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Diego Javier Luis March 17, 2014

Historia de la conquista de México: Grand Narrative of a New World Alexander

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Abstract

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Spanish humanist scholar Francisco López de Gómara interpreted Hernán Cortés's conquest of Culhúa within the framework of the classical literary tradition. In *Historia de la conquista de México* (1552), López de Gómara created his employer, Cortés, as a hero embodying traits of the canonical classical hero, Alexander. Convinced of the universal significance of the conquests, the Spanish humanist employed the most eloquent and rhetorically persuasive tools available to monumentalize his heroic Cortés for the ages. Naturally, he turned to his knowledge of the literature of antiquity for models of major, influential historical narratives. His Alexander-Cortés parallel and classical structural and rhetorical imitations indicate the revered position of the classical tradition during the Spanish Renaissance humanism movement. They are also conduits through which López de Gómara challenged the opinions of his contemporaries, like Bartolomé de las Casas, and justified conquest, subjugation, and conversion. His text created a new battleground in the raging literary war over memory of the conquests. His commemoration of Cortés and sympathy for Spanish imperialism have resulted in a polarized historiography for *Historia de la conquista de México*. Responses have ranged from a ban on printing and sale lasting nearly two centuries to William Prescott's romanticist expansion of Cortés's glory through *History of the Conquest of Mexico*. These reactions reinforce the ideological potency afforded by López de Gómara's classically inspired text. This examination of the Spanish humanist within his literary and historical contexts reveals his recreation of reality through the lens of his classical education. The Alexander-Cortés parallel molds the Spanish conqueror into a heroic figure, a channel through which López de Gómara immortalizes his interpretation of history.

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Introduction: Gambling with the High Ground

"When they [the Sogdians] *had been summoned* [by Alexander] *to discuss terms, and he had offered them the opportunity to withdraw in safety to their homes if they surrendered the place to him, they had laughed and in their native language had urged Alexander to seek soldiers with wings to capture the mountain for him, since no other men were of concern to them…Alexander sent a herald and ordered him to shout to the barbarians' advance guard to delay no longer, but to give themselves up, as Alexander had indeed found the men with wings, and the heights of the mountain were in their hands. The barbarians were astounded by the unexpectedness of the sight."*[1]

-Arrian (86-160 CE)

"Cortés showed them [the Culhúan[2] warriors] *a pleasant face and ordered that they were not to be harmed, and they, seeing such gentleness, sent word to the men on the rock to yield to the Spaniards, who were such kindly men and who, besides, were equipped with wings to climb wherever they wished."*[3]

-Francisco López de Gómara (1511-1566 CE)

A temporal space of roughly 1400 years separates these two passages, yet the juxtaposition reveals a remarkable literary resemblance between Hernán Cortés and Alexander of Macedon. In reality, these men probably had little in common, but Cortés's conquests coincided with the 16th century climax of the Renaissance humanism movement, an

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[1] Arrian, Pamela Mensch, and James S Romm. *The Landmark Arrian: the campaigns of Alexander ; Anabasis Alexandrou : a new translation*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 4.18.6-4.19.3. This translation is the operative text for all quotations from Arrian.

[2] Lesley Byrd Simpson defines Culhúa as follows: "The 'Mexican Empire,' or Triple Alliance of Texcoco, Tacuba, and Mexico-Tenochtitlán. López de Gómara uses 'Mexican' and 'Culhúan' indiscriminately, although 'Mexican' should be restricted to the inhabitants of Mexico-Tenochtitlán." López de Gómara, Francisco. *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson. (California UP, 1964), 412.
I reject the term, "Indian," that López de Gómara uses in his text to signify the native peoples, since this classification would be read as culturally insensitive in today's world. For López de Gómara, Indian referred broadly to the indigenous populations of the Americas, and natives of specific cities, where appropriate, are identified by city (Mexican for residents of Mexico-Tenochtitlán, Tlaxcalans for residents of Tlaxcala, Cempoalans for residents of Cempoala, etc.).

[3] Ibid, 258. I have studied *Historia de la conquista* both in English translation and the original Spanish; I will provide the original in footnotes when quoting the text. Other sources have solely been consulted in translation except when either the original appears in contemporary historians' work or the original language is English. "Cortés les mostró alegre rostro, y mandó que no se les hiciese mal ni enojo. Ellos, viendo tanta humanidad, enviaron a decir a los del otro peñol que se diesen a los españoles, que eran buenos, y tenían alas para subir donde querían." López de Gómara, Francisco. *Historia de la conquista de México*. 1552. Reprint, (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1979), CXXVIII.

intellectual tradition that brought a revivalist approach to the literature and culture of antiquity.

In 1552, Francisco López de Gómara, once employed in Cortés's service as a private chaplain, published a highly influential and controversial history of the conquest. The chaplain saw thematic similarities between the earlier exploits of his aging employer and the Macedonian conqueror, and he both implicitly and explicitly alludes to Alexander (and his conquests) in his *Historia de la conquista de México* (henceforth referred to as *Historia de la conquista*). His heroic protagonist symbolizes the chaplain's interpretation of the "New World" and expresses themes of Spanish nationalism and Catholic religious supremacy.

While most scholars only generally acknowledge classical imitation in *Historia de la conquista*, historian Brian Bosworth draws attention to López de Gómara's subtle "wings" allusion, which recalls one of Alexander's most successful actions.[4] Bosworth notes this allusion in a larger—self-consciously "painstaking" though undeniably enlightening—discussion on cross-referencing sources specific to these two narratives. Through a close reading of various scenes, he demonstrates that the kinds of sources available on Cortés play roughly analogous roles to the ancient Greek and Roman sources on Alexander.[5] Bosworth's observation is a point of departure for my investigation. I use the story of the "winged men" as

[4] Bosworth, A. Brian. *Alexander and the East: The Tragedy of Triumph*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Alexander's stunning success at the Sogdian Rock is perhaps second only to his victory over the Taulantians, who fled merely at the sight of the Macedonians marching in formation (Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1.16.1-1.16.4).

