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### Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America\*

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## Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America\*

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In the mid seventeenth century, Doña Isabel Uypa Cuca, a woman of a noble Inka lineage, lived in and created a culturally and biologically hybrid household in the city of Cuzco, Peru. She married a man of Spanish descent and they gave birth to two daughters. She wore clothing of Spanish bayeta, Chinese silk, Andean cotton and alpaca fiber; the material was cut and tailored according to both European and Andean fashion. Her belongings were stored in locked wooden cedar chests as well as Inka *urpus* (pottery vessels). The walls of her home juxtaposed the images of Christian saints with the likenesses of pre-Hispanic Inka emperors.<sup>1</sup> Yet in her own accounts of her possessions there appears no suggestion that her particular heterogeneity was in any way remarkable to either her or her contemporaries. Rather it is we who recognize, name, and remark on hybridity here.

Because cultures are collective, they are inherently heterogeneous. Millennia of travel and trade have insured that mixing and interaction is the norm; examples of truly isolated societies are rare in the extreme. Yet in every society certain mixtures become naturalized over time, losing their visibility and potency as mixtures, while others continue to be marked as such. The latter apparently disclose signs of their disparate origins; they stand out from the norm and seem to require acknowledgement, if not also explanation. They also require naming.

Recently the term “hybrid” has been used. Although some scholars have resisted applying the words “hybrid” and “hybridity” to cultural forms, many others have adopted them as a way of acknowledging the mixed descendancy of certain objects and practices.<sup>2</sup> It is the selectivity currently exercised in the discourse of hybridity that prompts this essay. Beyond this, we find that in present academic discourse the word “hybrid” and its cognates evoke quite particular—especially political—connotations. This paper thus addresses the implications of choosing, or not choosing, to recognize and name hybridity in visual and material culture. In approaching the subject this way, we seek to examine the politics of recognition (and, perhaps, mis-recognition) rather than determine the value or appropriateness of applying the term “hybridity” to distinct cultural manifestations.

Since the Iberian cultures now glossed as “Spain” were expansionist, scholars who have studied colonial societies in Spanish America have confronted the

products of cultural contact for some time. In some ways, the term “hybrid” is less a new offering than a new way to continue debates within Latin American academic circles that have been ongoing since the early twentieth century. Yet because “hybridity” entered into (post)colonial scholarship largely in the context of subaltern studies, the term and its associated concepts emphasize structures of power that center and marginalize. Indeed, as descriptive of colonial Spanish American culture, “hybridity” is usually understood to designate specific by-products of European expansion. Thus, despite the obvious hybridity that was early modern Europe, the term “hybrid” commonly identifies things that were newly, and partially, European, distinguishing these works from objects and practices with either longer European histories (and so recognized as “European”) or no European histories at all (and so labeled “indigenous”). Further, hybrids were things that Europeans did not (or could not) successfully incorporate or coopt. The descriptive term “hybrid” therefore performs a double move: it homogenizes things European and sets them in opposition to similarly homogenized non-European conventions. In short, hybridity is not so much the natural by-product of an “us” meeting a “them”, but rather the recognition—or creation—of an “us” and a “them”.

In this paper we argue that contrary to common presumptions, hybridity neither inheres within, nor describes, specific objects or activities. Rather hybridity is produced and enacted when particular kinds of things and practices are brought together that in some way challenge presumptive norms. Consequently, we find that neither the origins nor the sources of particular styles, cultural practices, iconographies, or materials are truly the most pressing issues in discussions of hybridity. Rather, the key issues center upon two processes: how the foreign and uncanny take on meaning through material objects and daily practices in colonial contexts; and how interpreters living in the present choose to reckon with, and reconstruct, these contexts. Relationships between past and present, no less than relationships established and enacted in the past, are what we see as crucial.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, we will argue that hybridity—which is the marking of particular kinds of difference—is generated out of intolerance, out of the need to distinguish and come to terms with unacceptable, conditionally acceptable, or uneasy mixes. That we need a term such as “hybrid” for certain things and practices betrays the exercise of discrimination—the creation of what belongs and what doesn’t belong, usually with the implicit devaluation of the latter. Hybridity thus describes exceptions within a system that is at once exclusivistic and dependent upon the recognition of difference.

This essay focuses on visual culture in part because we are art historians and this is the form of social practice we know best.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, we are concerned with the particular place of the visual within any critique of hybridity. Given that hybridity is often recognized precisely because of its visibility, we are interested in showing how the political force of hybridity is entangled in conventions for seeing, noting, and displaying. Both visibility and invisibility, then, are fundamental to the descriptive and evocative power of the term “hybrid”. Furthermore, because so many discussions of colonial culture—in Spanish America and elsewhere—take on mixtures (whether they are explicitly identified as hybrids or not), as a “problem” of colonial culture itself, we focus on the colonial history

and visual culture of the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru, two regions that have become foundational to notions of coloniality in Spanish America.<sup>5</sup> Our objective in this essay, then, lies in outlining and examining hybridity's imagined boundaries for scholars of colonial Latin American visual culture. In so doing, we hope to elucidate some persistent but subtle operations of exclusion within the realm of colonial studies. Because these operations appear to challenge the exclusions of colonial practice itself, yet nevertheless draw sustenance from them, the imagined boundaries of hybridity are porous and complex, but, we believe, still critical to describe and to limn.

### Hybridity's Latin American History

Early in the twentieth century, many terms were offered to describe the colonial mixing of European/Spanish and native American cultural forms and practices; *ibero-indígena* (Noel 1936), *hispano-aborígen* (Benavides 1936), *criollo* and *mestizo* (Guido 1937) are but a few examples. The need to identify and name Spanish American hybridity grew in response to rising *indigenista* sentiments, especially in Mexico and Peru, the centers of the largest pre-Hispanic populations. A vital part of nation building, *indigenismo* crescendoed in the 1930s when Spanish American intellectuals created a pre-Hispanic past of which they and their urban contemporaries were the proud heirs. There was a perceived need to create a nation that recognized the racial mixture of countries like Mexico and Peru, that "made room" for the Indian in ways comfortable to the largely Hispanic elites. Not surprisingly, the terms recognized primarily empirical mixtures—they were ways of denoting the visual evidence of past encounters. They attempted to describe, usually in non-evaluative language, the cultural as well as ethnic mixing that had made colonial Spanish America neither Spanish nor indigenous, but both.

Because mixing was, and is, cultural and biological, many of the most long-lived terms evoke both culture and biology. *Mestizo*, a term used in the colonial period to designate the offspring of Spanish and indigenous couplings, was introduced by Angel Guido to describe architecture representing a mixture of European and native American cultural elements. Not all scholars have adopted the term *mestizo* to describe Latin American cultural hybrids, however. Art historian George Kubler ([1966] 1985, 75) forcefully objected to the term, calling it a racistist solecism; he preferred the term *criollo*.<sup>6</sup> In 1942, the Mexican scholar José Moreno Villa offered the term *tequitqui*, meaning "tributary" in Nahuatl, to describe certain monuments created by indigenous artists after the Spanish colonization of Mexico (Peterson 1993, 14). Despite the disputes and a growing list of alternative terms, *mestizo* continues to be a widely employed term, most particularly by Latin American scholars. In recent years, "hybrid" has gained some ground, although it seems to be a preferred term in North America and Europe. "Syncretism", "confluence", "composite", "pastiche", and "mixture" are all terms that have also appeared in the literature since mid-century. This raises the question: is "hybrid" just another alternative to these terms?

The answer, we believe, is both yes and no, depending on who is doing the

naming. Certainly, terms such as *mestizaje*, “syncretism”, “confluence”, “convergence”, “pastiche” and “mixing” evoke combinatory practices and events, and have been used in ways similar to “hybridity”. Moreover, all of these terms throw into relief questions of purity and authenticity. That is, they all accent discrete cultural origins that combine in ways that yet betray some past act of combining such that they insist on (rather than deny) cultural intercourse. Yet none of these words, at least as they have appeared in the literature in the last twenty years, carries the political charge of “hybrid” and “hybridity”. Indeed, very few of the words that designate mixtures raise—either explicitly or implicitly—the power relations that engendered the conditions of encounter and which, in turn, gave rise to the most potent mixtures known from colonial Spanish America.

