos indios”¹¹. Even formulated like this, this comment is an obvious challenge from the position of a Peruan “mestizo” to the European centre. He does not want to directly contradict the Spanish, but in order to present his different version of history, he has to correct them nevertheless, in other words indirectly contradicts them in a certain way. Here, the structure of the Inca’s arguments already becomes visible, which always contains certain contradictions: he claims not to want to do a certain thing (so

⁹ See Fritz 2008, *Reclamar el derecho a hablar*, pp.102-103.

¹⁰ *Comentarios reales* 2000, p. 382-383.

¹¹ Pupo-Walker (ed.) 2008, *Comentarios Reales*, p. 139.

as to make the challenge not too obvious), but he does it nevertheless. And he draws the reader's attention to this process by formulating his function of interpreter and his role as translator, both linguistic and cultural, already in these few words. The authority of the "mestizo" in this function is based on his knowledge of the two languages and cultures. He is, in different ways but equally important, part of both of the worlds, the Inca and the Spanish one, and from this double perspective brings into connection heterogeneous discourses that normally would be difficult, if not problematic to relate¹². What Rössner says in an article about translations of canonical texts during the renaissance in Latin America, that "the translation serves as conjuration, as magic spell that covers the abyss between centre and periphery with a red painted curtain[...]"¹³, is valid in the same way for the cultural translation of the Inca. With the connection of the two worlds, which always turns out to be full of tensions and contradictions (as we will see more detailed below), the Inca Garcilaso positions himself somewhere between the participation in prestigious cultural codes of the centre and the different ways of thinking of the periphery. In this way, for a European public, his texts always oscillate between the known (familiar) on the one hand, and the "exotic" (alien) on the other, in other words between their own and another culture.¹⁴

1.2. Between Power and Helplessness

Using the codes and cultural models of the European metropolis, Garcilaso somehow appropriates them to his own purposes. In this act of appropriation, he enhances at the same time the status of his own culture by relating it to the European one¹⁵. Like the Latin American authors who translate the canonical texts and thereby put them into another context with different valuations, who in other words take from the "other" and convert it to a part of their "own" cultural self-positioning, the Inca Garcilaso, too, uses this practice. This does not only concern the translation of León Hebreo, but also the translation of the cultural, religious and political concepts we find in the *Comentarios reales*. Because the process of translation means to take something out of its habitual context and transfer it into a different one in a double act of decontextualization and recontextualization,¹⁶ it always involves a change of meanings, a new valuation of the translated concepts. Almost like a magician – if we want to go along with that image of translation as "magic spell" – that turns a hat into a rabbit, Garcilaso the Inca turns the European concepts into others, similar but very different at the same time. Let us imagine, for example, the hat and the rabbit would both be black, of the same size and

¹² See Galperin 2007, *Traducción y redes culturales*, p. 100.

¹³ Rössner 2008, *Traducción y poder*, p. 123. (The translation is mine)

¹⁴ See Galperin 2007, *Traducción y redes culturales*, p. 94.

¹⁵ See Rössner 2008, *Traducción y poder*, p. 122.

¹⁶ See Burke 2007, *Cultures of translation*, p. 10.

that they would weigh the same. They would share some common characteristics, then. But of course, the hat is made of cloth while the rabbit supposedly lives. In a similar act of taking possession and transformation into new concepts, the translator (just like the magician) puts himself in a very powerful position¹⁷: he is able to change the situation, the context, the values, the meanings. If we conceive of the colonization of America as a “gigantic act of translation between distinct cultures” (S. Fritz)¹⁸, then the chronicle of the Inca would be a text of cultural translation par excellence. For in the *Comentarios reales*, he does just that: establish a relation between the Old and the New World, and comparing one with the other. As already mentioned, the position of the “mestizo” plays a very important role in all of that, not just because the Inca has better knowledge of the two cultures. In this context, it seems relevant what Homi Bhabha, the postcolonial theorist, says:

“The migrant culture of the ‘in-between’, the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture’s untranslatability; and in so doing, it moves the question of culture’s appropriation beyond the assimilationist’s dream, or the racist’s nightmare [...] towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture’s difference”¹⁹.

