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The Poetics of Revision: Tulio Mora's *Cementerio general*¹

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The establishment of the modern cemetery, as Joseph Roach observes, offered Enlightenment-era Europe and its colonies “a revolutionary spatial paradigm: the segregation of the dead from the living” (48). Roach later asks, “If the dead are forever segregated, how are the living supposed to remember who they are?” (55). Remembering the subaltern dead, whose legacies are silenced by both the tomb and official national culture, is an even more complicated matter. Tulio Mora's *Cementerio general* (1989, 1994), a collection in which unremembered or misremembered historical figures offer poetic monologues from the grave, can be seen as a response to such institutionalized amnesia in Peru. While *Cementerio general* includes a broad diversity of voices suppressed by or distorted within official memory, this essay examines Mora's creative resuscitation of indigenous and *mestizo* testimonies in particular. I argue

¹ I thank the members of the summer 2009 faculty writers' group at St. Mary's College of Maryland for their insightful critique of an earlier draft of this essay.

that their chronological sequencing within the text makes visible a historical chain of subjectivities that encourages modern readers to engage with the social and literary constructions of race that continue to haunt Peru.

I call Mora's approach in *Cementerio general* a "poetics of revision" for several reasons. First, the poet offers his readers the opportunity to literally "re-see" Peru's past by poetically staging sixty-four figures descending from a wide range of chronological, geographic, social, and ethnic contexts. Opening with the musings of a cave dweller from 20,000 B.C. and ending with a monologue delivered among the contemporary ruins of Zaña, the book also re-creates the testimonies of—to name just a few—Inca nobles, Spanish *conquistadores*, a Dominican priest, a cross-dressing Spanish adventuress, a black slave, prostitutes, folk heroes, guerilla fighters, a drug trafficker, and an assortment of artists, singers, and musicians. What unites these diverse voices is their absence from or skewed representation within the canon.

In allowing readers to "re-see" Peruvian history in this way, Mora gestures towards a critical re-examination of the past. Just as Adrienne Rich's oft-cited feminist revision is a look back with fresh eyes at male-authored and male-centric history (166), Mora's postcolonial revision is a fresh look back at Eurocentric and patriarchal constructions of power in Peru. The setting of a poetic graveyard that conjures the semi-presence of the dead becomes a particularly powerful site for this historical revision. Kathleen Brogan observes that "through the agency of ghosts, group histories that have in some way been threatened, erased, or fragmented are recuperated and revised" (5-6). Avery Gordon similarly writes that stories of cultural haunting may "not only repair representation mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which memory was produced in the first place, toward a counter-memory, for the future" (22). In Mora's poetic graveyard, spectral revisions happen on implicit and explicit levels; some ghosts simply re-present recognizable events, places, or figures from alternative angles, while others openly cite archival intertexts within their own enunciations. Yet while supernatural voices may recover a lost or denied past, they also emphasize "the degree to which any such historical

reconstruction is essentially an imaginative act,” as Brogan puts it (6). Indeed, as Jill Kuhnheim observes in her insightful examination of *Cementerio general*, Mora’s literary revision of history questions the validity of any narrative, including his own (43-44).

However, Mora does not simply offer a cynical commentary on the impossibility of truth and representation. His project instead becomes akin to what Gordon calls an “alternative diagnostics” that “link[s] the politics of accounting, in all its intricate political-economic, institutional, and affective dimensions, to a potent imagination of what has been done and what is to be done otherwise” (18). *Cementerio general* gradually unveils the transformative potential of its poetic phantoms. The book’s progressive chain of voices blurs the historical and representational space between an ephemeral (and potentially forgettable) past and the tangible present, thus shedding light on the modern condition and proposing liberation from a cycle of violence.

The need to break free from that cycle was never more apparent than the years framing the book’s publication, when Peru was in the midst of the civil war waged principally between Shining Path and government forces. In 2003, years after the conflict was officially declared over, Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported that more than 69,000 victims, the majority Quechua-speaking peasants from the highlands, had been “disappeared,” while hundreds of thousands more had been forced to flee their homelands, leaving behind ghost towns and fragmented communities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission). In addition to underscoring a persistent legacy of racism (intensified by perceived geocultural divisions), the TRC report revealed the blindness of some Peruvians—most crucially, the coastal political elite—to the extent of the violence; strikingly, casualties had previously been estimated at about half the number reported by the TRC (Lerner). Mora’s book counters this kind of non-vision with a poetic revision that conveys both ritual and literary memorial.

Funerary rites and literary memorializing can parallel each other, as Brogan proposes: “close attention to the emergence of redefined ethnicities in stories of cultural haunting illuminates the importance of ritual in the

ongoing construction of, more precisely, *enactment* of cultural identity” (22). Building on this idea, I examine how Mora’s poems not only stage and revise rituals that perform ethnicity, but also act as funerary rites in and of themselves; they put some myths to rest and fashion new stories in their place in order to propose alternative understandings of what it means to be indigenous in Peru. Taking another look at these myths and official history leads Mora to also revise aesthetic categories, such as Latin American *indigenismo*, the institution of poetry, and even his own work, as he substantially expands the second edition of his book to make its chain of subjectivities more inclusive.

The first poem of the collection, “Pikimachay”—a title that refers to a cave in the Ayacucho Valley and the site of the earliest known human civilization in Peru (González Carré 27)—serves as overture for the book’s journey through Peruvian history:²

Pikimachay

(20,000ac-14,000ac)

Descanso la fatiga de una vida sin culpas
 bajo la negra, humosa tierra de una cueva.
 Pero antes en las pampas
 limpias como el ojo de la luna
 fundé la memoria de este país.
 Fue como cargar a un puma vivo. (11)

An archeologically appropriate location for the initiation of Mora’s examination of Peruvian history, the cave is also a powerful setting mythologically. Caves were common burial sites for pre-Columbian cultures, and are considered by some Andean communities to be sacred *pacarinas* (underground places) from which humans emerged and cosmic energy springs (Ossio 207). The opening poem of *Cementerio general* thus conveys cultural and poetic germination alongside death, interlacing its beginning with its end in a manner consistent with the circular view of life and death inherent in Andean thought.