Admittedly the history of all words chosen to sign cultural and material mixing is complex, and although some linguistic histories overlap, no two terms have identical trajectories or implications. Furthermore, the sense of each word—its positive or negative connotations—has both waxed and waned over the last several decades. For instance, in North American scholarship across the last forty years, the term “convergence” accrued, then shed its ideological and political connotations, only to be reinvested with yet others.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, and in spite of the differences among terms such as “convergence”, “syncretism”, and “pastiche”, nearly all of these words privilege (or seek to privilege) one condition: the condition of having become mixed. “Syncretism” indicates that blending has occurred; “confluence” and “pastiche” bespeak a similar state. As a result, the processes that produce cultural mixing, with their concomitant political and economic negotiations, emerge as incidental. The implication is that mixing simply happens. Suppressed are the ways in which particular mixtures are created, imposed, and resisted, as are accounts of the human acts responsible for shaping both the conditions and forms of specific mixtures.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, the word “hybrid” shares several features with “syncretism”, “convergence” and the other terms. For instance, although a number of scholars find transgressive power in “hybridity”, the word does not, a priori, connote subversion, nor does it automatically underscore the processes by which mixing transpires. Pnina Werbner (1997) argues, in fact, for the recognition of two kinds of hybridization. Drawing upon Mikhail Bakhtin’s analysis of language, she identifies an organic form of hybridity which does not fundamentally challenge social, political or biological senses of order and continuity, and an intentional form of hybridity which has the power to shock, change, and revitalize. Yet in neither instance do the historical events or the political and material realities that cause mixing come immediately to the fore. This, however, represents only part of the story. For in current parlance and for many scholars, “hybridity” evokes meanings that contrast sharply with terms such as “syncretism” and “convergence”, terms that are, at least at present, both more benign and objective in their connotations. Thus, although “hybrid” as a word is similar to other terms invoked to denote mixtures (and certainly can be used in this way), its history of usage has been profoundly different and so conveys something beyond the mix, something behind the mix.

“Hybridity”, as both term and concept, has had a checkered political history

(Young 1995; Papastergiadis 1997). While we recognize that the colonialist context of nineteenth-century Europe—where “hybridity” first became persuasive—lends the term some of its charge, more important for current debates is the appearance of “hybridity” in the realm of postcolonial studies. In these contexts, “hybridity” refers less to biology and organic processes than to political and cultural events in which conquest and colonization, resistance and subversion, play significant roles. Moreover, in recent years discussions of hybridity have transpired primarily in arenas where there is a recognizable subaltern presence. To invoke “hybridity” today, then, is to raise questions about (if not also align one’s scholarship with) the subaltern, the previously colonized, or, at the very least, with postcolonial theory and/or research. Given that “hybridity” bears these highly charged political connotations—and in current usage, clearly it does—we believe that the identification of objects or cultural practices in colonial Spanish America as “hybrids”, and our ways of recognizing them as such call for explication.

### The Visibility of Hybridity

Perhaps the best known of all colonial objects that explicitly address intercultural mixing are the *casta* paintings of New Spain (Figure 1). These works were painted throughout the eighteenth century, primarily for patrons of the upper classes, often Spaniards who had been in the Americas or had strong curiosities about the New World, its peoples and artifacts (García Sáiz 1989, 12; Katzew 1996, 15).<sup>9</sup> Typically, *casta* paintings are composed of 16 scenes—and thus 16 admixtures—which register, through the presentation of family groups, the progressive dilution of “pure” Spanish, Indian, and African blood. Inscriptions set within or near to each painted panel identify the names assigned to each new “racial” combination (called *castas* or “castes”). For instance, in Figure 1, just below the first scene in the upper left corner, a well-dressed Spanish man extends his arms to receive his child from his indigenous mate; the text reads, “From Spaniard and Indian, *mestizo* or *cholo* [De Español, y Indio, Mestizo o Cholo].” Tracing from left to right, across the top and down the caste hierarchy, we see the generation of *castizo*, *español criollo*, and mulatto children.<sup>10</sup> Taken together, then, these painted scenes appear to document the complex process of *mestizaje* among groups that inhabited New Spain: indigenous, Spanish and African. Equally important to *casta* paintings is their commentary on racial purity and on status. Spaniards, who in this realm of pictorial representation have the highest social standing, usually appear in the first panels of each series; across successive scenes, the pairs become darker and darker until the painter depicts people of the lowest social status—either those of the most multiply mixed blood or those so “barbaric” and “uncivilized” as to be beyond the realm of mixing.<sup>11</sup> Thus biological mixing is a means to civilization for the savage and a path to barbarity for the civilized. According to the *casta* narrative and imagery, culture is biologically based and demonstrably so in visual terms.

If *casta* paintings seem to highlight anxieties about the mixing of people, they also raise at least one point crucial to any discussion of hybridity in colonial Spanish America. In lending mixing and its complexities visible form, these



FIGURE 1. Casta painting, 1777. Ignacio María Barreda. Courtesy of the Real Academia Española de la Lengua, Madrid.

paintings throw into relief the presumption that mixing will manifest itself physically and thus be visually apparent. These paintings seem to argue that one can, quite literally, see the results of cross-cultural (cross-racial?) interaction. That *casta* paintings do not merely depict racial mixing, but rather, through their interest in status and purity, provide a commentary upon it is not insignificant. For our argument, however, it is their interest in surface appearances that is most telling. As pseudo-documentary representations of Novohispanic culture, these paintings underscore a commonplace of both colonial and contemporary societies: the mixings that matter most will be distinguishable visually. Beyond this,

these paintings seem to reaffirm that the origins of every significant cultural mix will remain traceable and distinct. Consequently, as these images depict the possibilities for, and results of, inter-racial mixing in New Spain, they also articulate an argument about the importance of cultural origins.

Questions about origins have long haunted the work of art historians in particular. Indeed, one of the most significant tropes of art historical scholarship—especially on the arts of colonial Latin America—has concerned the relationship between the arts and architecture of Europe and those of the colonies.<sup>12</sup> Thus the parsing of visual signs, be they painting styles or architectural ornamentation, is a well-established tradition. At issue in much of this scholarship is the desire to distinguish distinct inspirations and conventions and assign them to stylistic, national or racial entities (Spanish, Isabelline, Baroque, Mixtec, Andean) in order to describe and chart the kinds of mixings that occurred. In this regard the rhetoric of *casta* paintings does not fall far from the mark as a model for this type of research. No less important, however, have been art historical interests in identifying the point at which colonial manifestations become something other than step-cousins and derivatives of their European parents. Thus, art history has invested considerable energy in determining how, across the Atlantic, sources and origins form copies and mixes, and then how these works diverge to become distinct styles, objects, and entities.

While this work certainly has its merits, we want to suggest that once the visual features of cultural mixing—if not hybridity—are put on the table (as it were), “what we see” becomes highly problematic. In part this is because modern scholars (art historians, historians, anthropologists, and others) recognize cultural mixing in arenas where colonial people in Latin America found no occasion for comment. Not only did Doña Isabel Uypa Cuca and her compatriots fail to address the heterogeneity of their households because to them it was unremarkable, but throughout colonial Spanish America people willingly (if not self-consciously) mixed items of diverse origins yet found such mixtures acceptable, if not also commonplace. Even early in the colonial period—when the distinctions between things European and things pre-Hispanic would seem particularly sharp—Nahua *caciques* in central Mexico owned and used Spanish-style clothing, swords, tables, and saddles as well as pre-Hispanic-style regalia.<sup>13</sup> No less tellingly, numerous sixteenth-century indigenous manuscript paintings intertwine elements of pre-Hispanic painting with those introduced from Europe. The example illustrated here (Figure 2), a painting from the central Mexican manuscript *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, depicts six ancestral heroes having their noses pierced as part of a ritual of investiture.<sup>14</sup> The scene displays not only pre-Hispanic rites, but also references to pre-Hispanic warrior societies in the depiction of an eagle and jaguar, and pre-conquest-style footprints; framing the page is a border reminiscent of “carpet pages” and other European hand-painted manuscripts. Yet nowhere does the manuscript offer a word of commentary upon the disparate sources of its paintings.<sup>15</sup> For modern viewers, however, the presence of cultural mixing appears pronounced, and because of this, fundamental to our understanding of sixteenth-century colonial culture.