[5] In his first example, Bosworth lines up the accounts of Cortés, López de Gómara, and Bernal Díaz del Castillo on one side, and those of Ptolemy (through Arrian) and Arrian on the other. The scene he chooses in Arrian places Ptolemy as the protagonist (like Cortés), while he implies a link between Arrian's contribution and López de Gómara's. However, the analysis cannot be complete because "there has been no control source to provide the different perspective which Díaz supplies for Cortés" (Bosworth, *Tragedy*, 49). I question his terming Díaz a "control," but his point remains that the source tradition on Alexander is problematic and complex. He then turns this methodology to the accounts of Curtius Rufus and Diodorus Siculus for the second part of his source analysis.

an entry into the ways in which López de Gómara follows ancient models in constructing a grand narrative of Cortés's conquests. These classical imitations had a fundamental impact on both popular receptions and scholarly understandings of the conquest.

López de Gómara came of age during the height of the Renaissance humanism movement. As an adolescent, he learned Latin and became acquainted with models of classical literature like Herodotus, Plutarch, and Livy. Later, he spent nearly a decade residing in Italy, where he further familiarized himself with the land's ancient language and its texts.[6] Like the ancient Greek and Roman writers on Alexander, he constructs his protagonist from classical heroic archetypes. This last assertion necessarily raises the following basic questions: what caused López de Gómara to shape Cortés from the mold of the classical hero? What were the tools he used to accomplish his goals? And finally, how has his commemoration of Cortés and the conquest been received? Exploring the answers to these questions will trace a path through time, from as far back as Homer, to Herodotus, through the grandeur of the Alexander narratives, to Cortés's conquests and the Spanish Renaissance, to William Prescott's canonical 19th century work, and finally to contemporary reevaluations following the quincentenary of Columbus's voyage.

A careful examination of López de Gómara's passage set next to Arrian's reveals deep, thematic parallels beneath the common "wings" metaphor. Both Cortés and Alexander allegedly achieved astounding successes on the battlefield by contrasting their military cunning with kindness and sincerity. Alexander gained dominion over much of Sogdiana as a result of capturing the Sogdian Rock; Cortés earned "a great name among the people of the

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[6] On what he terms "The Problem of the Italian Years," see Lewis, Robert E. "The Humanistic Historiography of Francisco López de Gómara, 1511-1559." Ph.D. dissertation, (University of Texas at Austin, 1983), 28-31.

region" for pardoning the surrendered Culhúan warriors.[7] The conclusions of these two episodes depict processes of conquest and subjugation in a positive manner. A close reading of *Historia de la conquista* reveals that López de Gómara interprets Cortés as operating under similar conceptions of honor, glory, and methods of conquest as Arrian's Alexander. The chaplain uses the heroic parallel and his knowledge of the classical tradition to reinforce his imperial ideology and vision of the New World.

The general trend of López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista* is an idealization of Cortés. He begins the history with Cortés's birth and ends it with his death. To López de Gómara, the history of the conquest was quite literally the history of Cortés's life. In his account, the two are so closely tied that the moments when López de Gómara is able to separate his subject from his hero are rare. Furthermore, he dedicates the work to Martín Cortés, the conqueror's son, rather than King Charles V—which, despite the chaplain's ironic tone—reflects his serious devotion and gratitude to the Cortés family. As a firsthand witness to Cortés's lack of recognition before the royal court, López de Gómara came to see himself as one to elevate the elderly conqueror back into the spotlight of glory that he felt the veteran captain deserved.

López de Gómara saw the Spanish conquests as the most important events in human history since the coming of Christ. By extension, he believed his books would achieve a status equivalent to the Christian Gospels.[8] This project would necessitate use of the most powerful

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[7] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 258. Full quote: "[Cortés] los perdonó de grado, y holgó mucho que se le diesen aquellos que con victoria estaban, porque era ganar mucha fama con los de aquella tierra." López de Gómara, *Historia*, CXXVIII.

[8] Carrasco, David, preface to *Histories of Infamy: Francisco López de Gómara and the Ethics of Spanish Imperialism* by Roa-De-La-Carrera, Cristian A. (Colorado UP, 2012), ix. From López de Gómara's preface to *Historia general de las Indias*.

rhetorical tools he could muster. As is evident from his "quotation" of Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandrou*, López de Gómara knew of Alexander's history and the lasting influence of the heroic commander's legacy. Who better to model Cortés after than Alexander?

Other historians and writers have suggested resemblances between López de Gómara's Cortés and classical heroes. However, they stop short of identifying and tracing the evolution of classical heroic traits from their literary origin with Homeric heroes. They accept that *Historia de la conquista* contains classical structures, but rarely do they achieve more than a surface understanding of the reminiscences. In his *Rhetorical Conquests*, Glen Carmen likens López de Gómara's Cortés to Odysseus, although his textual evidence does not in fact support his conceptual premise.[9] Lesley Byrd Simpson finds it more accurate to compare the chaplain's Cortés to Xenophon, who campaigned against Persia. Robert Lewis maintains that López de Gómara´s Cortés simply resembles a "hero of antiquity."[10] Claims about the chaplain's classical influences have remained fragmentary in the historiography and have generally been poorly substantiated.[11]

In this thesis, I establish Alexander as *the* representative classical hero by linking his characterization in the ancient sources to previous canonical heroic figures. Alexander took steps during his life to create connections between himself and both Achilles and Heracles.[12] Alexander claimed to have descended from both of these heroes, and he behaved in ways that both resembled these figures and attempted to surpass their accomplishments. Furthermore,

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[9] See Chapter 4.
[10] Lewis, *Humanistic*, 187.
[11] Lewis's "The Humanistic Historiography of Francisco López de Gómara (1511-1559)" and Roa-De-La-Carrera's *Histories of Infamy* stand as important exceptions, though they neither consider the Alexandrian nor the Herodotean tradition, two groupings of works that, I argue, are critical to understanding *Historia de la conquista*.
[12] Allegedly, Alexander even kept a copy of the *Iliad* by his bedside during his campaigns. Plutarch. "Alexander," in *The Age of Alexander*, trans. Scott-Kilvert, Ian. (Penguin Books, 1973), 8.

Alexander's journey, which took him to various corners of the known world, recalls those of the mythical Odysseus and the historical Xenophon.

The ancient Greek and Roman sources developed these similarities, which played crucial roles in establishing and expanding upon Alexander's heroic legacy. Frequently, later figures (such as Julius Caesar) consciously took steps to resemble Alexander in action and commemoration. Thus, many of the established heroes of the classical world relate to Alexander, epitomized in history, art, and literature. The Macedonian conqueror both embodied the models of those who came before and influenced those who emerged after. López de Gómara constructs Cortés as symbolically continuing this line of heroic imitation. In this thesis, I argue that the chaplain's hero resembles Alexander more closely than any other classical hero.