At first glance, “Pikimachay” suggests a pure, originary voice, obscured by the corruption of subsequent civilizations. The short, balanced

² Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from *Cementerio general* are taken from the 1992 edition.

lines of the poem and its brief overall length formally complement this impression of prehistoric clarity. The poem, in this sense, hints at a reversal of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"; in Mora's lines, truth and enlightenment are buried deep within the cave rather than illuminated by the outside world. However, several aspects of the poem unsettle this reading. First, the Quechua word "Pikimachay" translates as "flea cave" (González Carré 27), semantically at odds with any intended representation of purity. In addition, the complicated initial impression of "resting the fatigue of a life without sins" and the tenebrous images that follow obscure the nature of the speaker. This ambiguity is enhanced by the comparison between the pure pampas and the "eye of the moon" in the third and fourth lines; while the moon is a revered divinity, the combined images of the humid cave, darkness, and this goddess of fecundity evoke classic correlations between feminine powers and mysterious volatility. The associations between this ancient mummy-speaker and the moon also bring to mind the *Machakuna* ("Old Ones"), described by anthropologist Catherine Allen as "a gigantic race who lived by moonlight in an age before the current Sun existed" (38). According to Allen, the *Machakuna* coexist with the living in a parallel and sometimes intersecting "shadowy" dimension, and can exert a negative influence in the world (39-40). Juan Ossio similarly describes how the *soqas*, or mummies, of ancient ruins are seen as representative of a dark, uncivilized people and potential sources of contemporary evil (208). Read alongside the last words of the poem, which liken the foundation of Peru's memory to "carrying a live puma," these images suggest a more precarious legacy than the initial lines would have the reader believe (11).³

"Pikimachay," an obscure poem that leads to a variety of potential interpretations, thus rejects Manichean portrayals that have created the heroes and villains of official history, a general aspect of *Cementerio general* that Consuelo Hernández emphasizes in her astute analysis of Mora's book (40). Through his multifaceted voices, Mora instead seeks to express the intricacy of human nature, or what Avery Gordon calls "complex personhood" (4). Gordon proposes that "at the very last, complex

³ The puma is richly symbolic in Inca mythology, in general terms "associated with changes in the human and natural world," as Steele explains (163).

personhood is about conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people's lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning" and suggests that recognizing this depth "guides efforts to treat race, class, and gender dynamics and consciousness as more dense and delicate than those categorical terms often imply" (5). In cultivating "complex personhood," then, Mora's initial poem does manifest one of the tenets of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave": the need to look beyond the one-dimensional "reality" projected by puppeteers.

The poems representing pre-Inca voices that follow "Pikimachay" develop the theme of layered traditions; while they spotlight individual voices and emphasize the diversity of cultures that led up to the Incas, they are linked to one another by recurring images and phrases, suggesting a chain that has fed into a greater commonality. The second poem, "Toquepala"—a title referencing a group of highland caves whose paintings date back to about 9,500 years ago (Moseley 98)—spotlights the voice of a cave artist. His descriptions of both the subjects he paints—victims of plunging darts—and his motivations for doing so complicate modern assessments of his art:

La resignación es su lenguaje. Los más fuertes
se revuelcan de dolor, lanzan gemidos que el carbón
no reproduce. Su agonía es todo el arte que he dejado.
Su agonía y el goce (también el miedo) de mi vientre.
Aquí no he pintado una ceremonia, sino un consuelo.
El tiempo —esa repetición de mis harturas y
penurias,
con los dientes más filudos del más viejo carnicero del
Perú—
concederá otros atributos a mi estilo, pero recuerden
el hambre hizo de mí el artista que ahora elogian. (12)

While modern spectators celebrate the technique apparent on the cave walls, the voice re-created by Mora considers the hunger, fear, pleasure, and guilt that also motivated these paintings. The poetic speaker's emphasis on the "lenguaje" and "gemidos" of the painted victims draws attention to the voices and bodies silenced by not only physical violence but also the art that fossilizes them. When the speaker characterizes the flow of time as "esa repetición de mis harturas y penurias," he not only lays bare his own humanity, but also perpetuates the image of a chain that links both

each poem within Mora's work and each period within Peru's cyclical history.

While the first two poems offer complex voices, encouraging readers to look beyond simplified characterizations of indigenous people, the third poem, "Chilca (5,000ac-2500ac)," offers an exaggeratedly homogeneous voice to the same end. The title refers to a fishing community that flourished a few kilometers inland from the coast, but also cultivated gourds, beans, and possibly squash (Moseley 112). Mora's pastoral representation of the Chilca recycles some of these descriptors, but also mocks 'museumified' representations of ancient cultures by alluding to the hyperbolic one-dimensionality of *indianista* writing. The poem's introductory description of a lush, springtime blossoming of corn, peppers, and other typical Andean crops contrasts strikingly with the starkness of "Pikimachay" and "Toquepala. This celebration of fertility and rebirth reaches an apex in the poem's central lines:

...Y he aquí
 que el frijol, tan dimunito como un niño,
 levantó sus hojas como agradecido
 y luego fue el zapallo, ese sol que a gatas
 lleva la cabeza y dentro de la esfera
 sus trajes amarillos. Entonces
 el cuy y la vizcacha masticaban
 la hierba dulcemente, la hierba de los cercos
 dulcemente y cada lluvia
 tuvo un nombre y hablamos una lengua
 como el murmullo del quishuar
 al pie de la cascada. (13)