That is to say, the person that finds himself in the so-called “in-between”, in the imaginary space between two different cultures, is always divided in two contradicting, incompatible parts as well. In this way, even though the translator between cultures is in a powerful position, he remains at the same time helpless and in a troubled situation in other ways. However hard he tries to relate the two worlds in which he lives, there will always be parts that he cannot relate nor unite, that remain separate. The same happens in the case of the Inca, as we will see in the next paragraph: at the interface between two worlds, the Inca sees himself obliged to join the two ideologies to build a new reality where not only one but two powerful centres coexist (Peru and Europe). Even if it turns out to be almost impossible to find an equivalent form in many fields for an appropriate comparison between one culture with the other, this fusion of the two perspectives seems to be necessary to unite the two worlds.

¹⁷ See Fritz 2008, *Reclamar el derecho a hablar*, pp. 117-118.

¹⁸ Fritz 2008, *Reclamar el derecho a hablar*, p. 102. (The translation is mine)

¹⁹ Bhabha 1994, *The location of culture*, p. 224.

1.3. Construction of the Transcultural Identity

It may appear somewhat anachronistic to relate the Inca Garcilaso to the word “transcultural”, which obviously did not exist the time he lived. Nonetheless, it seems to me that the work of the Inca as cultural translator between Europe and Latin America could be considered as the beginning of a long process of transatlantic transculturation. And during this process of transculturation, during this active moment, a change of the previous situation has been produced.²⁰ The Inca locates himself very proudly in the middle of two different cultures: in the preface to his second work, *La Florida del Inca*, a narration about the expeditions Hernando de Soto to Florida²¹, he affirms that he tells this story “para honra y fama de la nación española, que tan grandes cosas ha hecho en el Nuevo Mundo, y no menos de los indios que en la historia se mostraren y parecieron dignos del mismo honor.”²² Here, he does obviously not speak of the American Indians from Peru but of those from Florida, but this affirmation (that the natives are worthy of the same honour as the Spanish) still lets us see the revaluations of the indigenous cultures in his work in general. This is not at all common to say in a historiographic work of the Renaissance about the New World. And Garcilaso, a descendant from the two cultures, as a “mestizo” earns the double honour of belonging to both worlds. That way, he initiates a revaluation of the position of all the “travellers between cultures”, of every “cultural translator” in general. Nowadays, a similar revaluation of the “mestizaje”, of the mixed-blood, is getting more and more interesting in the field of postcolonial theory and cultural studies about migration, diaspora, and cultural hybridity²³. In this light, the Inca Garcilaso in effect constructs already in the epoch of the Renaissance a transcultural identity in his texts, an identity that remains in a permanent process of moving back and forth between inevitable contradictions and the desire to unite the two cultural origins. In other words, he is far ahead of his time.

After having talked so much about the role of the translator, we have to ask finally: What exactly does the Inca in his book translate (besides some Quechuan words)? And what forms the basis of his argument, so that we are allowed to speak in this case of a cultural translation?

2 Cultural translation. Precursor Function – *translatio imperii* – Parallel Worlds

To investigate these questions of cultural translation, or in other words this “interminable translation journey”, this “magic spell”, I will discuss now three models of interpreting the Inca Garcilaso that

²⁰ Pagni 2008, *Lateinamerika als Übersetzungsraum*, p. 172.

²¹ Pupo-Walker 2008, *Comentarios reales*, p. 36.

²² Pupo-Walker 2008, *Comentarios reales*, p. 113.

²³ See Hausbacher 2008, *Transnationale Schreibweisen*, pp.51-52.

seem to me the most interesting ones. Through these three different models of interpreting the translation processes in the *Comentarios reales*, I hope to clarify some of the intentions of the “mestizo” and in the end combine them to create an overview more or less plausible (even though the limited space of this essay only allows for an insufficient idea of a really vast field of investigation.)