I must also acknowledge, however, that López de Gómara's commemoration of Cortés engaged with contemporary political issues and was not solely intended to benefit the conqueror and his estate; he was also rhetorically sparring with contemporary proponents of native rights like Bartolomé de Las Casas. The Valladolid debate in 1550 provided a venue for debate on Spanish conquest ethics in the Americas. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda represented the faction that favored the subjugation and enslavement of the Indies, whereas Las Casas sought to expose the injustices and genocides of the Spanish colonial empire. López de Gómara aligned himself with Sepúlveda in the inconclusive aftermath of the Valladolid debate and contributed his justifications of conquest and conversion via his *Historia general de las Indias* (*Historia general*) and his *Historia de la conquista*.[13] Through Cortés, López de Gómara argues

[13] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 53.

that conquest facilitated and eased the process of conversion, and he occasionally uses Cortés's war with Culhúa to signify a tremendous religious confrontation.[14]

The heroic Cortés of López de Gómara's account, then, serves a second purpose. Through his conquests and great deeds, he personifies the glory of Spanish colonial, religious, militaristic, and cultural dominance. The dual function of López de Gómara's Cortés reveals the chaplain's literary interactions with both classical texts and his contemporaries. Most scholars of López de Gómara trace the contemporary influences with precision. I hope to emphasize that classical structures in *Historia de la conquista* are integral to any understanding of the text and, in so doing, help to close the historiographical gap on López de Gómara's usage of classical authority.

My project crosses traditional historical boundaries, both temporally and geographically. My analysis of López de Gómara situates the Spanish writer as both historical narrator and actor, while his hero, Cortés, remains bound by literature.[15] I explore how legacies from the classical world have informed later historical writing that uses rhetorical and storytelling conventions that reach back as far as Homer. In my analysis, I do not seek to determine which depictions of Cortés or Alexander are more realistic or provide greater degrees of historical truth. For contemporary scholars, Cortés and Alexander primarily exist only as depicted in texts. For this reason, I shift focus to interpretations of these characters, a

[14] See López de Gómara, *Historia*, "Don Martín Cortés, Marqués Del Valle."
[15] Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 2. "Human beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators. The inherent ambivalence of the word "history" in many modern languages, including English, suggests this dual participation."

concept at the core of humanistic inquiry.[16] Through López de Gómara's Cortés, students of history can gain a greater understanding of the polysemic character and culturally-rooted interpretations of the past.

In Chapter One, I analyze the contemporary 16th century influences on *Historia de la conquista* and explore the humanistic milieu from which the chaplain emerged. Pivotal to this discussion is the relationship between López de Gómara and Cortés, as well as political controversies trailing Cortés since the conquest. The ethical reception of conquest had changed dramatically by the time López de Gómara began writing, nearly twenty-five years after the fall of Mexico. López de Gómara justifies Cortés's actions and presents them in a palatable manner by invoking the classical tradition. However, he wrote at a time when apologist conquest narratives like Fernandez de Oviedo's and Sepúlveda's had come under heavy fire from figures like Las Casas, and were accordingly censored.[17] López de Gómara's account pushed back against this evolving discursive landscape and reasserted the preeminence and historical agency of the "great man" in history—Cortés.

Situating López de Gómara as a scholar during the Renaissance humanism movement is necessary to understanding his classical imitations. In Chapter Two, I discuss López de Gómara's use of classical storytelling conventions that elevate his conquest narrative to the level of "prose epic."[18] He follows closely in the style of Herodotus whose *Histories* had resurfaced at the end of the 15th century as a result of both recent translations and interest

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[16] I refer to Trouillot's distinction between "'what happened' and 'that which is said to have happened.' The first meaning places the emphasis on the sociohistorical process, the second on our knowledge of that process or on a story about that process." Of the two, my focus is, as stated, on the latter. Ibid.
[17] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 27, 58.
[18] Simpson, Lesley Byrd. Introduction to *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror*, by López de Gómara, Francisco, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson. (California UP, 1964), xxii.

provoked by European encounters in the Americas. The resemblances reveal the structural and stylistic debt of *Historia de la conquista* to the classical tradition. Related is a question fundamental to classical and Renaissance historiography—what is the purpose of historical narrative? The structure of López de Gómara's work—particularly that of his "Dedication" and "To the Reader" chapters—exhibit linkages to classical ideas about pleasurable history, moralizing history, and history that preserves memory. Furthermore, I pay close attention to ethnographic traditions and find literary parallels between López de Gómara and Herodotus, as well as sources on Alexander that Herodotus's narrative influenced. I also focus on López de Gómara's use of what I term "emotional essentialism." Like his ancient models, he simplifies complex sensations to single words like happy, fear, angry, and sad to both provide swift transitions between scenes and to advance specific interpretations of characters. My analysis of the supernatural closes the discussion on López de Gómara's grand narrative structures. The inclusion of the marvelous lifts the history out of the ordinary world and adds a mythical undertone to the Spaniards' adventures and conquests.

Within the framework of López de Gómara's grand narrative, Cortés as a classical hero emerges. In Chapter Three, I trace the evolution of classical heroic motifs in antiquity, beginning with Homer and ending with the ancient Greek and Roman sources on Alexander. However, I remain aware that Alexander's character and deeds add new traits to the classical heroic paradigm. Then through a close reading of *Historia de la conquista*, I demonstrate Cortés's embodiment of these identified traits, such as the glory of few versus many, the glory

of single combat, *pothos*,[19] honor in respect for one's enemy, and honor in building knowledge of the known world, among others. These themes bridge the imagined gaps in time and space between López de Gómara's Cortés and Alexander.

In this discussion, I focus on the significance of the two conquerors' similar methods of conquest as presented in the sources. I describe these methods by distinguishing between the conquerors' manipulations of positive and negative fears. Positive fears affected the conquerors' own soldiers and bolstered both their will to fight and devotion to the cause. A prime example of a positive fear was the psychological result of Cortés's [in]famous burning of the ships incident, whereby his men had no choice but to trust their leader and follow him into the unknown interior. A negative fear had an adverse effect upon the conquerors' enemies. For example, Cortés's strategic uses of both ranged weaponry and horses on the battlefield resulted in negative fears. The ability to carefully control and manipulate fear in other men elevates these conquerors above the lives of the ordinary and establishes them as singularly extraordinary military commanders, capable of unimaginable (perhaps even linguistically inexpressible) victories that have had scholars scratching their heads for centuries (millennia in Alexander's case).