The formulaic language that frames this idyllic *locus amoenus* is enhanced by repeated fluvial images and gushing sounds. Specifically Andean referents like "el cuy" and "la vizcacha," among others, further evoke *indianista* depictions of a lost Andean Golden Age. This parody is enhanced by the poem's personified, childlike plants and docile animals. The final lines of the poem intensify the poem's double coding:

Entonces cansados nos echamos
 a dormir después de la faena
 de los siglos
 bajo la sombra de un millón de colibríes. (13)

llamándome estéril y traidora. (20)

The focus on the speaker's aged womb and breasts highlight not only the objectification but also the disposability of her body, since she is unable to reproduce the Inca line. In addition to condemning gender disparity, Curi Ocollo's enunciation challenges romanticized views of Inca egalitarianism by revealing the bloodthirsty ambition of Inca royalty. Before graphically describing bloody fights for the throne within the Inca ruling family—a cycle begun, as she tells it, when the first Inca ruler Manco Capac killed three of his own brothers—Curi Ocollo proclaims “Nada más que intriga y miedo es nuestra historia” (20-21). This line is later reiterated, punctuating the legacy of violence begotten with Manco Capac's act.

Curi Ocollo herself is a victim of familial treachery, for it is her brother Guamán Achcachi who urges the young Huayna Cápac—for whom the poetic speaker had served as nursemaid—to hurl her over the precipice. Consistent with preceding poems, however, Mora's portrayal of Ocollo avoids a straightforward portrayal of martyrdom. As the poem approaches its conclusion, the speaker reveals that she has been both victim and victimizer in this cycle of deceit; she changed her own killer's destiny when he was a child, ordering the execution of a teacher who intended to drown him. She emphasizes this cyclical history, saying of Huayna Cápac: “Ahora me despeña a mí sin comprender / que la traición ya late en los hijos que aún no tiene” (21-22). In exposing Curi Ocollo's own blood-stained hands, Mora not only complicates her image as a defenseless victim, but also suggests the unwritten agency of Inca women. The subversive influence of women is also captured through repeated references to their narrative power. Though she herself is initially condemned to silence because of her infertility, Curi Ocollo recalls hearing other women indoctrinate their sons with tales of Inca traditions, thus shaping the empire: “En silencio mi vergüenza mastiqué/escuchando a otras mujeres y hermanas de los reyes/—como yo—hablar de las herencias y futuras sucesiones” (20). Curi Ocollo associates herself with these women, sisters of the kings like herself, and foreshadows her own narrative clout in Mora's book.

In the end, however, the speaker suggests that no force can compete against a fated destiny. After depicting the indoctrination passed down

orally by royal women, she wistfully observes, “Cada quien educó a su cachorro en estas lides/y después lloró en vano su pretensión” (20). This sense of futility continues in the final lines of her poem:

Desde esta casa del relámpago le grito mi presagio:
en el vértigo que inspira el precipicio está escrito
que uno a uno todos caerán, como la flecha
que intentó en vano el corazón del arco iris. (22).

On the one hand, Curi Ocollo has the last laugh here; her final words live on—inscribed in Mora's poem—while the empire sought by her killers dissolves, their familial disunity greatly assisting Pizarro's campaign. And yet, her prophecy of demise is bittersweet, its sadness accentuated by the image of vain shots aimed at the heart of the empire, symbolized here by the rainbow.⁴

Mora weaves the image of the rainbow into the next poem, “Chalcuchímac (?-1533),” thus interlacing voices newly resurrected in the second edition of his book to those—like Chalcuchímac's—already included in the first. In fact, “Chalcuchímac” extends the tale of treason begun by Curi Ocollo, this time spotlighting the legendary—and catastrophic—competing claims to the throne by Atahualpa and Huáscar, both sons of Huayna Capac. As Mora informs readers in a historical footnote included in the first edition of his book, Chalcuchímac originally served in Huayna Capac's military, but as an older man turned away from the Inca's legitimate successor to become Atahualpa's general instead (102).⁵ In

⁴ According to Inca mythology, the ancestors' decision to settle in the valley of Cuzco was confirmed by the sign of a rainbow stretching over the valley (Urton 49). More generally, the rainbow manifestation of the deity *amaru*, who arches across the sky after rains, signals transition within the cycle of nature (Steele 21). The rainbow lives on in the multi-colored contemporary flags of Tawantinsuyu (*wiphalas*).

⁵ In the first edition of *Cementerio general*, Mora sparsely titles his poems with the speaker's initials and dates of birth and death; however, endnotes offer full names and brief biographies of each speaker. As Kuhnheim observes, the original historical notes “constantly remin[d] us of Mora's fictionalization of these figures by juxtaposing historical and literary versions of their lives” (40). In the second edition, initials are replaced by full names in the titles, and the historical notes are eliminated. While a compelling juxtaposition of “fact” and “fiction” is lost with the absent endnote data, Mora's purging of ostensibly objective accounts of history suggests an even greater distancing from the kind of totalizing voice challenged by his poems. It also encourages readers to become more active agents in a collaborative re-construction of the past.

Chalcuchímac's monologue, Atahualpa's brow is tragically marked by a bloody rainbow.