At one level, then, there is the problem of modern perceptions contrasting with (and even contradicting) those of the people in the past. This is no small





FIGURE 2. Ritual scene from the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, c. 1545–1563. Anonymous painter. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

point. For to follow with fidelity cues left by Doña Isabel Uypa Cuca and the anonymous *Historia* painter leads us, as interpreters, to an unsettling conclusion: cultural mixing, even if recognized as such, apparently did not prompt comment from indigenous people. Although objects of disparate cultural origins were used daily, the textual record suggests this facet of life was un-notable. Yet not all shared this position. Many a resident of early modern Europe found the material objects of expansion and colonization collectable, precisely because of their mixed nature. Further, significant textual anxiety about purity and mixing can be found in the writings of Spaniards and Creoles across the colonial period.<sup>16</sup> For some, then, cultural mixing—of people, practices, and objects—was of considerable import. Some reasons for this will be considered below. For now, we would note that current understandings of both colonial history and modernity depend, to no small degree, upon the recognition that Europe's expansion and coloniza-

tion of the Americas produced cultural mixes of an extraordinary sort—some of them so strong that they still anchor certain cultural practices of current nation states in Spanish America. To recognize and find significance in cultural mixing is, then, to side with whose version of the past, is to privilege whose experiences?

At another level the issue is even more complex. For there remains in all of this a kind of “deceit of visibility”. This deceit invites us, in fact tempts us as scholars to perform a move similar to that of the *casta* paintings. To wit, we are encouraged to find that the mixings that matter most are those we can see, tease apart, and describe—precisely because of their visual features. This deception, we believe, is a powerful one. For even though early in European philosophy mistrust of the visual was clearly voiced, the visible world has continued to exert substantial authority. What can be seen can be described and known. For many years this has sustained a large literature concerned with parsing, purity, and origins. Much of this writing, however, has failed to engage the politics of coloniality, not to mention the questions about hybridity raised in recent years by scholars working in the realm of postcolonial studies. The issue at hand, then, is not merely that of visibility—but also that of invisibility. It is to the tension between these two conditions that we turn.

### Deceptions of Visibility

Hybridity is usually conceived of and discussed as a duality—an opposition between colonizing and colonized cultures that confront one another in and through objects or practices. Yet this bipartite characterization of the hybrid ignores and sometimes disguises the multiple hybridities of many colonial creations. Choosing to represent hybridity, as is usually done, as the result of a clash between Spanish and indigeneous cultures presses other forms of mixing to the margins, rendering them both less potent and less visible. Consider Andean tapestries, whose material and imagery derive from European and Andean sources as well as evincing distinct and obvious Asian influence (Figure 3). The textile illustrated here is woven of cotton, wool, linen and Chinese silk; among its many motifs are crowned European rampant lions, Andean llamas, and Chinese peonies and mythical beasts (Cammann 1964, 22–23, 26). The Asian contributions to colonial Latin American visual culture are rarely remarked upon, however, let alone studied.<sup>17</sup> We suggest that, while there may be many reasons for this, Asian influences have been less engaging because our understandings of hybridity depend upon a hierarchy. Mixtures that, through their material form, register and preserve traces of conflict between indigenous and Spanish cultures have a stronger political valence and thus sway in modern and contemporary scholarship than do those that resulted from more routine practices of trade and exchange.

Ultimately, this concept of the hybrid may change; at present, however, we believe that the privileging (and problematizing) of some forms of cultural interaction over others turns on the postcolonial effort to re-present the history of indigenous peoples and cultures in ways that disavow the colonial process itself. Put simply, in the wake of Spain’s conquest and colonization of the

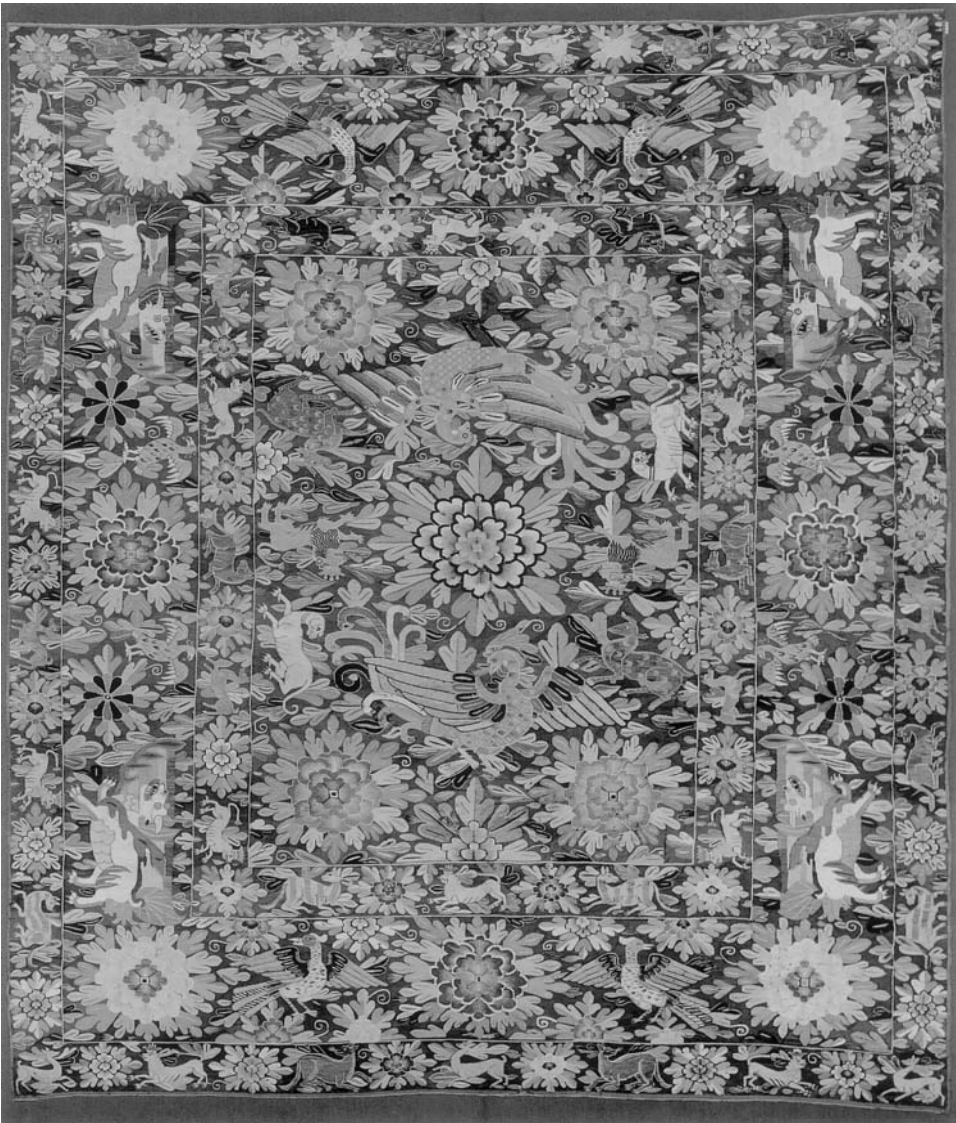


FIGURE 3. Andean textile, late seventeenth to early eighteenth century or later. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Americas, indigenous survival and signs of its vitality are no small matter. Recognition of indigeneity (and its loss) has historically turned on the presence (or absence) of pre-Hispanic features. Consequently there lies at the heart of many discussions of cultural mixing the uncomfortable notion that we—as interpreters living in the present—have to see pre-Hispanic forms to be convinced that indigenous people were not completely vanquished. This is one implication of the deception of visibility—that native peoples have to be

culturally pre-Hispanic, and their works have to look pre-Hispanic, to be recognized as indigenous. This denies the radical transformations of the lives of indigenous peoples brought about as a result of colonization. Such interests also betray desires to freeze indigenous people in the past, turning them (or aspects of their lives) into artifacts or relics of a bygone, romanticized era. Whether emphasizing the pre-Hispanic part of colonial mixes also soothes the Western conscience, allowing colonialism's legacy to be ignored by applauding the scattered remnants of a pre-Hispanic world rather than confronting the changes colonization wrought, we cannot say.