As a result of this heroization and its ideological thrust, *Historia de la conquista* has had a polarized historiography since its publication. In Chapter Four, I analyze the impact of López de Gómara's writing, not only in the immediate, volatile aftermath, but also over time. This

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[19] Historian Peter Green defines *pothos* as follows: "If baulked by the difficult, try the impossible. The Greek word for this urge is *pothos*; it recurs throughout Alexander's life as a 'longing for things not yet within reach, for the unknown, far distant, unattained', and it is so used of no other person in the ancient world. *Pothos*, in this sense, is an individual characteristic peculiar to Alexander." Green, Peter. *Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 B.C.: A Historical Biography*. (UCP, 1991), 128. There is, perhaps, no better way to describe the motivation for Cortés's invasion of Culhúa in a single word other than *pothos*.

section is not intended to be a complete historiography; rather, I examine snapshots of responses to the chaplain's history with the goal of illuminating López de Gómara's role as both historical narrator and actor. I begin with a discussion of the political ramifications—including the 1553 ban on printing and sale of López de Gómara's work—and from there, closely analyze the criticisms of Las Casas and Díaz. Next, I consider the role of Andrés González de Barcia in resurrecting *Historia de la conquista* in the 18th century. Then, I trace the perpetuation of López de Gómara's heroization of Cortés in Prescott's canonical *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) and in a 19th century Spanish engraving of the Battle of Otumba. In the following section, I move into Ramón Iglesia's influential writings in the 1940s and his efforts to initiate another cycle of resurrection for *Historia de la conquista*. Finally, I note the contemporary post-quincentennial reevaluations. I aim to shed light on what these new perspectives mean for the enduring legacy of López de Gómara's Cortés.

The heroic Cortés is an interpretation reflecting López de Gómara's perceptions of history and reality. His existence reveals the prominent position of classical literature during mid-16th century Spain. He also embodies national and religious ideals that symbolically do battle with those of Las Casas and his sympathizers. *Historia de la conquista* creates an Alexandrian Cortés as a channel through which López de Gómara presents the glory of the conquest as a history for the all the world to venerate.

Chapter 1: Conquest, Political Developments, and Humanism[20]

The Renaissance humanism movement anchors my analysis of López de Gómara's use of the classical tradition. I will examine the chaplain's educational background, his relationship to the Cortés estate, late 15th to 16th century intellectual movements in Spain, and finally, the ways in which explorers and scholars used language to express or imagine Spanish encounters with indigenous peoples. The mingling and distortion of these factors reveal causal threads, helping to explain the character of López de Gómara's Cortés. While I discuss potential influences, I stop short of attributing intentionality. This contextual analysis will properly set up a classical reading of the history that would otherwise appear incongruous.

Spanish Renaissance Humanism

Renaissance humanism refers to a literary, intellectual movement defined by a revivalist interest in the literature and culture of antiquity.[21] This revolution in academic inquiry first thrived in Italy but quickly spread to Spain in the late 15th century and was part of the established order by the time López de Gómara began writing in the 1540s. Spanish

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[20] In my analysis, I build in Robert Lewis's dissertation, *Humanistic Historiography of Francisco López de Gómara (1511-1559)* (1983). I also incorporate elements from Glen Carmen's *Rhetorical Conquests* (2006), J.H. Elliott's "Cortés, Velázquez, and Charles V" (1971), Hanna H. Gray's "Renaissance Humanism: the Pursuit of Eloquence" (1963), Ramón Iglesia's *Cortés, Columbus, and Other Essays* (1969), Paul Oskar Kristeller's "Studies on Renaissance Humanism During the Last Twenty Years" (1962), Arnaldo Momigliano's "The Place of Herodotus in the History of Historiography" (1958) from *Studies in Historiography* (1966), Anthony Pagden's introduction to his translation of *Letters from Mexico* (1971), Cristián Roa-De-La-Carrera's *Histories of Infamy* (2005), Lesley Byrd Simpson's introduction to *Cortés: the Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary* (1964), Richard Stoneman's *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (2008), and finally from Francisco López de Gómara himself, as quoted by these authors and from *Historia de la Conquista*.

[21] Not to be mistaken for the contemporary usage of the word, "humanism." Kristeller, Paul Oskar. "Studies on Renaissance Humanism During the Last Twenty Years." *Studies in the Renaissance* 9 (January 1, 1962): 7–30. doi:10.2307/2857109, 9.
Lewis, "Humanistic," 69.

institutions with strong ties to Italian intellectuals aided the transmission of thought. The Spanish College of San Clemente and the Universities of Alcalá and Salamanca were key channels of scholarly communication and produced some of the most productive academics of the day.

The Spanish King Ferdinand's and Queen Isabela's interest in learning Latin—the primary language of Renaissance humanism—reflected the popular aristocratic custom of hiring Italian tutors. Spanish scholars also commonly traveled to Italy for their educations and returned to teach privately or at institutions. Through these academic conduits, Renaissance humanism came to define the Spanish intellectual sphere and deeply impacted the ways in which scholars, chroniclers, and historians wrote about Spanish encounters in the Americas.[22]

As Robert Lewis points out, Renaissance humanism was a heterogeneous movement. There existed disparate schools of thought, and to exemplify this fact, one need look no further than perspectives on the furtherance of history, of which there were four types. One faction proposed a degenerative theory of mankind. Long ago, humanity had experienced a "Golden Age," but the state of the world, they maintained, had been in decline ever since. Looking back to the classical tradition only substantiated the view that contemporary scholars were merely imitating the rhetorical elegance and glory of a gone age. Second, there were those who believed in the cyclicality of history, pointing out that events roughly tended to repeat themselves over time, usually varying only in specific detail though not thematically. Closely related was stagnation theory, which focused primarily on human nature and characteristics as generally remaining the same since the beginning of time. The last

[22] Ibid, 10-12.