2.1. Precursor Function

The first aspect of translation that can be identified in the *Comentarios reales* I would like to discuss now, which appears in various investigations about the Inca,²⁴ is the presentation of the people of the Incas as precursors to the European colonizers. And this aspect refers as much to the role of the Incas as civilizational precursors as to their precursor role of the Christianizing function. According to the Inca,

“permitió Dios Nuestro Señor que de ellos [los incas] mismos saliese un lucero del alba, que en aquellas escurísimas tinieblas les diese alguna noticia de la ley natural, y de la urbanidad y respetos que los hombres debían tenerse unos a otros, y que los descendientes de aquél, procediendo de bien en mejor, cultivasen a aquellas fieras y las convirtiesen en hombres haciéndoles capaces de razón y de cualquiera buena doctrina;”²⁵

In other words, the Incas are staged as (little) bright star in the dawn, as the small light in the dark that bring the news of the natural law, of the urbanity and the mutual respect the humans should have amongst each other. They appear as respectable humans in comparison to the anarchic animals that are living around them. This makes us think about the ancient Romans, who affirmed something similar about the tribes surrounding them, pretending to civilize those “barbarians”²⁶.

Beyond this comparison with the Roman people, the Inca Garcilaso alludes with these words also to the Bible, as we can see in the following sentence: “para que cuando ese mismo Dios, sol de justicia, tuviese por bien de enviar la luz de sus divinos rayos a aquellos idólatras, los hallase no tan salvajes, sino más dóciles para recibir la fé católica [...]”²⁷. In other words, if God, the sun of justice, wants to send the light of his divine rays to those idolatrous people, he does not find them too savage, but more docile to receive the Catholic faith. The Incas, then, are the small light only there to announce

²⁴ See for example Rössner 2009, *Orden mundial*, and Fritz 2008, *Reclamar el derecho a hablar*, amongst many others.

²⁵ Pupo-Walker (ed.) 2008, *Comentarios reales*, p. 145.

²⁶ Advice: it is known that Garcilaso the Inca was familiar with the work of Julius Cesar and other important European historiographs. See for instance Fritz 2008, *Reclamar el derecho a hablar*, p.106.

²⁷ Pupo-Walker (ed.) 2008, *Comentarios reales*, p. 145.

the arriving of the “real” sunlight, which would be here the Christian faith. According to Michael Rössner, the people of the Incas are presented here like St John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ²⁸. Without entering into detail here, I want to indicate the most interesting passage of the quotation: “procediendo de bien en mejor”, proceeding from good to better. The idea that the Inca has about history in general is evidently a process of a linear sequence of empires, that go from good to better. That one people follows the other always surpassing its predecessor. It is important to mention that the Inca tries to reduce the inferiority of the Inca people, while at the same time he has to maintain the superiority of the Spanish. This strategy does not (yet) mean a very risky challenge, but (again) a somehow indirect revaluation of the position of the Incas.

2.2. The *translatio imperii*

The second possibility of interpreting the cultural translation of the chronicle of the Inca is the so-called theory of the *translatio imperii*. In the first sentence of the *Comentarios*, Garcilaso affirms that “como natural de la ciudad del Cozco, que fue otra Roma en aquel Imperio” (as a native of the city of Cuzco, which was another Rome in that empire), he has better knowledge and abilities to tell the story of the Incas (before and after the conquest) than the Spanish chroniclers of his times. Based on this declaration of the Inca, let us examine more closely the juridic and political discourse related to the word “Rome” in the age of the Renaissance – used by Garcilaso in a different contextualization²⁹. The *translatio imperii* is an ancient theory that already appears in the Bible in the book of Daniel,³⁰ and according to it there is a linear sequence of four empires (Assyrian, Persian, Greek, Roman) to which finally follows the kingdom of God, the paradise. Starting from this doctrine, which is considered the first concept of universal history, the idea of the *translatio imperii* developed during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance like a transmission of power from one empire to the other. The more this theory spread, however, the more empires had to precede the new one, leading to more and more kingdoms that claimed to belong into that tradition. Since every empire wanted to be the last one, the best one, the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, in the Middle Ages for instance, Charlemagne was considered to be the last link in a line of power, passed on over Athens and Rome finally to France. In this context it is also important mentioning the *translatio studii* – passed many times simultaneously with the *translatio imperii* – that describes the transmission of knowledge from one empire to the next, in this case starting from the Greeks over the Romans to the French people (and to their university in Paris). In the theories of the

²⁸ See Rössner 2009, *Orden mundial*, pp. 8-11.