We can, however, state with certainty that the deception of visibility also permits the denial of indigenous activity in building the colonial world: in too many instances it re-pacifies Indians, marginalizes them, and characterizes them as victims rather than survivors. Visibility thus tricks us into recognizing the native only in very limited and circumscribed ways. For example, pre-Hispanic Cuzco—the capital of the Inka empire, the largest American state, whose expansion climaxed in the early sixteenth century just prior to the Spanish invasion—brimmed with significant religious and political edifices. The single most important structure was the Qorikancha, the Inka's "Golden Enclosure". It was the religious heart of the empire, in which many of the state's most sacred objects were billeted. After the Spanish conquest of the Inka, Cuzco was "founded" as a Spanish city and its lands were divided into houselots and distributed to conquerors. Many of the precious contents of the Qorikancha were apportioned as well. The architectural complex that was the Golden Enclosure was eventually awarded to the Dominican Order and the church and cloister of Santo Domingo were erected there. Rather than tearing down all of the Inka masonry—a difficult job considering the size and solidity of Inka stonework—the Spanish edifice was constructed on top of and around the Qorikancha (Figure 4). The Golden Enclosure was itself enclosed by the walls of Santo Domingo. Parts of the Qorikancha's base remain visible from the exterior. Most striking is the curved wall of the Qorikancha which enshrined the place where Cuzco was founded. The curved wall serves as the base for the apse of the Dominican church; this holy Inka place provides both literal and figurative support for the Dominican altar. Its hybridity speaks directly of conquest and domination, for it is a visibly composited structure whose Inka and Spanish parts are readily identifiable.

However, most colonial structures in the heart of Cuzco are hybrid as well—they are just better at hiding their particular hybridities. For instance, Cuzco's cathedral, visibly derived from European church architectural prototypes, was constructed by Andean workers using stones sacked from a pre-Hispanic ruin, that of Saqsaywamán, just outside the city proper (Dean 1998) (Figure 5). Despite its European façade, many of the stones had been cut and dressed in pre-Hispanic times. One Hispanic witness describes the indigenous method of dragging large stones to construction sites and then the use of earthen ramps to place them, saying, "I saw this method used for the Cathedral of Cuzco which is under construction. Since the laborers who work on this job are Indians, the Spanish masons and architects let them use their own methods of doing the work, and in order to raise up the stones, they made the ramps mentioned above,



FIGURE 4. Qorikancha-Santo Domingo, Cuzco. Photograph by Carolyn Dean.

piling earth next to the wall until the ramp was as high as the wall” (Cobo [1653] 1990, 229–30). Once the masonry was re-formed into a European-looking structure, the Andeanness of the cathedral was erased. This is the deception of visibility—it leads us to believe that unless we can see the traces of indigenous (i.e. pre-Hispanic) style or iconography, the cultural mixing is less significant. This deception, too, encourages us to view indigenous craftsmen and artists figuring into the mix that became Spanish America in a skewed light, a light that lets these people figure only when they bring to our minds something of the “untouched” pre-conquest past.

In pre-Hispanic times, feather-working had been a highly refined art among various Mesoamericans, including the Mexica, Mixtecs, and Maya. Not only do pre-Hispanic sculptures and paintings depict extraordinary feathered head-dresses and garments, but a number of Mexica feathered shields have survived, testifying to both the exquisite craftsmanship and visual spectacle that feather-workers could create (Figure 6). After the Spanish conquest, feather-working did not disappear. Through the late sixteenth century (and in some places, even later) indigenous Novohispanic craftsmen fashioned objects for Christian worship out of feathers. Not only images of Christ preaching and the Madonna with Child, but chasubles, mitres, and other priestly vestments were all adorned with feathered imagery (Figure 7).<sup>18</sup> Many of these works were made as gifts for clergy and rulers in Europe and thus left New Spain shortly after their manufacture; others seem to have been used in New Spain before finding their way to Europe, and yet others were sent to Asia (*Los Siglos de Oro ...* 1999, 394; Castelló Yturbide *et al.* 1991, 104). Scholars of this material have made clear



FIGURE 5. The cathedral of Cuzco. Photograph by Carolyn Dean.

that Novohispanic feather-work, which exhibits the handiwork of indigenous craftsmen making European-style objects, is not European, but rather always “indigenous” and always “hybrid”. This is so because Europeans never worked feathers in this way. Thus, every feathered object seems, inherently, to contain, and display, its mixed heritage. The implications of this are telling. For hybridity accrues a wholly other status when it is the craftsmanship rather than the final appearance that accounts for the cultural mix. For every colonial building is, in fact, a hybrid object in a similar vein to the feather-working, yet the hybridity of these structures is—to most modern interpreters—less remarkable. This is not because the makers of feathered mitres are, in fact, more indigenous than the builders of Cuzco’s cathedral. Rather, the discourse of hybridity, especially in art history, does not value the labor of art production as much as it values an object’s final appearance.<sup>19</sup>

To Europeans of the early modern period, feathers could symbolize the exotic, untamed wilderness of the Americas (Dean 1999, 170–75). In European representations of America as an allegorical female, she is nearly always bedecked in the feathers of tropical birds. Europeans, in a variety of festive masquerades, used brightly colored, feathered costumes to recreate themselves as American natives; a late seventeenth-century engraving of the British actress Anne Bracegirdle, for example, shows her dressed as an Indian queen, shaded by a feathered parasol, with feathers in her hand and around her brow (Figure 8). Owing to the implicit identification of colorful feathers with the native Americas, Novohispanic feather-work appealed to European expectations about American material culture. Further, the feathers used to create works for the Roman Catholic

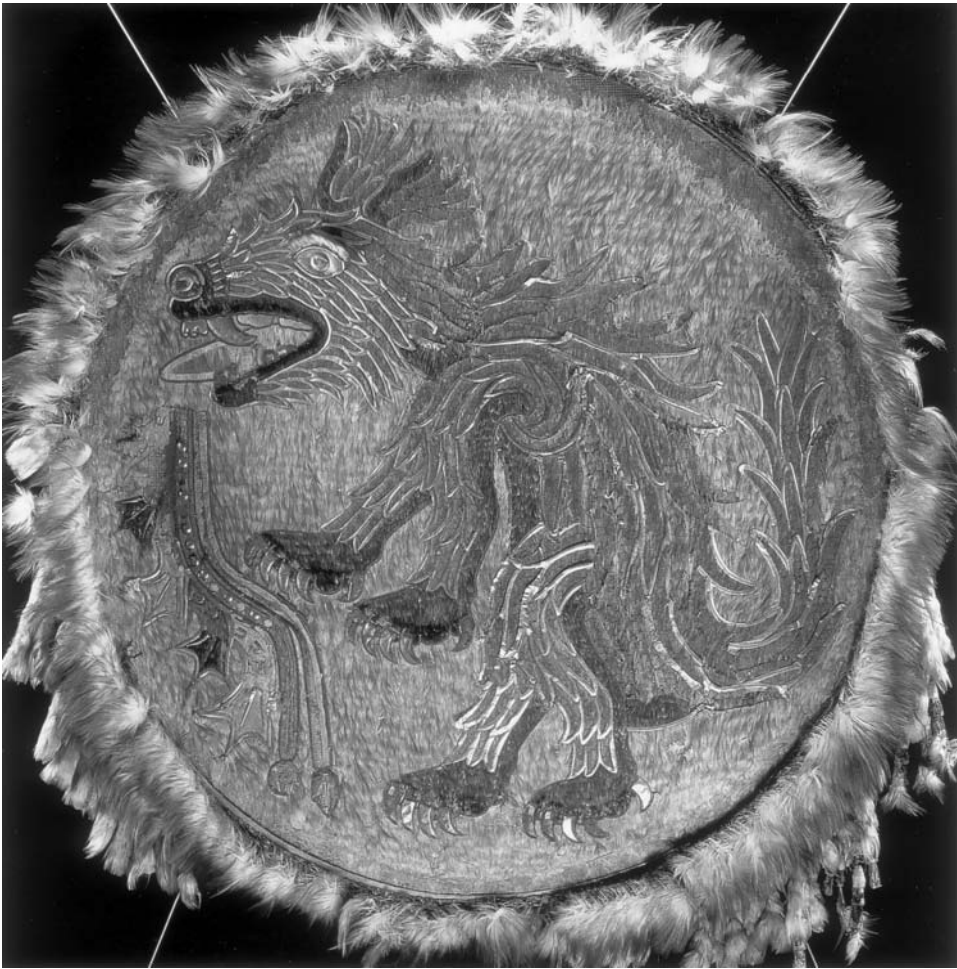


FIGURE 6. Mexica shield with coyote, late fifteenth to early sixteenth century. Courtesy of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna.