perspective, which bears the most resemblance to the conventional present-day views of history, was the theory of human progress. López de Gómara and his supporters belonged to this last category. These scholars commonly justified their perspective by citing scientific advancements that debunked previously accepted theories from antiquity. By way of example, López de Gómara in his *Historia general*, notes the advances in geographical studies that contested previous hypotheses concerning regions of possible human habitation. In this case, López de Gómara cites Spanish exploratory experience to question the authority of classical thinkers.[23]

Nonetheless, scholars (López de Gómara included) acknowledged that the historical narrative required a proper handling of classical authority, contemporary experience, and personal perspective.[24] To do so was said to be "eloquent," the goal of any writer who participated in the movement. Eloquence of style also signified a certain rhetorical polish, reminiscent of classical texts, and a moralistic quality, which was a historian's perspective on the history about which he wrote.[25] While this style has since fallen from favor in the field, the moralizing tone was expected during the Renaissance humanism movement and heightened the stakes of writing history, since the instructive judgment of people and events required implicating oneself in the production of history. It is partly for this reason that López de Gómara's *Historia general* and *Historia de la conquista* have received such heavy criticism, but I will discuss this issue more fully in a later chapter.

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[23] Ibid, 137-140.
[24] Ibid, 140-145.
[25] Gray, Hanna H. "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no. 4 (October 1, 1963): 497–514. doi:10.2307/2707980, 497.

To Spanish humanists, rhetorical eloquence was of foremost importance, and the decision between writing in romance (Spanish) or Latin became a significant one. Latin rose to be the language of the scholarly community, worthy of the ancients, and transcended contemporary linguistic divisions. It was not uncommon for scholars to write in Latin, and one need look no further than Pedro Mártir and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda for examples of historians of the great encounters using the ancient language. Spanish humanist Pedro de Rhua even asserted that he spoke better in Latin than in Spanish.[26]

However, many humanists also made a strong case for the vernacular. Along with many of his contemporaries, López de Gómara believed in the advancement of the romance, that Latin need not dominate the pursuit of eloquence. It was an argument against the restriction of knowledge in order that more people could have access to the fruits of the literary productions of the age. Even so, López de Gómara, who wrote in Spanish, still acknowledged the rhetorical benefits of writing in Latin, and in his prologue to *Anales de Carlos V*, he claims that Latin would have allowed and required him to reveal more information. He even intended to write, but never completed, a Latin version of his *Historia de la conquista*.[27] While López de Gómara did end up favoring romance to Latin, many of his colleagues disagreed with his moderate defense of Latin.

While Renaissance humanists studied the key classical authors—from Thucydides to Plutarch and Cicero to Tacitus—it will be most useful for this study to discuss briefly the

[26] Lewis, "Humanistic," 25. Hugely influential to the proliferation of Latin in Spanish humanist writings was Antonio de Nebrija's *Spanish-Latin Dictionary*. Ibid, 13.
[27] Ibid, 200-202. A draft of this incomplete version survives.

humanist reception of Herodotus and the development of the Alexander tradition from medieval Spain into the Renaissance.

The 15th century Guarino, Lorenzo Valla, and Mattia Palmieri Pisano translations of Herodotus from Ancient Greek to Latin reintroduced the great ethnographer to the academic public. They admired the writer from Halicarnassus "not only for his style, but also for his method of working, for his journeys, for his free and independent mind."[28] In the humanist esteem for Herodotus, one can again recognize the respect for his *authority* of style, his methods based on *experience*, and a supposed independence of *perspective*. The eloquence of Herodotus's account, and the enjoyment derived from reading it, elevated the importance of his work as a model during the humanist movement. Indeed, writers like Giovanni Pontano, Camerarius, and Henricus Stephanus defended Herodotus from traditional criticisms of his work. According to Arnaldo Momigliano, by 1566, "The change becomes complete, the defence of Herodotus against traditional accusations becomes confident and aggressive…"[29] Significantly, Spanish encounters in the Americas forced a greater reliance on oral histories due to the absence of easily recognizable indigenous writing systems, so the similarities between Herodotus's and Spanish humanist historians' approaches fostered interest in the ancient historian. Experiences in the Americas, many of which appear as marvelous encounters in travel narratives, made plausible (even validated) fantastical elements of Herodotus's *Histories* that had been so heavily criticized in antiquity. *The Histories* guides the imagination in search of the wondrous unknown. The existence of peoples and civilizations whose lives, institutions, and cultures were completely "new" to European eyes turned

[28] Momigliano, Arnaldo D. *Studies in Historiography*. (London: The Trinity Press, 1966), 137-139.
[29] Ibid, 138-139.

scholars towards generating ethnographic reports of American societies reminiscent of Herodotus's exhaustive work. Who better to use as a model than the great ethnographer himself? During the 16th century, theologians similarly flocked to Herodotus, since his *Histories* complemented well the Christian historical tradition, as did the prominent role of divine prophesy in his work.[30]

The Alexander romance tradition in Spain emerged with *Libro de Alexandre*, a "classic of Spanish literature" in the 13th century. This text takes its inspiration from Walter of Châtillon's 12th century romance, *Alexandreis*, with a dash of the supernatural from *Historia de proeliis*. Walter of Châtillon derived his romance from Curtius Rufus's *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, not the *Greek Alexander Romance* tradition, which likely originated in Alexandria.[31] Thus, from the beginning of Alexander's literary existence in Spain, the available material had been closely related to a (more or less) canonical history of the Macedonian conqueror. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the more serious inquiries of Arrian, Curtius Rufus (in his actual text), Diodorus, Justin, and Plutarch replaced the medieval, chivalric romance of Alexander, a genre that defined popular literary interest in previous centuries.[32] The drive towards eloquence and classical imitation reoriented academic focus on the ancient Greek and Roman sources on the Macedonian conqueror.[33] A classical education was not complete without a consideration of Alexander, the writers who wrote about him, and the ways in which earlier

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[30] Momigliano, Arnaldo. *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*. (UCP, 1990), 51.
[31] Stoneman, Richard. *The Greek Alexander Romance*. (London: Penguin, 1991), 242.
[32] Bosworth suggests that López de Gómara may have read a Gerbelius edition of Facius's translation of Arrian, printed in 1539 (Bosworth, *Tragedy*, 38n25). Of Curtius Rufus's work, Bosworth writes, "Between 1471 and 1545 there were no less than 17 editions of Curtius, and at least 2 Spanish translation…" (Ibid, 38n26), though López de Gómara's fluency in Latin forgoes any need to restrict his reading to Spanish translations.
[33] Stoneman, *Legend*, 212-214.

writers (like Herodotus) informed these later works. The reemergence of classical texts during the Renaissance humanism movement deeply impacted López de Gómara's writing.