As the poem opens, the general voices his allegiance to Atahualpa on the eve of the empire's demise: "Atahualpaman Intip Churin' / pensé, grité, lloré" (the Quechua phrase loosely translates as "Tú Atahualpa eres hijo del sol"⁶) (23). The linguistic juxtaposition here emphasizes rupture, both within *Tawantinsuyo* and between the Incas and the Spanish, while the verbs "grité" and "lloré" underline Chalcuchimac's exertion of voice, alluding to the clash of orality and writing brought with the conquistadors' arsenal of rhetorical weapons (such as the *requerimiento*). The lines that follow expand upon the link between writing and violence in the Americas, as Chalcuchímac's words are interrupted by a colonial intertext. Here, we see Atahualpa throwing the Bible offered by a friar to the ground:

*Y el frayle, con un libro en las manos,
le empeco a dezir las cosas de Dios
que le convenian, pero el no las quiso tomar.
Y pidiendo el libro, el padre se lo dio,
pensando que lo queria besar: y el lo tomo
y lo echo enzima de su gente.... (24)*

Atahualpa's rejection of the Bible instigates the massacre of "*seys o siete mil indios*" (24). Chalcuchímac only manages to repeat "Atahualpaman Intip Churin" one last time before conceding, "volví a salir sin voz" (24); his ultimate speechlessness presaging the subjugation of orality by the lettered tradition.

Mora's characterization of Chalcuchímac, however, does not offer a black-and-white vilification of the Spaniards and idealization of their victims. After presenting the scene of Atahualpa's murder, the poet cuts to Cuzco, where Chalcuchímac—faithful to the end—kills his brother Huáscar, massacres several members of *cuzqueño* royalty, and destroys the imperial *quipus*. Vivid descriptions of his relentless cruelty contrast with his earlier melancholic lyricism. By juxtaposing the brutality of *conquistadores* with the unapologetic spite of Chalcuchímac himself, Mora blurs the line between victims and aggressors, questioning instead a cycle of violence that

⁶ I am indebted to Nina Kinti-Moss for help with this translation.

afflicts both. As Chalcuchímac throws Huáscar's body to the river, the latter utters his final words:

“Derrumbémonos juntos”,
 el arriba sea abajo,
 el Pachakuti desordene el mundo
 y retorne el ciclo de la tripa negra
 por quinientos años.... (26)

Like Curi Ocllo's final prophesy, Huáscar's emphasizes the unending cycle of destruction and recreation in the world, or *Pachakuti*, reminding Chalcuchímac that they share the same inescapable destiny.⁷ Indeed, Huáscar's closing words carry over to Chalcuchímac's own final enunciation, spoken as Pizarro orders his execution:

“Derrumbémonos juntos”, repetí,
 asentí, decidí,
 y me entregué a la hoguera
 como a su forma el odio. (27)

In pronouncing “Derrumbémonos juntos” to a mixed Spanish and Inca audience, Chalcuchímac mocks the immanent power's doomed mission; *pachakuti* will overturn it, too. Furthermore, whereas the series of verbs that open the poem (“pensé, grité, lloré”) suggest powerlessness, the final verbs that Chalcuchímac utters signal his recuperation of agency. He refuses to die a victim, throwing himself into the flames and maintaining control over his own body.

As Mora's text moves into the colonial period, two poems recreate the prominent voices of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala and El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, whose monologues draw attention to the appropriation of European letters by indigenous and *mestizo* writers (even if they did not always enjoy a contemporaneous readership, as was the case with Guamán Poma's *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*). Like other poems in *Cementerio general*, Guamán Poma's enunciation mourns a cycle of domination that plagues Peru:

Mi dolor fue más lejos que mi edad,
 fue mi vagar sin fin por el país en ruinas
 entrando en los ciclos de la tripa negra
 (cada quinientos años).
 El tiempo de mi dolor es incuantificable.

⁷ As Urton explains, this term combines the words *pacha* (“time and space”) and *kuti* (“turning over or around; revolution”) (40-41).

Pero nostalgia no es.
Es el Perú lo que me duele. (50)

Chalcuchímac's earlier evocation of *pachukuti* haunts Guamán Poma's enunciation; in fact, the phrase "los ciclos de la tripa negra" appears in both poems, explicitly weaving a conceptual thread throughout Mora's text and suggesting one that runs through Peruvian history. Mora also links Guaman Poma's colonial voice to his own modern one in a fragment that appears toward the end of the poem:

Lloro por estos cuarenta años de escribir
y escribir y escribir
la historia inmunda que quise transformar
con la palabra,
ingenua asunción del tiempo y los caminos,
como ingenua es la poesía gritando,
miles de siglos,
por los dolores del humano error. (51)

Within the context of the second edition of *Cementerio general*—that is, Mora's rewriting of his own book—this sense of shared anguish and skepticism regarding the usefulness of "years of writing and writing" becomes a poignant instance of identification between the poet and his narrator.

The unending repetition of history in *Cementerio general*—through its own reduplication of devastatingly cyclical historical patterns—threatens to overwhelm readers with pessimism. Yet the reinvention implicit in Mora's poetics of revision creates imagined ways out of those patterns.⁸ We see this in the next poem, "Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616)." While Garcilaso did not receive direct treatment in the first edition of *Cementerio general*, a dialogue with the colonial writer was already implicit; as Consuelo Hernández notes, Mora's title echoes that of Garcilaso's most famous work, *Comentarios reales de los Incas* (1609) (36).⁹ Garcilaso's

⁸ Joseph Roach, drawing from Richard Schechner's descriptions of performance as "restored behavior" as "twice behaved behavior," explains, restored behavior "must be reinvented the second time or 'the nth time' because it cannot happen exactly the same way twice, even though in some instances the 'constancy of transmission' across many generations may be 'astonishing'" (Roach 3, Schechner 28-29).