Church testified visibly to the success of evangelical efforts in the once savage Americas. They manifested much more than the religious conversion of indigenes; they evinced Europe's "civilizing" mission itself.

Although Andeans building the Cuzco cathedral in native stone and technologies also spoke to the success of religious conversion, the testimony was not invariably visible in the results. Andean stone in colonial edifices is not read as "indigenous", for Europeans used this building material as well. We might say that the cathedral, although born of both European design and indigenous Andean material, "passed" as European owing to its façade, its looks. Once again it seems that culture, biology, and the visibility of the mix have had everything to do with how and when hybridity is recognized. What renders an



FIGURE 7. Feathered bishop's mitre, mid sixteenth century. Courtesy of The Hispanic Society of America, New York.

object or work of art hybrid, it would seem, is our ability to detect and identify traces of pre-Hispanic handiwork. The corollary to this position implies that when the traces of pre-Hispanic hand-work become invisible, the hybridity of a work will also disappear.





FIGURE 8. Portrait of Anne Bracegirdle as an Indian queen, late seventeenth century. R. B. Parkes (engraved after the picture by J. Smith and W. Vincent). Courtesy of the Houward-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University.

### Desiring Visibility: Fetishized Hybrids

It is here, with discussions of production, that the invisibility of hybridity becomes most important. If it is not possible to see the trace of mixed ancestry on the surface of an object or building, the misrecognition of mixing becomes likely, if not inevitable. This greatly complicates current understandings not only of colonial history and interactions, but of what it means to be hybrid in colonial Spanish America. To give just one example, a map painted in New Spain in 1578 to accompany a *merced* (land grant) petition near the community of Azcapotzaltongo was prepared by an indigenous painter. The tell-tale signs include footprints, pre-Hispanic-style houses, and waterways with undulating lines reminiscent of pre-Hispanic glyphs for water (Figure 9). As was typical of this genre of cartographic rendering (Mundy 1996; Leibsohn 2000a), the indige-

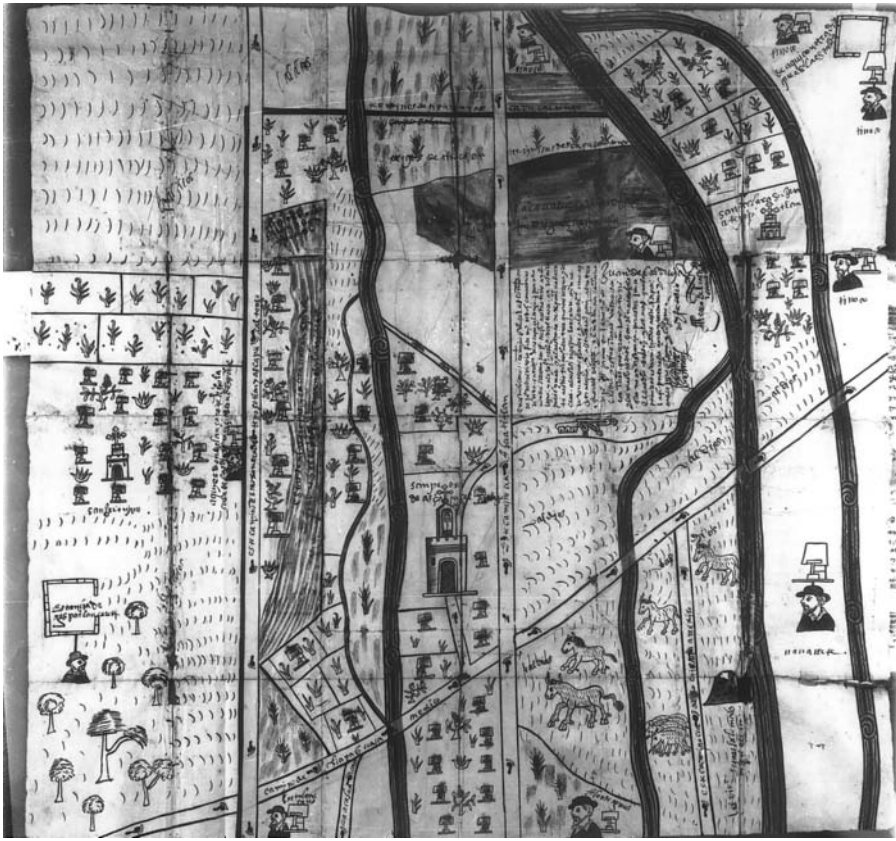


FIGURE 9. Merced map showing Azcapotzalco (Cuautitlan, Mexico; Tierras, vol. 2673, exp. 2), 1578. Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City.

nous painter crafted an image which was then inscribed with alphabetic explanations by a colonial official; in this case, as was common, the official was Spanish. Closer examination of the map, however, reveals that the pre-Hispanic-style houses were fashioned by two hands. Most were set down by the indigenous painter, but a few were adumbrated by the Spanish hand that penned the map's glosses.<sup>20</sup> The composite nature of this map, then, is not merely iconographic. It also derives from its manner of creation. In fact, the Spanish painting of pre-Hispanic-style houses complicates our interpretation of this document. For the map calls into question traditional presumptions that hybridity resulted when indigenous people adopted European forms, iconographies, and conventions, not when Europeans appropriated indigenous objects or practices. The issue here is not merely who painted, sculpted, built, or stitched which colonial objects. What is at stake is the very real possibility that hybridity—in spite of current desires to identify and name it—may be largely invisible. This, we believe, raises the stakes for discussions of authorship and identity, and it places surface appearances in a new light.



FIGURE 10. Evangelist wall painting, 1562. Juan Gerson. Monastery of Tecamachalco, Mexico.

The classic example of misrecognition in colonial Spanish America is that of Juan Gerson, the indigenous painter responsible for a number of murals in the monastic complex of Tecamachalco (Figure 10). For years, scholars presumed that because of their stylistic and iconographic affinities with European models, these murals were created by a Flemish artist who had trained in Italy before arriving in New Spain. Only in 1962 did a group of Mexican scholars find documents that revealed Gerson was a baptized Nahuatl working with Franciscans.<sup>21</sup> What had been a European image in New Spain, became a visual hybrid. Moreover, Gerson is not an exceptional case. Basilio Santa Cruz, an artist who worked extensively in mid-seventeenth-century Cuzco, was identified as a Spanish friar, trained by European masters and proficient in the Baroque style of the period, until contracts revealing his Andean surname (Pumacallao or Pumaqallo) were uncovered by Jorge Cornejo Bouroncle (1952, 100–1). The artist's indigenous surname forced a revision of stereotypic assumptions about race, art styles, and abilities by pressing to the fore questions about what it means for an indigenous person to work in a “foreign” style.

The jumping of categories by people like Basilio Santa Cruz Pumacallao and Juan Gerson reveals once again our refusal to recognize the indigene unless his or her work is visibly pre-Hispanic. Further, the revisions of scholarship that

follow the discovery of these artists' genetic make-up involve a literal re-seeing of their work. In the case of Santa Cruz Pumacallao, his work was (re)described as *mestizo*, implying that a native artist working in European media and styles produced a "mixed" product regardless of its appearance. Here media and artistic style intermingle with the artist's newly discovered Indian body to produce a *mestizo* that passed for European only until its parentage was revealed.<sup>22</sup> Hybridity, in these cases, is clearly not only about what's visible. Rather, it is about biology and about how much we know about artists of the colonial period. It is also about our willingness (or need) to "see" the influence of European culture in colonial Spanish America, or, by contrast, the survival of indigenous culture despite the pressures of colonization.

In calling attention to the labor invested in the fashioning of objects and images, we are not suggesting that the production narrative necessarily tells the truest story about the hybridity of colonial Spanish American works. Rather, we are raising an interpretive dilemma. To wit, if the facturing process plays no role in our interpretations, hybridity becomes an issue of surface effects. And the possibilities of understanding the actual mixes—both those willfully chosen and those imposed—that formed colonial societies becomes severely limited, for many a mix will leave no clear visible trace. Yet taking seriously the production scenario for colonial Spanish American objects also leads down an uninviting path. For to understand how objects were made, and by whom, we need better detective work: more thorough searches for archival documents, more attentive analyses of pictorial images. Certainly this research can, in some instances, set the record straight, as it were, documenting what "actually happened" in the past. Nevertheless this interpretive tack also presumes that a painter's or builder's ethnic and racial (if not national) identity will always infuse his or her work, staining it some indelible way. Although visual culture operates along more complex axes than this (how else could forgeries pass as acceptable master-works?), the desire to bind identities of artists to their creations across time remains one of the most persistent of art historical and anthropological tropes. For colonial Spanish American visual culture, this conviction leads to an interesting, and rather unsettling place, rendering works such as those of Juan Gerson into artifacts of genetics and race (Leibsohn, 2000b). Only when we know Gerson's ethnicity, can we know how to properly (re)read his work. Ethnicity thus trumps all other interpretive possibilities.