²⁹ See for that Rössner 2009, *Orden mundial*, p. 4-6.

³⁰ See for the following Krämer 1996, *Translatio imperii*.

Renaissance epoch, the sequence of power continues even more in direction of the west, like for example until arriving in Spain³¹. When we use this theory to understand the *Comentarios reales*, we can see that the Inca Garcilaso presents his text in such a way that he situates the kingdom of his ancestors, of the Incas, in a similar sequence of empires, in a parallel structure in the South American continent. Only that this linear series has another origin and leads to “another Rome” in “this empire”, or in other words, to another powerful centre. Therefore, just like in the translations discussed above, here it is also about the linear sequence of peoples, in which always the following power surpasses the one before. This rhetorical strategy of the Inca already seems a bit less modest, because it is based on a duplication of origins of the linear sequence, and therefore relates Peru directly with the most powerful empire of the European tradition, Rome.

2.3. Two Parallel Worlds

This leads us to the third translation. We already analyzed the argumentation of the Inca Garcilaso towards a new world vision, which turns it into one of two origins and centres of the world. He builds a parallel history in his *Comentarios*, in which he translates the “symbolic Rome”, the cultural centre and the focus of power in Europe, into the peripheric Peruvian context. It is a parallel history, because “if there is another Rome, there is another origin, another causal foundation of rights and obligations, of ties and powers, there is another fountain of knowledge and there is – as a last resort – a parallel history, since the origin of the history occurs in this symbolic Rome and his empire”³². Let us look a little more closely at some of the words of the Inca himself, that are to be found in the beginning of the chronicle: “*Comentarios reales, que tratan del origen de los yncas, reyes que fueron del Peru, de su idolatría, leyes y gobierno en paz y en guerra: de sus vidas y conquistas, y de todo lo que fue aquel Imperio y su Republica, antes que los Españoles passaran a el*”³³. (“Royal Comments that are about the origin of the Incas, kings that they were of Peru, of their idolatry, laws and government in peace and war: of their lives and conquests, and of everything that was this empire and its republic before the Spanish went through”) So far the long title of the subsequent *Comentarios*. What is already presented very clearly in this title page of the book is exactly the concept of a world that has two origins that I mentioned before: one in Peru, from where the Incas descend, and the other in the Old World, from where the Spanish descend; the fundamental argument here is that there was already an “origen de los yncas [...] antes que los Españoles passaran a el”, before the Spanish people got there. They had a government with its own

³¹ See Campanella 1640.

³² Rössner 2009, *Orden mundial*, p. 6. (The translation is mine)

³³ Pupo-Walker (ed.) 2008, *Comentarios reales*, p. 98.

laws, there was already a dominant tribe that had its own culture. Law, and religion -- even though a heretical religion, as the Inca has to indicate with the word “*idolatría*”, if he wants to be heard in the Christian culture. In other words, there was already an empire with its own history in this part of the world, far away from the European centre. And suddenly we have a totally different conception of the structure of the world: it is one of two histories that exist at the same time, and do not result one from the other, but develop independently. Obviously, this conception contrasts with the one of the linear sequence of the history we have seen above in the other two examples of translation. Or rather, it is the duplication of the sequence. But with this duplication occurs a situation of constant tension, because it approaches questions like: Which centre is more powerful? And which origin is truly “original” and “authentic”? That is to say, the sequence goes back before a final comparison, a continuous competition between the old and the new centre.

To illustrate this image of two coexisting centres in the world, amongst which can always be noticed a certain tension, Michael Rössner relates it to the geometrical form of an ellipse³⁴. The ellipse is a geometrical figure, where two circles of the same size are added, as in a parallel projection, and a double structure of the centre is created. I would go even further with the example of graphic illustration, introducing another geometrical form at this point in the argument: the fractal geometry. Without entering into details of the mathematical formula, I will try to explain my hypothesis - which is a structural illustration that does not pretend to be in any way a complete explication. The geometrical figure of the fractal is a complex system of models which are reproduced over and over again in different scales and sizes. The most characteristic aspect about this figure is its infinite self-similarity, which means that one part of the figure has always more or less the same shape as the whole figure. And this shape repeats itself various times in similar ways and different sizes in the entire object³⁵. How does this model help us in relation to the Inca Garcilaso and his cultural translation?