⁹ As Consuelo Hernández observes, the title of Mora's book also evokes Pablo Neruda's *Canto general* (1950) and fellow Peruvian Antonio Cisneros's *Comentarios reales* (1964) (35-36).

chronicle is itself a self-proclaimed revisionist work, as the colonial writer makes it clear that he wishes to amend Spanish chroniclers' misguided interpretations of the Incas. Yet as a book that excessively idealizes the Incas and was penned at great chronological and physical distance from the events narrated, it is far from unbiased (Oviedo 197-198). If Garcilaso's *Comentarios reales* is already a subjective reconsideration of history, then Mora's poem represents a twice-distorted revision.

Garcilaso's enunciation begins with a direct citation from the *Comentarios reales*: "Vi salir al primer inca...vi correr los cuatro indios/con sus lanzas; vi sacudir a toda lo demás gente común y hacer los demás ademanes" (53). The repeated verb "vi" reminds readers of Garcilaso's insistence on his intimate, eyewitness perspective on the Incas. However, in Mora's poem, this self-assurance is offset by an imagined confession of uncertainty:

No recuerdo, imagino que recuerdo. Repetirlo me ha
ocupado
hasta vaciar mis días de su carne.
El tiempo es siempre diferencia, duplica sus torturas
en mi sangre.... (53)

The questioning of his accuracy is only one facet of a more complex doubling with which the poetic speaker wrestles: the ethnic divide living within his body and mirrored by his writing. In his *Comentarios reales*, Garcilaso reconciles *mestizaje* as a neoplatonic union of opposites, suggesting that the encounter allowed the Incas to realize their preordained Christian faith (Oviedo 198). Garcilaso affirms that he has embraced his mixed identity; referring to the term *mestizo*, he declares, "me lo llamo yo a boca llena, y me honro con él" (708). In Mora's poetic reimagining, however, the colonial writer expresses anguish over his fragmented identity:

¿Por qué escribo en una lengua lo que no puedo en otra?
Cuando arribo a esta duda ya me reconozco en la
traición.
Los dos hombres que de espaldas me habitaron
vuélvense y se tocan
.....
La página en blanco ha aceptado el desafío:
duplicarme en la tortura, repetir mis desalientos,
resentir mis resentimientos:.... (54)

Here, Garcilaso's corporeal divide is magnified by the writing that reduplicates it.

However, while Mora's poem reflects an unreconciled identity, it also acknowledges Garcilaso's appropriation of the colonizer's writing as an access to power: "pero no tengo más coartada (más mentira) que oponer/a la palabra del Poder el Poder de la Palabra" (54). The chiasmus created by these two lines is reminiscent of baroque *conceptismo* and brings to mind Garcilaso's mastery of European rhetorical tropes. The mirrored words also accent the theme of Garcilaso's dual identity and the simultaneous entrapment and liberation that Western writing offers him. Yet it is a sense of liberation that prevails in the final lines of the poem, in which the poetic speaker asserts the agency embedded within his words:

Ya han traspuesto el cerco del olvido
 los que escombraron en mi alma, mientras mi libro
 es el poema que reta transparente
 las miserias del tiempos y sus cronistas,
 la belleza que derrota a la verdad.
 Otros hombres lo devoran en sus noches preocupadas
 por la tromba de la guerra
 y lo citan cuando suben al cadalso.
 Y es el sueño que aún espanta a los gobiernos. (54)

The characterization of Garcilaso's writing as a "poem" in these lines again conflates the poet and his narrator, emphasizing their common project of literary revision. Here, anxieties about the futility of writing, apparent in both Guaman Poma and Garcilaso's monologues, are replaced by an acknowledgment of its revolutionary potential.

As the poem rendered in Garcilaso's voice insinuates, the republication of his text in 1722 fed a wave of neo-Inca revivalism that swept Cuzco and sparked a series of rebellions against the Viceroyalty in the late eighteenth century, a period that Peter Klaren aptly calls "the age of Andean insurrection" (Klaren 108, 116). In *Cementerio general*, Mora imagines the testimonies of the legendary leaders of two such revolts, Juan Santos Atahualpa and Túpac Amaru II. In both cases, the poetic speakers beg for more humanized visions of their now mythic personas. Mora's version of Juan Santos Atahualpa's testimony ironically requests: "No se

refieran a mí según los usos de la época,/no me exalten ni hagan poesía con mi gesta./Sólo digan que fui hombre como todos” (65). The appeal not to “make poetry” within a poem ironically reveals Mora’s revision of heroic verse; rather than aggrandizing great deeds, he explores “complex personhood” (Gordon 4).

Mora’s portrayal of José Gabriel Condorcanqui, better known as Túpac Amaru II and the legendary leader of a 1780 rebellion, correspondingly humanizes this iconic figure. Seen in his day as a great threat to colonial power, Túpac Amaru II is now celebrated as a national hero. He begins his monologue contemplating his idealized status, alluding to a popular conflation between himself and Jesus Christ. This parallel is extended when he cites an archival record of his torture, which evokes the crucifixion of Jesus: “*Onze coronas/de hierro con puntas muy agudas,/que le han de poner en la cabeza...*” (68). Now an outsider viewing the myth-making spectacle of his own body, Túpac Amaru questions the exaltation of his execution as “una metáfora de culpas nacionales” (68). The popular image of an Inca messiah is countered in Mora’s poem with the speaker’s graphic descriptions of the dismemberment that not just he, but also his wife, children, and followers suffered upon the collapse of their uprising. By highlighting the sacrifices endured by lesser-known figures, Túpac Amaru emphasizes that he was as human—and no more valiant—than those who fought alongside him.