There are, of course, other relevant questions raised by the examples of Gerson and Santa Cruz Pumacallo. For instance, how much time has to pass before a style or idiom of European origins no longer retains its power to sign Europeaness? Is oil painting once and forever European? And if this oil painting is applied to *amatl* (indigenous central Mexican paper), as were the pigments of Juan Gerson (Camelo Arredondo *et al.* 1964), are these works once and forever Mesoamerican? Most important to work on hybridity, however, is whether an object always bear the trace of its maker's ethnic origins. We suggest that an object holds such origins (whether superficially visible or not) so long as they can be known and, crucially, those origins are important to us. So, ultimately, the discourse of hybridity in art history has not been about what can actually be seen, but about the human hand and (post)colonial interest in the color of that hand.

### The Object of Hybridity

Cultural mixing appears to be a necessary by-product of cross-cultural encounter in which the strangeness of new things inevitably wanes (although the pace may vary and be inconsistent). Oil painting and other so-called European media, new to the Americas in the early sixteenth century, were no longer new in the seventeenth century when artists of indigenous American ancestry practiced their crafts. Cultural hybridity, then, should be understood as a perhaps obvious subaltern strategy for coping with dominant and dominating cultures. It should also be understood as a perhaps obvious strategy utilized by dominant cultures to incorporate subalterns. In turn, recognizing colonial hybrids is—or ought to be—a profoundly political act, for hybridity is inherent to the process of colonization. The scholarly preoccupation with cultural origins all too often avoids confronting the political forces that (implicitly or explicitly) generated hybridity.

Let's return for a moment to Doña Isabel's home in Cuzco. The oil paintings of pre-Hispanic Inka emperors hanging from her walls (and those similarly decorating the homes of many other Andean elites) were not problematic to the people of viceregal Peru until the late eighteenth century. In the wake of a series of rebellions—the most dangerous of which was the uprising led by José Gabriel Túpac Amaru (1780–1781)—the Spanish colonial government prohibited the display of portraits of Inka royalty. They did so because the idea of a revitalized Inka monarchy, given material form by these portraits, inspired those who sought to overthrow colonial rule. Not only were images of pre-Hispanic rulers prohibited, but so too were portraits of their colonial descendants, who were accustomed to adorning themselves in royal Inka regalia on special occasions (Figure 11). The costumes and accouterments that colonial-period Inka elites wore to evoke their royal ancestry, especially head-dresses of the type worn by Don Marcos Chiguan Topa in his portrait, were also perceived as a threat and so outlawed as well. What made the regalia and portraits a problem to the Spanish colonizers was not in itself their visual hybridity; what made them problematic was what they meant to a portion of their eighteenth-century audience. Because they evoked a past that presented an alternative to the colonial present, they were quite possibly subversive. Alterity, which went unremarked until the rebellions, became intolerable. Thus it was the historically conditional menace of difference that caused the mix to be both noticed and feared.

That colonial-period portraits of Inka nobility speak to us of cultural hybridity today is a consequence of late eighteenth-century actions through which their mixing was problematized. We remark on the hybridity of these portraits at present because the political discourses of later historical periods identified anti-colonial agendas in them and made them explicitly (rather than implicitly) hybrid. Perhaps much of what is now described as “hybrid” has similar histories. These hybrids catch the modern eye rather than the period eye because they meet our needs to see not cultural decimation but survival. To wit, hybridity may recognize not just mixing or mixing alone, but particularly recognizes menacing mixes. Hybridity, as we have practiced it, is therefore not just a visible or known



FIGURE 11. Portrait of Don Marcos Chiguan Topa, eighteenth century. Anonymous painter. Museo Inka, Cuzio.

difference, but a difference that appears to matter—a difference that, in fact, seems to have made a difference.

We all know that there are many mixed things and practices that never register as such. We also know that all objects and cultural practices are, to some extent, hybrid. Much of the force of hybridity stems from the fact that there are multiple kinds of mixing and interacting—some of which are more tolerable and less disturbing than others. Hybridity that is treated as though it leaves only a visible trace in objects, and thus concerns only style, iconography, form, composition, and materials has not been particularly problematic—or interesting—because it is quite tolerable. This is, presumably, because it is perceived as relatively superficial, if not also natural.<sup>23</sup> The portraits of Inka nobility rested comfortably in this category until the rebellions of the late eighteenth century exposed

clandestine contents. The more embedded forms of hybridity—those related to manufacture, audience, meaning, and use—which are not necessarily visually, or easily, recognizable are more dangerous because they are perceived as somehow deeper and more consequential. Again, these are the hybrids that appear to have mattered.

From the examples given here (as well as many others we might cite), it is clear that hybridity does not inhere in objects or practices. The perception of hybridity is generated from the contexts in which things circulate, and the settings in which mixed acts are performed or practiced. The object of hybridity, then, is not an *objet d'art*. Rather, it is the histories we choose to tell. Clearly mixing could be problematic, and possibly subversive, as well as benign, practical, and not remarkable at all. Mixing, if we are to understand colonial culture in the Americas, must be both unsettling and the daily nature of things. Ultimately, then, this paper is suggesting that there is much to be gained by entertaining the possibility that hybridity could be not only invisible, but visible and unremarkable as well as visible, remarkable, and disquieting. In other words, from Doña Isabel we might learn how unremarkable mixing could be in the eyes of an indigenous woman of the seventeenth century. But our interpretation should not stop there. We would learn even more about both colonial society and modern coloniality if we could also examine how the mixedness of her daily life appears so differently to us, today, and what disquiet the tension between these two perspectives produces.

What has been explored here are the effects of remarking upon some kinds of hybridity and not others. As scholars, we seem to have been trained to sniff out purity and to thus purify colonial culture: people either come to this material from European studies with skills and desires to distinguish the purely European from the purely New World (i.e. derivative or impure), or come from pre-Hispanic studies, where desires and skills for seeing what is truly indigenous (beneath some veil of European style or media) have been well honed. Yet both of these approaches value, in different ways, purity. Why and to what end do we notice and write about mixing (whatever term we might use) if it is not to reify purity? We contend that recognizing hybridity in colonial objects today is inherently an exercise of discrimination—the creation of what fits some cultural norm and what does not fit. If art history as it has been practiced over the last century were the arbiter, in Spanish colonial society what fits is European. But because what doesn't fit doesn't always fit indigenous cultural norms either, it is often termed “hybrid”. We do not think this is necessarily inappropriate, but we also think that it is of fundamental importance to recognize the implications of the naming. Thus it is important to ask why we or others have refused to let go of some cultural origins and not others, why some origins are staunchly maintained and others denied.

The answer, at least in part, lies in the fact that certain kinds of alterity trouble cultural norms (and, therefore, social or political authorities) in different ways at different moments in history. Further, what does not fit the normative culture opposes, or in some way threatens, the status of the norm. To recognize superficial difference without exploration of its social generation is to colonize colonial culture, to separate out the misfit, name it, and so dispossess indigenes

of the ability to adapt, coopt, and fit European things to non-European (or partially European) ways of creating culture. Accordingly, we need to confront what we do when we recognize and name cultural hybridity. We need to know that we are not just recognizing cultural difference but are—either explicitly or implicitly—recognizing the traces of hegemonic forces, the processes through which people craft colonial cultures. Hybridity, when we name it, is necessarily a sign that intolerance was and is at work marking alterity from fixed norms as dangerous to those norms.