As we have seen above, the Inca presents us in the *Comentarios reales* another version of the universal history: on the one hand, he somehow puts the culture of the Incas in the sequence of a *translatio imperii* of Latin America, which resembles the one of Europe. Or else, it can be seen from the other side as well, in which Latin America is considered the new empire that follows a

³⁴ Rössner 2009, *Orden mundial*, p. 8.

³⁵ For the fractal geometry, see the appendix, the Mandelbrot set, taken out of the internet. See also the article of Guntermann 1997, *Chaos in Amerika*.

long series of the European ones, as a continuation of the empires of Greece, Rome and Spain in America (but this refers rather to the imposed empire of the Spanish and not to the Incaic kingdom; so that I do not think it very likely, since the Inca talks about the time *before* the arrival of the Spanish)

Anyway, we can confirm that in his principal work, the Inca stages the Incaic people as precursors (both religiously and culturally) of the Spanish, which obviously creates a temporal sequence. But on the other hand, we notice that he also always employs an image of the world which has two parallel centres, that exist at the same time and that have the same right to exist. This is not what he was officially or directly allowed to say, so he used this indirect, symbolic form. In his explicit argument, Garcilaso makes an effort to emphasize the superiority of the Europeans, both religiously and culturally. But even though he finds himself in a situation where it is almost impossible to express views which would be heretical to the Europeans and Spanish crown – he tries nonetheless all the time to find comparative patterns for the two cultures. He creates, for example, a similarity between St John the Baptist and the Incas, or proves that the beliefs of the Incas were monotheistic as well (which means, as highly developed) like the Christian religion, even though with this statement, he becomes entangled in various contradictions: he affirms that “[...] no tuvieron más dioses que al sol”, they did not have more than one God, in the same paragraph in which he says that “no habían de adorar más de al Pachacamac por supremo Dios y señor”³⁶, they must not worship more than the Pachacamac as supreme God. Furthermore, he tries to show that the Incas are similar to powerful peoples like the Romans (or the Spanish, too).that they are colonizers and civilizers, as well, spreading the Quechuan between the native tribes of Peru just like the Romans did with the Latin language:

“Con este artificio domesticaron y unieron los Incas tanta variedad de naciones diversas y contrarias en idolatría y costumbres como las que hallaron y sujetaron a su Imperio, y los trajeron mediante la lengua a tanta unión y amistad que se amaban como hermanos [...]”³⁷

There are innumerable comparisons like this in the *Comentarios reales*, for example about the administration of the kingdom and the structure of monarchy. Some of them are logical comparisons, others are less comprehensible. The Inca finds himself in the dilemma of those things *he wants to say* with his text (that he knows more than the Spanish chroniclers, for instance, that the Inca world has another, independent centre etc.) and those things *he can say* in his situation

³⁶ Pupo-Walker (ed.) 2008, *Comentarios reales*, p. 162.

³⁷ *Comentarios reales* 2000, p. 377.

(referring always to the European centre, and to the historical and political models prevalent there) to be heard by the European audience. See this paragraph:

“Demás de esto, en todo lo que de esta república, antes destruida que conocida, dijere, será contando llanamente lo que en su antigüedad tuvo [...] sin comparar cosa alguna de éstas a otras semejantes que en las historias divinas y humanas se hallan, ni al gobierno de nuestros tiempos, porque toda comparación es odiosa. El que las leyere podrá cotejarlas a su gusto, que muchas hallará semejantes a las antiguas, así de la santa escritura como de las profanas y fábulas de la gentilidad antigua; muchas leyes y costumbres verá que parecen a las de nuestro siglo, otras muchas oirá en todo contrarias; de mi parte he hecho lo que he podido, no habiendo podido lo que he deseado.”³⁸

In saying this, Garcilaso obviously wants to establish analogies between the Old and the New world, he tries to build an cultural affinity between them. First, he shows himself offensive saying that there are many characteristics similar to ages in the past and the present (European) in the culture of the Incas, only to become defensive immediately afterwards, affirming that “all comparison is annoying”. As soon as he expresses something, he takes it back again. But what he has said once remains written, even if denied later on. In this way, he can express his ideas without getting problems with the Spanish authority. And he compares nonetheless, clandestinely: In other words, he translates.