López de Gómara's Education (1523-1540)

How did López de Gómara fit into this dynamic intellectual environment? Historians have long speculated on the exact details of López de Gómara's educational background, since relevant records were either not kept at or are missing from major institutions such as the Universities of Alcalá and Salamanca. However, that inconvenience has not stopped historians like Don Enrique de Vedia and Simpson from connecting the chaplain to these respective institutions. Lewis makes the persuasive case that López de Gómara received instruction from Pedro de Rhua on the basis of his own statement in his *Anales de Carlos V*. (Recall Pedro de Rhua's admission, noted earlier, of greater proficiency in Latin than romance.[34]) This humanist has been lauded as "deservedly placed among the most learned men throughout Spain…without subjecting himself to any teacher, solely relying on his own wit, came out most learned."[35] Lewis's hypothesis of Pedro de Rhua's involvement in López de Gómara's education is an attractive one because there is textual basis for the argument as opposed to what amounts to little more than speculation in favor of the alternatives. Needless to say, at Alcalá, Salamanca, or under the tutelage of Pedro de Rhua, between the ages of twelve and twenty López de Gómara became well acquainted with Latin and the literature of antiquity.

Afterwards, López de Gómara became ordained as a "clérigo or member of the so-called 'secular clergy,'" though it remains unclear where specifically he received his

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[34] Lewis, *Humanistic*, 22-23.

[35] Ibid, 25, quoting from Marineo Sículo's *De Rebus Memorabilibus* (1530).

ordination.[36] Then, there comes a long historical silence in López de Gómara's life. He was in Rome in 1531 and in Venice in 1540.[37] Despite valiant attempts at reconstructing a coherent narrative of these absent nine years, the facts remain largely speculative. What is certain is López de Gómara's growth as a humanist scholar and his continued interactions with prominent intellectuals of the movement like Diego Hurtado de Mendoza and Olaus Magnus. This development would later have important implications for the composition of his *Historia de la conquista* and the choices he would make during the creative process. His intellectual growth further reinforces his capacity as a writer and producer of history, more so than the later accusations of Las Casas and others would allow.

Cortés and the Post-Death Scene

The heroic Cortés of the conquest was not the Cortés that López de Gómara encountered during the dismal Spanish invasion of Algiers in 1541.[38] The political conundrums following the fall of Tenochtitlán twenty years before had changed—one might say traumatized—the once victorious conquistador.

From the very beginning of Cortés's expedition in 1519, he had placed himself in a politically compromised position. His ambition conflicted directly with the plans of his superior, Diego Velázquez. The two could not simultaneously occupy the same role as conqueror-colonizer of Mexico. Realizing that Velázquez would soon receive royal permission to colonize

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[36] Ibid, 27.

[37] Ibid, 28. Lewis notes that we know from López de Gómara's *Anales de Carlos V* that the chaplain was in the presence of the Papacy in 1531, and from his *Crónica de los Barbarrojas* that he was with Hurtado de Mendoza in Venice in 1540. See Lewis, *Humanistic*, 28-31, for more on "The Problem of the 'Italian Years.'"

[38] A storm destroyed much of the fleet before it even reached the African continent. Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 21.

the continent, Cortés had a small window of opportunity to realize his own New World ambitions and declare hierarchical independence from Velázquez by claiming that he answered to the crown alone. His sudden departure for Mexico initiated a lifelong political war against several factions and prominent members of the Spanish bureaucracy and court. These opponents varied drastically in profession, proximity, and threat. Besides Velázquez, notable adversaries were Pánfilo de Narváez, Andrés de Tapia, Francisco de Garay, Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, and Cristóbal de Olid. Through skillful political maneuvering, the influence of allies in Spain, his *Cartas de Relación*, and a healthy dose of luck, Cortés managed to best them all. In 1522, he had finally received the royal recognition he had sought since setting foot on the continent and was appointed governor of New Spain. By the end of 1524, his two great nemeses, Velázquez and Fonseca, were dead, but unfortunately for Cortés, his own woes had only begun.[39]

Increasingly restrictive oversight and investigations limited Cortés's administrative agency. By the time his captain, Cristóbal de Olid, defected and occupied Honduras, Cortés had neared wits' end. Livid, he rose from his governor's seat and departed on a campaign into Honduras to apprehend Olid. J. H. Elliott describes the journey as "an extraordinary saga of heroism and suffering. Cortés emerged from it alive, but a different, and in some ways a broken man."[40] Upon his return to Mexico in 1526, Cortés found the country divided in what has retrospectively been termed a civil war. Just a year later, the crown placed a ban on his *Cartas de Relación*. Like many other bans issued in the 16th century, there remains no

[39] For an extended discussion on Cortés's political maneuverings, see Elliott, J.H., "Cortés, Velázquez, and Charles V." in *Letters from Mexico* by Cortés, Hernan, ed. Pagden, Anthony R., (New Haven; London: Yale UP, 2001), xi-xxxvii.

[40] Elliott, "Cortés," xxxv.

definitive reason for the action. Anthony Pagden suggests that officials wanted to prevent "open public legitimation of his behavior," which is perhaps reflective of the public popularity of Cortés's letters.[41] After the fires of rebellion dimmed and Cortés was suspended from office, he traveled to Spain in another attempt to appeal to the crown. At court, they granted him the title that he would retain for the rest of his life and pass to his son, Martín Cortés: Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca. Without any real administrative power or involvement in the development of the Spanish colonial empire, Cortés returned to Mexico in 1530 where he remained before retiring to Spain in 1540.[42] There, he served under the Spanish banner once more during the invasion of Algiers.

An episode regarding Cortés during the siege of Algiers stands out prominently at the end of *Historia de la conquista*. After Charles V had announced his intention to withdraw from the siege, López de Gómara writes,

> Cortés then offered to take Algiers with the Spanish, German, and Italian troops, if the Emperor would consent. The soldiers were delighted and praised him highly; but the sailors and others did not heed him. The Emperor, I think, did not hear of the offer, and so retreated.[43]

López de Gómara expresses his admiration for the aged conqueror, even at Charles V's expense. The troops' positive reception romanticizes Cortés's offer, but the sailors' noncompliance symbolizes the polarity of Cortés's legacy at the time. Ultimately, despite

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[41] Pagden, Anthony R, introduction to *Letters from Mexico* by Cortés, Hernan, ed. Pagden, Anthony R., (New Haven; London: Yale UP, 2001), li.