Yet the title of this poem, “Túpac Amaru II (1740-1781),” also draws attention to an aspect of the speaker’s self-promotion. By placing his taken—rather than given—name at the forefront of the poem, Mora underscores the masquerade that José Gabriel Condorcanqui willingly embraced. The name “Túpac Amaru” was already symbolically loaded when Condorcanqui assumed it, evoking not only the mythological Andean serpent god *amaru*, said to appear in moments of *pachakuti*, but also the last Inca of the Vilcabamba region, himself a celebrated rebel (Lienhard 123-124). As Klaren observes, Condorcanqui’s adoption of this particular name emphasized his alleged blood descent from the first Túpac Amaru and played into millenarian predictions of the advent of the Inca messiah *Inkarrí* (117). However, the end of Mora’s poem imagines the hero’s regret,

not so much for the deliberate crafting of his image, but rather for its posthumous commodification:

Un look para el consumo: los cabellos largos
coronados por un sombrero con el pico rombo
y el ala tiesa y circular—ideal
para levantar turistas en el Cusco. (69)

Modern capitalistic appropriations of Túpac Amaru's figure only underscore the failure of his struggle. The poem further insinuates that entrepreneurs are not the only offenders, bringing to mind the dictator Juan Velasco's conjuring of the image of Túpac Amaru II upon his implementation of *Plan Inca* in 1968 and the rebel group Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru's appropriation of his name, for example (Klaren 340-342; 377).

This positioning of indigenous and *mestizo* people in these more recent ideological struggles has nineteenth-century precedents, including the Independence Wars (1820-1824) and the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) (Starn et al. 163). In *Cementerio general*, Mora re-creates the perspectives of indigenous soldiers to question official accounts of these momentous battles. "Marcelino Carreño (?-1824)," imagines the voice of an uncelebrated hero who fought alongside José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar in the Independence Wars. Carreño's declaration exposes the selective memory of official history and denounces the fact that Peru's "liberation" in reality only applied to the elite. The poetic speaker begins with a description of a dismal and arid Ayacucho, the site celebrated as the final triumph over Spanish forces and forgotten as the final resting place for Carreño and thousands of other anonymous soldiers. This particular setting, most recently the hotbed of the Shining Path, emphasizes the cyclical entrapment of peasants in wars supposedly waged for their freedom.

Carreño hints at the hypocritical nature of the Independence Wars through lines that echo Enlightenment sentiment:

...Transpiro
el aire asociativo a las exudaciones gloriosas
(*liberté égalité fraternité*) para reñir
conmigo mismo. Como en vida.... (80)

Carreño then describes how an “ebriedad independista” intoxicated him with a false sense of hope, especially since, alongside creole fighters, “...no soy el enemigo, sino el aliado, el que viene del montón, el *montanero*” (80). Later in the poem, however, a distorted version of the revolutionary maxim haunts the poetic speaker. Referring to the writings of Hipólito Unánue, a wealthy Enlightenment intellectual who later became Peru’s first minister of finance (Klaren 105, 139), Carreño laments, “que en el *Mercurio Peruano*/nos demuestra científicamente la *debilité/fragilité inferiorité* de los indios” (81). By the end of the war, the soldiers who had embraced the designation *montaneros* found their efforts forgotten and their ethnicities berated with more disdainful epithets. Describing the sacrifices of his fellow soldiers, Carreño grieves:

Sus nombres—Culuhuanca, Cairo, Terreros,
Mayta, Cascayanri, Cuyubamba, Huavique—
no aparecen entre las firmas del acta
de la independencia del Perú. Lo mismo da. Ya hemos sido
clasificados por el mismo veredicto:
indio, jetón, gavilán, bárbaro, ignorante. (81)

Carreño’s monologue thus proposes a revision of archival memory, recording the contributions of—and condoning the inequitable benefits to—indigenous people during the independence movement. It also reconsiders the double-edged legacy of the Enlightenment, a vehicle of both progressive and oppressive ideals.

In fact, independence did little to change the status of indigenous communities in Peru. Yet the turn of the century did bring about *indigenismo*, which—though led primarily by white intellectuals, riddled with contradictions, and ultimately not emancipatory—took steps toward revindicating Peru’s indigenous roots. The poem “Luis Felipe Luna (1884-1945)” sheds light on *indigenismo* from an unconventional angle, by portraying one man’s reactionary resistance to its cause. As Mora explains in the first edition of *Cementerio general*, Luis Felipe Luna not only epitomized the feudal landowners scathingly portrayed by *indigenista* writers, but also spearheaded a counter-*indigenista* movement (107). His enunciation reveals unbending faith in colonialism and sheer bewilderment at indigenous rebellion. He begins with a complacent overview of his

paternalistic reign on his *latifundio* and the tools of domination that secure his position: “Mi pequeño imperio. Hay marasmo ambiental. La fría puna./El quechua imprescindible. Aguardiente y coca. Es casi una foto: *mis hijos infantiles*” (117). Luna follows this ekphrastic description with references to the government’s threats of agrarian reform and the power plays he undertakes to dodge that outcome. His intimate poetic voice is interspersed with fragments of his political writings, all leading to the same conclusion:

Y la intolerancia de mi pluma
 contra los indianófilos:
*El derecho a la tierra no es un problema
 racial sino un privilegio económico
 obtenido por el trabajo y el esfuerzo.* (118)

By placing Luna’s voice in a dialogue with itself, Mora accentuates the speaker’s single-mindedness. As the poem continues, however, Luna’s convictions are intermingled with reports of peasant land takeovers, hinting at his impending identity crisis. Baffled, he asks “¿Dónde están mis hijos?/¿dónde mis capataces?” (118). He later muses:

...¿Quién soy yo?
*Un personaje de Arguedas, una foto
 de Martín Chambi, un poema de Gamaliel Churata,
 un cuadro de Sabogal. ¿Quién soy yo?* (118)

Luna realizes that he has been typecast in a drama of colonial power and resistance, not unlike those portrayed by the prominent artists of the *indigenista* movement mentioned in these lines.