The Inca Garcilaso thus combines two versions of historic presentation – the temporal sequence and the competitive comparison – which are contradictory, which never coexist without certain tensions, an impossibility of their combination. The Inca history is, therefore, in an interminable process of cultural negotiation. Negotiation between an understanding of the history that is evolutionary or causal, and an alternative history that could be defined as coexistent and comparative.

This is where the figure of the fractal seems applicable. If we imagine, as in the illustration in the appendix, the fractal in a spiral form, we can combine these two versions of history as the Inca presents it. Two of the spiral forms would then be the two centres. One would be Peru, the other one Europe. The temporal and causal sequence that includes ideas like the precursor function and the *translatio imperii*, can be found in the spiral movement that the fractal models have. They begin all at a certain “origin” and then develop in spirals. Then, considering the entire geometrical figure of the fractals, we see the relation that they have between them. The models resemble each other, they can be easily compared being translated into another context. One can find analogies and

³⁸ Pupo-Walker (ed.) 2008, *Comentarios reales*, pp. 156-157.

differences between them. Moreover, the tension is also visible in this geometrical form: it is like a competition between the snails, the similar spirals, competing over the most “original” origin, over the biggest size, the most beautiful shape. And the Inca Garcilaso stays in the middle of the fractals, trying desperately to add together the two of them, to combine them and to build his own logic from this image.

It is an impossible addition, as Borges would say. It is an untranslatable translation, as I would say. A journey that never reaches the end. It seems to me that it is exactly in that contradiction where we can see the whole ambivalence of the identity of all “mestizos”.

C. Conclusion.

In Latin America, processes of translation have been constitutive for the creation of its own cultures from the beginning of the *conquista*.³⁹ As a first reaction to the European centre, the American authors translated the “originals” of Europe into the context (or the language) of the periphery, as for instance in the first translation of the Inca (the theory of love of León Hebreo or in the translation of the sonnets of Petrarca by Enrique Garcés). More and more, from the “inmediate” translation emerges another, more extensive one, which offers new concepts and constructions of identity and power, like the *Miscelánea Austral* of Diego Dávalos or the *Comentarios reales* of the Inca Garcilaso. As we said above, the Inca establishes in his text a relation between the periphery and the centre, because it is not possible to deny the existence of a centre from the perspective of the periphery, since one descends of a people that is conquered by another. So the only possibility from the Latin American perspective – which is already confronted with an imperial centre in Europe – is to build another centre, another identity, another history. As the Latin American writers cannot deny the existence of a powerful world on the other side of the Atlantic ocean, they have to build a *coexistence* of *two* centres of power, of *two* parallel worlds. Many years later, these two worlds turn into an infinite number of coexisting worlds in the texts of Borges. The Latin American perspective since the conquest of the Spanish has to contain (or to “swallow”, as in the Brazilian theory of translation of Oswald de Andrade⁴⁰) the European structure of thinking. In the case of the Inca, this refers to the linearity, the causality, the “evolution” as descriptive model of history. At the

³⁹ See Pagni 2008, *Lateinamerika als Übersetzungsraum*, p. 164.

⁴⁰ Véase Pagni 2008, *Lateinamerika als Übersetzungsraum*, p. 172.

same time, he relates these with the indigenous ideas of the origin of the world etc. Peripheral cultures have to be form transcultural identities and parallel worlds, because two origins coexist without distinct limits. These parallel worlds are interchangeable, mixed, contradictory sometimes, and increasingly becoming blurred, existing conflictively side by side. For this reason, the “mestizo” authors of Latin America turn into cultural translators in an attempt to relate these coexisting worlds. And this is a project in continuous process, never ending.

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