In closing we would like to consider the discontent registered in another kind of mix—not a colonial hybrid—but a postcolonial pastiche, created in Hollywood to evoke an unnamed (but vaguely pre-Hispanic) Indian past. In the opening sequence of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), Indiana Jones, an archaeologist from the United States, purloins an indigenous religious icon from its sanctuary deep inside a cave somewhere in the vast Amazonian jungles of South America. The icon itself is based on a pre-Hispanic image traditionally known as Tlazolteotl, an Aztec earth goddess, shown as giving birth (Figure 12).<sup>24</sup> In the film, the cave is decorated with a conglomeration of both Mesoamerican (Mexico/Aztec) and Andean (mostly Inka, Tiwanaku, and Chavín) motifs. The goddess's grimacing visage has been much enlarged. Because her lower body has been reduced in proportion, the small figure between her legs (who provides the explanation for her pained expression) has all but disappeared. Having significantly diminished the icon's graphic sexual content, perhaps to make it more palatable for contemporary movie-goers, the film leaves us with a snarling, angry animal-woman who crouches as if to pounce. Truly, she has been savaged by the physical alterations to her form; she has been transformed from a powerful female supernatural in pain to a horrifying feral female. Whereas the original image is of greenstone, the *Raiders* image is of gold; this precious metal appeals to the modern eye in ways akin to the signifying powers jade had for Mesoamerican audiences. To further convey value, we first see the statue on a pedestal with spotlighting similar to the arrangements found in modern museums. She is protected by elaborate, museum-like security systems that react to light, pressure, and movement. Thus *Raiders* creates a hybrid icon that through its physical form signs a kind of primitive indigeneity (of multiple disparate geographic origins) but through material and context signs contemporary worth.

One dilemma of this celluloid hybrid lies in the fact that it reaffirms contemporary values—both the gold standard as well as the ways art objects ought to be displayed, beheld, and prized. In this way, Professor Jones's temple looting emerges as an admirable feat that modern viewers can cheer: the civilized alternative to savage idolatry, the conversion of an idol into art. More pertinent to this discussion, the alterations to the image dismiss the substance and values of the indigenous original by privileging certain elements of form; Hollywood's re-making (revising) and re-marking (resignification) of the indigenous serve as a pointed lesson to those of us who study the colonial past. When we focus on form and surface do we do so at the expense of substance, of native values, uses, and meanings? And what damage do we do when we do so? And yet, the task before us is not merely to remain "more true" to our sources. Although we might gain much by listening more carefully or looking more





FIGURE 12. Tlazolteotl, c. 1350–1521. Anonymous sculptor. Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.

closely, neither Doña Isabel nor Juan Gerson can (or should) have the final word about the significance of their own lives.

The interpretive task, then, is challenging, but not without promise. A few years ago, Gary Tomlinson (1996, 261) articulated an elegant vision of postcolonial historiography which is apt here; he argued that the interpretive goal is not to “recreate a docile past ‘the way it really was’ but to build a past that resists our intellectual attempts to occupy it even while it takes its shape from us—and moreover, takes the only shape we give it”. In this essay it has been our contention that the hybridity of colonial culture is far more profound and difficult than appearances might suggest. It has also been our claim that, in

focusing on the visible mix—in making that the problem—we cause other hybridities to be ignored and reveal a need to erase or at least deny colonialism's force and legacy (which is only in small part visible). Perhaps once we accept that hybridity owes no less to present needs and desires to see and know what is disquieting about colonial history than it does to any particular past event, we can begin to write more complicated histories of Spanish America's past. Perhaps then we can engage colonial subjects in a place and history that are as they should be—neither fully ours, nor fully theirs.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> A list of Doña Isabel's possessions can be found in her two wills (Archivo Departamental de Cusco [ADC], Lorenzo Messa Anduesa, leg. 195, 1662, ff. 1354r–1378r; ADC, Lorenzo Messa Anduesa, leg. 199, 1665, ff. 1159r–1176v).

<sup>2</sup> Much recent writing on "hybridity" takes its lead from the work of Stuart Hall (1988; 1990) and Homi Bhabha (1984; 1985). A lucid analysis of the term, its history in British writing from the nineteenth century to the present, and its implications for discussions of colonialism and racial difference appear in Young (1995). For provocative critiques of cultural hybridity, see Ahmad (1995), Friedman (1997), García Canclini (1995).

<sup>3</sup> Gary Tomlinson (1996, 262), in a call for a postcolonial historiography, describes an interpretive approach that operates along two primary axes, "one from our present to an imagined past and another entirely within that past". We suggest something similar is (and necessarily must be) at work here, if we are to understand the epistemology of hybridity and its implications in contemporary scholarship. See discussion below.

<sup>4</sup> Both authors focus their research on indigenous visual cultures after the Spanish invasion and have long been concerned with the historical processes through which transcultured things and practices were (and continue to be) created.

<sup>5</sup> Several scholars have begun to articulate the relationships between sixteenth-century colonial endeavors in Spanish America and the present condition of coloniality (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992; Quijano 1998; Mignolo 1995; 2000). Yet analyses of material and visual culture, wherein colonial Latin American works and practices are considered in light of larger world systems, remain inchoate. Gauvin Bailey's (1999) work *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773* represents a recent notable exception. Bailey's political and intellectual goals differ from those of Quijano and Mignolo; nevertheless, his work situates colonial Latin American experiences within a larger narrative of early modern history. Our essay finds parallels in both of these projects, yet our goal is also distinct: we consider New Spain and Peru in order to further discussion both of colonial visual culture across Latin America, and the persistent legacy of coloniality in current interpretations of that past.

<sup>6</sup> In 1964, Graziano Gasparini distributed a questionnaire to 12 art historians and architects; eight of them used the term *mestizo* and thought it appropriate, two were ambivalent, and two disapproved of its use in reference to visual culture (Gasparini 1964). Pablo Macera (1993), in *La Pintura Mural Andina*, offers a particularly instructive commentary on the term *mestizo* and its history as a stylistic designation. Beyond the term's stylistic usage, see Bonfil Batalla (1992) and Klor de Alva (1995) for pertinent insights.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, writing about the extinction of pre-Columbian motifs in colonial Latin American art, Kubler ([1961] 1985, 68) defined "convergence" as "unconnected cultural traditions [that] produce similar behavior patterns which are inter-changeable in the colony for aims approved

by the ruling group". In *Arte Indocristiano* (Reyes Valerio 1978), *The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco* (Peterson 1993), *Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America* (Fane 1996) and *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America* (Bailey 1999), however, "convergence" takes on a range of meanings—some of which are politically and ideologically charged, others not.

- <sup>8</sup> Of course these are not the only terms, or models, being used to describe and explain cultural mixing in colonial Spanish America. Models that more fully incorporate human agency include "transculturation" (Ortiz [1940] 1978; Rama 1982; Pratt 1992), "double-mistaken identity" (Lockhart [1985, 1993] 1999), and "inter-cultural dialogue" (Bailey 1999). Also appearing in the literature—often in conjunction with critiques or discussions of the limitations of hybridity—are spatial metaphors such as "zones of engagement" (Mannheim 1998, 413), "sedimentation" (Cummins and Rappaport 1998), and Richard White's "middle ground" (cited in Rappaport and Cummins 1998). What is clear is that no single term or phrase has yet emerged as sufficient. This is the case, we suggest, not merely because colonial processes are complicated. To discuss cultural mixing in colonial Latin America is, among other things, to describe and lend shape to the legacy of colonization. At stake in one's language, then, are the political connotations of endorsing one explanatory model over another, and thus aligning oneself with certain positions on European conquest and expansion, indigenous claims to identity, and understandings of historical struggle.
- <sup>9</sup> Although *casta* paintings did not receive notice in either of two founding studies on colonial painting in New Spain (Kubler and Soria 1959; Toussaint 1967), descriptions of the genre are now well established (García Sáiz 1989 and 1996; Estrada de Gerlero 1994b; Katzew *et al.* 1996). Most *casta* paintings known today were created in New Spain, but similar works were also made in the Andean region. All of these images document the mixing—through biological reproduction—of different peoples; yet painters did not adhere to a single model or set of categories in their representations (García Sáiz 1989). The categories that surface most frequently include *mestizo*, *mulato*, *castizo*, and *zambo*; although others, such as *lobo* and *coyote*, and even more artificial designations, such as *no te entiendo*, *tente en el aire*, also appear (Katzew *et al.* 1996). Ilona Katzew (1996) has argued that *casta* paintings are best understood as depictions of both exotica and scenes of colonial self-representation, yet the ways in which eighteenth-century viewers actually understood these works remain poorly understood.
- <sup>10</sup> In this particular painting, the categories descend from *mestizo o cholo* to *castizo o cuarteron*, *español criollo*, *mulato*, *morisco*, *albino*, *tornatras negro*, *lobo o zambo*, *chino*, *zambaigo*, *cambujo*, *genízaro*, *albarazado*, *calpamulo*, *gibaro*, and *tente en el aire*. A separate landscape hangs pendant from the series of 16 panels, and displays a group of dark-skinned feather-be-decked men, women, and children, "Mecos and mecas [short for 'Chichimecas'] whose numerous castes are all alike." The visual implication: somehow the many mixes of non-European blood ultimately lead back to the "pure" *indio*. This *casta* painting also bears an inscription that identifies the painter, Ygnacio María Barreda y Ordoñez, his patron and friend, Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Rafael de Aguilera y Orense, and the place and date of the comission, Mexico City, 18 February 1777 ("Estas Castas de nueva España pintó [a instancias del Theniente Coronel de Exército, Don Antonio Rafael de Aguilera y Orense] su dignissimo Amigo, y apasionado a este arte, Don Ygnacio María Barreda y Ordoñez Bachiller en Filosofía, en México a 18 de Febrero del Año de 1777" [García Sáiz 1989, 140]). It is interesting that *chino* is among the combinations registered here and in other *casta* paintings. *Chino* was, and still is in parts of Spanish America, a common epithet for those who look Asian. Thus, according to the paintings, through various mixings of Indians, Spaniards, and Africans, pseudo-Asians could be produced.
- <sup>11</sup> *Casta* paintings also link occupations, modes of dress, and manners to the purity and status of each admixture. Thus domestic settings and furnishings, civic views and markets, as well as plants and animals of *casta* paintings all contribute to the moral commentaries proffered. In keeping with the hierarchies of the genre, then, those of the purest blood and highest status tend to be the most carefully groomed and well behaved. These are also the people who, in the eyes of high-status viewers of the eighteenth century, engage in the most appealing and respected leisure activities or business transactions (Katzew *et al.* 1996).
- <sup>12</sup> See, for instance, the "founders" of this field: Kubler and Soria (1959), Toussaint (1967), Wetley (1949).