The poem imagined from the perspective of artist Joaquín López Antay, a celebrated crafter of the *retablo ayacuchano*, spotlights a visual arts movement with its own connection to *indigenismo*. In fact, *indigenista* painter José Sabogal, mentioned in Luna’s monologue, links up to López Antay’s story. Critic Emma María Sordo details how a group of *indigenista* artists from Lima, including Sabogal, visited Ayacucho toward the mid-twentieth-century and “discovered” the *sanmarcos*, a portable altar box that, while originally used to proselytize to indigenous communities, later developed into a sacred *huaca* used by peasants to protect animals and promote fertility (34). The *sanmarcos* generally contains two levels, the

upper portion representing *hanan pacha* (“el mundo de arriba”) and holding the figures of Catholic saints accompanied by Andean musicians, animals, and other figures, and the more secular bottom level representing *kay pacha* (“este mundo”) and depicting Andean peasant life (Sordo 35-36). When mid-century *indigenistas* stumbled upon the *sanmarcos*, it was thus already a multifarious manifestation of Andean identities. According to Sordo, however, the *indigenistas* “suggested to don Joaquín López Antay, the master *imaginero* [traditional crafter], the possibility of representing scenes related to the customs of the city and region of Huamanga. Thus the contemporary concept of the *retablo* was born” (34). While modern *retablistas* have remained faithful to the original configuration and overall design of the classic *sanmarcos*, the updated boxes depict modern local events and concerns, including “military repression, massacres, violence in the Andean communities, migration and other aspects dealing with guerrilla (*Sendero Luminoso*) actions, etc.” (Sordo 41). A common mission of artistic revision—and in particular the use of art as a social chronicle—links the projects of López Antay and Tulio Mora, the poet's *Cementerio general* becoming akin to a verbal *retablo* that re-imagines Andean lives.

The poem rendered from López Antay's perspective alternates the artist's intimate voice with more detached descriptions of his work. Poignant reflections on the impact of migration in Antay's personal life, for example, flow alongside a more objective inventory of the *retablo*'s components:

Todos mis hermanos han muerto, se fueron
a Huancayo, La Merced, Lima,
se los llevó el viajero.
Un batán, papa, harina, anilinas bolivianas,
pinceles de pelo de vizcacha, cola, barniz
y madera tornillo para los cajones.
La papa es lo más importante.
Conmigo no ha podido, yo he ido a hacer
mi servicio militar obligatorio a la capital
y he vuelto. Odio a Lima, odio a los circos,
tiemblo de miedo cuando subo a una lancha el Callao,
me mareo en las calles. (135-36)

Similar oscillations follow, suggesting that some readings of López Antay's *retablos* have overlooked the humanity behind them (a phenomenon

similarly suggested in the earlier poem “Toquepala”). A sterilization of the art form is suggested in two lines that paradoxically describe the *retablo*'s multiplicity in terms of tastefulness and orderliness: “*arte de multitudes miniaturizadas/donde nada se abigarra ni confunde*” (136). These lines hint at the greater debate regarding what constitutes “art,” a polemic that López Antay unwittingly fed when he received a national prize for his work in 1976 (González Carré et al. 233-34). As Mora himself explains in the first edition of *Cementerio general*, this honor spurred disputes regarding the value of art versus *artesanía* in Peru (108). The last lines of the poem imagine Antay's response to this controversy: “¿Qué es arte, qué es ser artista?/prefiero que me hable más de mis paisanos/que están muriendo día a día en Ayacucho” (136). Antay's final statement questions the relevance of esoteric cultural debate in a time of social crisis.

The poem that directly follows Antay's monologue in *Cementerio general* recreates the voice of Ernesto Silva, popularly known as “Poncho Negro,” a folk musician and leader of migrant settlements in Lima, as Mora explains in the first edition of his book (108). The initial lines of the poem situate Silva's words within the collective voice of thousands of migrants who radically changed the contours of Lima in the second half of the twentieth century. Mora interlaces several literary intertexts, from the *Poema de mio Cid* to the works of Alexander von Humboldt, José María Arguedas, and Sebastián Salazar Bondy, into the beginning of Silva's epic story:

Cuando piden que hable de mi infancia lloro,
 fue una de las peores, oiga usted.
 Por eso tuve que viajar.
 Viajar entonces era como en tiempos del Cid:
Separarse la uña de la carne.
 Y más a Lima, *Kita weracochakunapa*
uma llaptatin kasiyani, las tres veces coronada villa,
 más alejada del Perú que Londres
 (according to Humboldt)
 dormida en su arcadia colonial
 (according to S. Salazar Bondy). (137)

These varied references, and the collage of Spanish, English, and Quechua they create, set the stage for Silva's portrayal of mid-century Lima, which in

a matter of years went from a homogeneous throwback of colonialism to a hybrid, globalized space.¹⁰

The imagined testimony of Silva continues with a depiction of the tightly controlled Lima of the 1920s, or “el inicio de la Patria Nueva de Leguía” (137). Despite his *indigenista* rhetoric, Leguía’s dictatorship (lasting from 1919-1930), suppressed indigenous rights; likewise, Lima resisted the changes posed by migrants during those years (Skidmore and Smith 208). Silva’s description of his early folk performances in the capital city attests to this enduring intolerance:

Cantar un huayno en Lima
 entonces era como en tiempos del corregidor Areche:
 herejía se descuartiza,
 vergüenza nuestra de domingo clandestino
 a distancia más que prudencial del gusto criollo. (137-38)

The allusion to Areche’s harsh repression links Silva’s contemporary persecution to that of Tupac Amaru II. He later recounts his subsequent travels to the United States, where, just as in Lima, he remains “un desadaptado,” prompting him to question both the determinants of national identity and the rights that citizenship supposedly warrants. Mora borrows from a fellow Peruvian poet to drive this point home: “¿O, como dijo el poeta Jorge Nájjar, / *la patria de uno es la cama en que nació?*” (138).