[42] Ibid, xxxvi.

[43] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 408. "Cortés entonces se ofrecía a tomar a Argel con los soldados españoles que había, y con los medios tudescos e italianos, siendo de ello servido el emperador. Los hombres de guerra amaban aquello, y loábanle mucho. Los hombres de mar y otros no lo escuchaban; y así, pienso que no lo supo su majestad y se vino." López de Gómara, *Historia*, CCLI.

Cortés's charismatic ambition, his proposal failed. One can imagine the emotions gripping López de Gómara in that moment, as he stood witness to this final denial of glory.[44]

Following Charles V's disheartening return to Spain, López de Gómara ended up in Cortés's service as a private chaplain. They spent most of this time in Valladolid, since Cortés still sought the crown's recognition for his deeds. Frustration defined the conqueror's final years but, as Lewis notes, the Cortés household enjoyed a vibrant intellectual atmosphere, hosting gatherings that functioned more like informal academic forums. Among the distinguished guests, two prominent historians, Francisco Cervantes de Salazar and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, had a significant influence upon López de Gómara. Along with Cortés, they either shaped or reinforced both López de Gómara's perspective of the conquest and his desire to write history. By 1545, he had announced in his *Crónica de los Barbarrojas* that a work on Cortés's life was in progress. However, Cortés would not live to see its completion. In 1546, Cortés had finally abandoned his hope for royal acknowledgement. Still with the intention of returning to Mexico, he died in Castilleja de la Cuesta in December of 1547 "of diarrhea and indigestion."[45]

This final theme of glory, once held but now lost, had a profound effect on López de Gómara. How could it be that the man who delivered to Charles V his second empire and who undid Culhúa with just a few hundred soldiers was brushed aside in his final years? As a witness to the disappointing final chapter of Cortés's life, López de Gómara felt that justice had not been done for his employer's legacy. He would need to elevate his writing style to the

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[44] Lewis, *Humanistic*, 32-33.

[45] Ibid, 33-35. López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 408. "Iba malo de cámaras e indigestión, que le duraron mucho tiempo." López de Gómara, *Historia*, CCLI.

zenith of humanistic eloquence, a melding of the following three critical components. He required classical *authority* derived from his educational background. He needed to incorporate his *experience* from exposure to Cortés as a source of oral history as well as to his *Cartas de Relación*, Pedro Mártir's *Oceanas*, and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés's *Historia general y natural de las Indias*. Lastly, he would have to foreground his *perspective*, consequent of both his employment in Cortés's service during those disgraceful, final years and the influence of Sepúlveda's *Democrates Secundus*, which he used as a theoretical model for justifying conquest.[46] These factors gave López de Gómara the inspiration and the tools to write what Iglesia termed "one of the most beautiful products of the Spanish language."[47]

However, there were powerful forces working against López de Gómara's project, not least of which was Bartolomé de las Casas. For Las Casas, the battle over conquest and colonial ethics had to be resolved in literature. He understood the significance of the persuasive power that the relatively recent printing presses afforded texts. Writing was now capable of reaching far larger audiences than ever before. He laments, "…the world believes nothing more than what is put in print."[48] The rhetorical war over Spanish conquest ethics, then, was by nature, a war over how to properly commemorate or silence history in writing. It was a war over popular memory.[49]

According to Roa-De-La-Carrera, the famous 1550 debate at Valladolid between Las Casas and Sepúlveda was important insofar as it "transformed the conditions within which

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[46] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 29, 53-54. Also, one must not forget the influence of Alfonso and Juan Valdés. Of the latter, Simpson says that his "charming *Diálogo de la Lengua* (1535) could well have served as Gomara's textbook" Simpson, introduction, xxv.
[47] Iglesia, Ramón. *Columbus, Cortés, and Other Essays*, trans. Simpson, Lesley Byrd. (UCP, 1969), 52.
[48] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 39, quoting Las Casas.
[49] For an examination of Las Casas's response to López de Gómara, see Chapter Four.

forms of textual authority could be established."[50] Aristotelian theory on "natural slavery" provided an intellectual foundation from which both sides drew to construct their arguments. Sepúlveda and the apologists of imperialism argued from Aristotle that the Spanish conquerors' victories proved their positions as both "superior" and "rulers" by nature. Congruently, native losses demonstrated an inherent inability to establish a just and virtuous domain. This binary distinction between capability and incapability of rule supposedly justified Spanish slave structures.[51] However, this reasoning presented a number of problems and contradictions that Las Casas and his progressive (or, at least, less conservative) proponents sought to expose. Las Casas argues, "They are peoples most capable of the Christian faith and all virtues and good customs, and able to be guided through reason and doctrine, and concerning their *nature* they are free, and they have their own kings and natural lords who govern their affairs."[52] The debate at Valladolid not only reveals the divergent nature of Spanish opinions on the conquests, but it also demonstrates the integral nature of classical authority in legitimizing or delegitimizing conquest and colonialism.

For a historian like López de Gómara intending to write a history sympathetic to the Spanish conquests and to Cortés, the stakes were high. Roa-De-La-Carrera implicates Las Casas in the suppression of the second part of Oviedo's *Historia general y natural* in the late 1540s. While initially popular with the Council of the Indies, Oviedo opened himself to attack with his

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[50] Ibid, 40.
[51] Ibid, 117-118, 226-227. Aristotle. *Politics*, trans. Lord, Carnes. (University of Chicago Press, 1984), 5.7, 6.3-5.
[52] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 117. It is important to acknowledge these uses of Aristotle's *Politics* during Spanish 16th century debates on the nature of American natives, but these arguments lifted from *Politics* lack Aristotle's nuances and complexity. For example, Aristotle writes that some people have "the bodies of free persons while others have the souls," which suggests that reality is too complicated to term all Spaniards capable and all natives incapable (or capable). Aristotle, *Politics*, 5.10.