- <sup>13</sup> In 1579, for instance, at the time of his death, one don Juan Jiménez of Cuernavaca owned tables, a horse, tackle, eight saddles, four feathered head-dresses (*yhuizoncalli*), three little shields for dancing, and pre-Hispanic-style drums of various sizes (including a *teponzatlí*, a *huehuatl*, and a *tlalpam huehuatl*) (Haskett 1991, 162–63). Other examples of indigenous individuals owning and using material possessions of diverse origins are known from across sixteenth-century New Spain and Peru (although by the late seventeenth century, pre-Hispanic-style objects appear less commonly). See, for instance, the analyses of testaments offered by Susan Ramírez (1998), Thomas Abercrombie (1998) and A. J. O. Anderson, Frances Berdan and James Lockhart (1976).
- <sup>14</sup> Ms. Mexicain No. 46–50, 51–53, 54–58. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. The *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* is the modern name for a set of historical annals created near Puebla, Mexico, in the community of Cuauhtinchan, ca. 1545–1565.
- <sup>15</sup> Although not every painting planned for the *Historia* was completed, all surviving images, including those of pre-Hispanic boundaries and wars, intertwine elements of pre-Hispanic and European origin. As is the case for most codices painted by indigenous hands in sixteenth-century New Spain, the alphabetic text of the manuscript remains silent about this fact. Indeed, very few indigenous documents from New Spain—be they pictorial or not—explicitly mention their sources. On the *Historia*, see Kirchhoff *et al.* (1976); on pictorial codices, see Robertson (1959) and Boone (2000).
- <sup>16</sup> Just two of numerous examples include the many writings of friars and others on the persistence of indigenous idolatry (e.g. Arriaga [1621] 1968; Avila [1648] 1904; Polo de Ondegardo [1571] 1872), and the description of riots in the streets of seventeenth-century Mexico penned by don Carlos Sigüenza y Gongora (Sigüenza y Gongora [1692] 1984; Rabasa 1994).
- <sup>17</sup> Moreover, we are unaware of any publication that poses these cultural mixtures as a problem of hybridity. Among other objects that fall into this category are seventeenth-century tin-glazed earthenware developed in Puebla, Mexico—known as Talavera Poblana—which owed material and visual debts to Spanish and Chinese ceramics (McQuade 1999), and *biombos*, elaborately painted room screens of wood and canvas, that drew their initial inspiration from Japanese screens (Castelló Yturbe and Martínez del Río de Redo 1970). Several recent exhibitions of colonial Spanish American art have included objects betraying Asian origins or influences, including “To Weave for the Sun” (1992), “Converging Cultures” (1996), “Siglos de Oro” (1999), and “Talavera Poblana” (1999). Nevertheless, interactions between Asian and Spanish American visual cultures have received far less attention than have those between indigenous and European traditions. Nor have discussions of cultural mixing focusing on Asian and Spanish American visual cultures yet engaged debates about “hybridity”, “convergence”, “syncretism”—or the politics of such terms—with much verve.
- <sup>18</sup> Bernardino de Sahagún’s *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (Florentine Codex) offers the most extensive indigenous-language description of pre-Hispanic feather-working among the Mexica ([1565–1580] 1959); helpful secondary sources include Pasztory (1983), Castello Yturbe *et al.* (1991), and Estrada de Gerlero (1994a). Examples of Novohispanic featherwork are known from across the colonial period; and in some places in Mexico feather-working exists today. Early in the colonial period, however, new forms of feather-working based on European imagery (especially that of prints) were introduced and, in particular at the Franciscan school of S. Juan de los Naturales in Mexico City, friars encouraged their male students to create fine feather-work (Castello Yturbe *et al.* 1991, 115).
- <sup>19</sup> Pursuing this logic one more step, we would note that the ease with which cultural pedigree can be discerned seems also to be valued.
- <sup>20</sup> The document has been signed by one Simón de Sosa, who may have been responsible for adding the extra pre-Hispanic-style houses to the map (although he may have just verified the completed document) (Archivo General de la Nación, Tierras 2673, exp. 2). In general, the request for land articulated in the court documents, the pictorial elements of this map, and its textual explanations are typical of sixteenth-century *mercedes*. The contribution of pre-Hispanic-style images by a Spanish hand represents an exception, but the visibility of this “crossing-over” reinforces our point: the facturing process, not only the final appearance of the object, is both implicated in and complicating to the hybridity discourse in visual culture (Leibsohn 2000a). Recent discussions of the authorship of the *Nueva Coronica y Buen*

*Gobierno* (c. 1615) which suggest that the Jesuit friar Blas Valera either collaborated with Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala or produced the manuscript under the Andean's name—and thus painted and wrote in a “mixed, indigenous” rather than “traditional Spanish” style—open the possibility of another Andean example in which the facturing process becomes critical to contemporary understandings of a work's hybridity.

- <sup>21</sup> Gerson painted his murals less than two generations after the Spanish conquest, in a town where Nahuatl—the lingua franca of the Aztec empire—and another indigenous language, Popoloca, were still spoken. Moreover, although unsigned, his works are dated with inscriptions in Nahuatl. Nevertheless, for nearly thirty years, from 1932, when these paintings were first “rediscovered”, until 1962, scholars believed that Gerson was a European painter. Only with the discovery of archival documents—documents that granted Juan Gerson of Tecamachalco permission to ride a horse—did Mexican scholars demonstrate convincingly that this painter was not Flemish, but rather a baptized Nahua of relatively high status (Camelo Arredondo *et al.* 1964; Gruzinski 1994; Reyes Valerio 1963).
- <sup>22</sup> In a related vein, in an ongoing study of the gestures and figural proportions in Gerson's figures, P. Escalante is demonstrating relationships between Gerson's painting and that of pre-Hispanic Mixtec manuscript painting (Elena Isabel Estrada de Gerlero, personal communication, April 2000).
- <sup>23</sup> Although hybridity is recognized and named because of intolerance, the visual realm has a great tolerance for alterity—often greater tolerance than does the textual, for example. This may be so because the visual is often received as decorative and superficial; not coincidentally, visual hybrids have often been gendered feminine (Dean 1995). It is interesting to note that historically, among humans, female “hybrids” have been deemed less threatening to colonizing cultures than their male counterparts precisely because of their pliability (cf. Burns 1999, 21–40). The perceived epiphenomenality of the visual facilitates assimilation and therefore acceptability.
- <sup>24</sup> The original figure, currently housed in the collection at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., is sculpted of greenstone with garnet inclusions.

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