The second half of Silva’s testimony re-situates him in Lima, this time focusing on the swell of migration that overtook the capital in the 1950s. Mora’s visually oscillating lines become a powerful complement to the image of unremitting waves of re-settlers, and here rhyme and repetition further intensify the sense of upsurge:

Llegaban de los desiertos de la puna
 para invadir los desiertos de la luna
 en pleistocénicas olas migratorias
 perseverantes en las mismas perseverancias:
 tener un sitio y picar las migajas del festín. (138)

Mora’s lines echo José María Arguedas’s famous celebration of the migrant invasion—depicted as indigenous reappropriation—of Peru’s capital city in

¹⁰ José Cerna Bazán offers insightful commentaries on heterogeneity in *Cementerio general* in his article “La poesía como género híbrido: Experimentación literaria y heteroglosia en el Perú.”

his poem *Tupac Amaru Kamak Taytanchisman/A Nuestro Padre Creador Tupac Amaru*. Yet while Arguedas's portrayal projects a jubilant resurgence of Andean influence in the city, the younger poet offers a more balanced, bittersweet take: "Invasiones dolorosas, apasionadas, epopéyicas,/a veces cursis, siempre trágicas,/ con muertos por las balas y los sables de la GC"¹¹ (Mora 139). In subsequent lines, the word "invasions" describes the infiltration of not only resolute peasants, but also real-estate agents and ex-politicians anxious to stake a claim in the booming shantytowns. Rather than emphasizing warmth and camaraderie, Silva's description captures the fragmentation of community and even humanity in the *pueblos jóvenes*:

Invasiones por clanes regionales
 con nuevas calles cuyos números
 tienen extrañas adiciones: CDM4L26S105
 (calle D manzana 4 lote 26 sector 105),
 o con los nombres de los muertos
 o de los que se quedaron en la sierra. (139)

Yet Silva's testimony is not altogether pessimistic. His subversive agency as a leader in the migrant movement is underscored here. Furthermore, while his final lines portray sordid aspects of modern Lima, they also celebrate the reconfiguration of the once-patrician city and hope for the future:

Desde el mirador más sucio de Lima, el Cerro de San Cosme,
 yo bendigo el tiempo de la nueva estética:
 ambulantes, microbuses, basurales,
 música chicha, pasta básica de cocaína,
 relojes made in Taiwán.
 Porque antes del tiempo de lo bello
 es el tiempo de la venganza y del horror. (139)

In its description of a necessary period of darkness that precedes beauty, the final couplet of Silva's enunciation once again evokes *pachakuti's* regenerative potential.

As in earlier poems, Mora's representation of Silva reveals a conflation of the poet and poetic speaker. The "new esthetic" that Ernesto Silva consecrates in Lima is analogous to the revisionist poetics undertaken by "Hora Zero," the Peruvian vanguard movement (counting Mora among

¹¹ As Lomellini and Tipton clarify, GC refers to the Guardia Civil (85).

its most prominent members) that positioned itself against lyric preciousness or aspirations to create “pure” poetry in the 1970s (Mora, *Hora Zero* 8). In fact, the poem that Mora renders in Silva’s voice displays several aspects of the “poetics of revision” that I have proposed throughout this study. It re-embodies the subjectivity of thousands of disenfranchised individuals who have shaped modern Peru and yet are marginalized by official national culture; it bespeaks Andean heterogeneity through linguistic combinations, shifts in register, and descriptions of a modern globalized Lima; it both evokes and challenges conventional notions of what constitutes poetry, and defies categorization within any one genre; it is textured work that layers Silva’s voice with those of other artists and incorporates traits of written, visual and oral traditions; it challenges reductionist notions of what it means to be indigenous; and finally, it exposes a continuing history of violence and repression while revealing optimism for a liberated future.

However, Silva’s testimony departs from the poems that precede it in one notable way: its title, “Ernesto Silva (1910-),” includes a conspicuous space next to his birth year, indicating that he was still alive when Mora’s book was published. Unlike the other speakers in *Cementerio general*, Silva is not a ghost, for he has not been laid to rest. On the other hand, his enunciation powerfully conveys what Avery Gordon describes as “the phantoms of modernity’s violence” (19). This haunting social reality is captured, for example, through Silva’s description of modern Lima as a virtual ghost-town, and his characterization of the present as a time of “vengeance and horror” (139). In effect, the chain of phantasmagoric subjectivities that feeds into Silva’s living voice connects the ephemeral past to the more tangible present, encouraging modern readers to engage with the ghostly social and historical bodies represented throughout *Cementerio general*. This is a process that Gordon, drawing from anthropologist Michael Taussig, characterizes as “making common cause”:

Making common cause with our objects and subjects of analysis involves ‘understanding...the representation as contiguous with that being represented and not as suspended above and distant from the represented (Taussig 1992: 10).’ ...Making common cause means that our encounters must strive to go beyond the fundamental

alienation of turning social relations into just the things we know and toward our own reckoning with how we are in these stories, with how they change us, with our own ghosts.
(21-22)

By emphasizing key links between Peru's past and present, Mora encourages readers to breach conceptual divides between themselves and historical ghosts, pushing us to "make common cause" with his literary subjects while questioning the political, social, and artistic structures that have historically framed them. In *Cementerio general*, the dead thus become potential agents in both the re-visioning of present memory and the envisioning of a distinct future.

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