claims in favor of subjugating the indigenous populations of the Americas.[53] Also featured on Las Casas's hit list were Sepúlveda and his *Democrates Secundus* (1544). Roa-De-La-Carrera connects Las Casas to the suppression of that text as well.[54] Las Casas's involvement in the deconstruction of the logic of Spanish colonialism was reflective of a larger societal movement to recognize the injustices of the initial Spanish conquests and the abuses of the *encomenderos*.[55]

The New Laws of 1542 and the official suspension of conquest in 1550 signaled the fall of ethical justifications of conquest from institutional approval. The New Laws were a kind of compromise between Charles V's organization of American colonies and Pope Paul III's bulls—securing a handful of basic rights for natives—generated from his interactions with the progressive Fray Bernardino de Minaya in 1537. The New Laws sought to eradicate the *encomienda* system, the use of the indigenous population for personal service, and guaranteed indigenous Americans the right to Christianize; while still markedly Eurocentric, this last stipulation elevates the perceived status of indigenous humanity. While although the *encomienda* clause of the laws was redacted in 1545, these initiatives still demonstrate strong countercurrents to the once conventional assumption of justified conquest.[56]

Despite these trends, López de Gómara did not hold back in his writing. He weighed his cause more heavily than the threat of potential repercussions, as is shown by his view of the encounters and the conquests in relation to the entirety of human history. To him, the Spanish "discovery" was the most significant moment in history since the coming of Christ, making his

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[53] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 39-40.
[54] Ibid, 44-45, 58-59.
[55] *Encomienda* refers to a land grant (together with the people who lived there) typically to Spanish conquistadors and colonists. *Encomedero* signifies the holder of such an estate.
[56] Ibid, 43-44.

Historia general and *Historia de la conquista* the most important texts since the Christian gospels.[57] López de Gómara's defiance of the changing rhetorical landscape of the conquests likely correlated with the ban placed on his work in 1553, the year after publication (the details of the ban will be discussed in a later chapter). However, despite the shifting historiographical trends, the suppression of Oviedo and Sepúlveda, and the rise of figures like Las Casas, López de Gómara did manage to get his *Historia general* and *Historia de la conquista* published in Zaragoza in 1552. The last Spanish edition appeared in 1555, but by 1554, the work already had appeared in print in Antwerp. In spite of powerful societal forces interested in suffocating López de Gómara's work, the power of his writing allowed it to live on, if not in Spain then abroad, until its resurrection in Andrés González de Barcia's *Historiadores primitivos de las Indias Occidentales* in 1749.[58]

[57] Carrasco, foreword, ix.
[58] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 60.

Chapter 2: Classical Conventions of Grand Narrative

The strongest historical, rhetorical, and storytelling tools available to López de Gómara came from the literature of antiquity. They allowed him to imbue *Historia de la conquista* with an identifiable and pleasing eloquent grandeur. Thus, he composed the history of Cortés's conquest within the framework of what I have called a classical "grand narrative." Only through this structural and rhetorical foundation could Cortés plausibly emerge as a modern Alexander. The following discussion relies on my interpretation of *Historia de la conquista* as Herodotean (or influenced by those near to the Herodotean tradition) in its methodology, rhetoric, ethnography, and in its supernatural occurrences.[59] At the turn of the 16th century, Renaissance scholars rediscovered Herodotus through recent translations and adoptions of similar methodologies (see Chapter One). While it is impossible to know whether López de Gómara read *The Histories*, there exist prominent Herodotean features in his *Historia de la conquista*. In this chapter, I aim to reveal the reminiscences, imitations, and structures in *Historia de la conquista* that connect first, to Herodotus's narrative and second, to Arrian's account of Alexander's conquests (with nods to Plutarch, Curtius Rufus, and also Homer), to construct a grand narrative, a "prose epic," of the conquest.[60]

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[59] This chapter also argues for *Historia de la conquista*'s closeness to the Herodotean tradition, as opposed to the Thucydidean tradition. I challenge the accuracy of claims that identify López de Gómara's work with popular writers like Thucydides, Sallust, and Tacitus because the chaplain's writing is far more romanticist, sensationalist, and essentialist, like *The Histories*.

[60] Simpson, introduction, xxii. Full quote: "Indeed, I am convinced that Gómara was consciously writing a prose epic and that virtually everything in the book was designed with this end in view, even the breathing spaces, in which he describes the landscape, the people, their customs, dress, and religion, and draws thumbnail sketches of their leaders."

It is crucial to remember that elements of López de Gómara's style serve compound purposes that cross the arbitrary categorical boundaries of contemporary influences, classical influences, and authorial agency.

The Purpose of Writing History

Like his classical models, López de Gómara believed that history should please, instruct, and commemorate—hallmarks of the Herodotean tradition that I will also connect to Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandrou*. The chaplain expresses this methodology in a preface entitled, "To the Reader," a structural feature of historical accounts familiar to nearly every writer of antiquity. The chaplain writes,

> Every history, even a badly written one, pleases. Hence, it will not be necessary to recommend this one of mine, but only to assure the reader it is as enjoyable as it is curious, because of its variety, and as notable as it is delightful, because of the many strange happenings it records…its chapters are brief, to avoid wordiness; its sentences clear and short…Brevity pleases all…I have not described the expeditions and conquests that many others have made at great cost, omitting some because they are of little importance and because most of them are alike, and also because of my ignorance, for otherwise I should not have omitted them. For the rest, no historian ever pleases everybody. If he should deserve a little praise he would be unhappy if he got none and would repay the neglect with churlishness, and if he has written what he would not like to see repeated, he would disown it and thereby truly condemn himself.[61]

[61] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 5-6. "Toda historia, aunque no sea bien escrita, deleita. Por ende no hay que recomendar la nuestra, sino avisar cómo es tan apacible cuanto nueva por la variedad de cosas, y tan notable como deleitosa por sus muchas extrañezas…los capítulos [son] cortos para ahorrar palabras…la brevedad a todos place…Cuanto a las entradas y conquistas que muchos han hecho a grandes gastos, y yo no trato de ellas, digo que dejo algunas por ser de poca importancia, y porque las más de ellas son de una misma manera, y algunas por no las saber, que sabiéndolas no las dejaría. En lo demás, ningún historiador humano contenta jamás a todos, porque si uno merece alguna loa, no se contenta con ninguna, y la paga con ingratitud; y el que hizo lo que no querría oír, luego lo reprehende todo, con que se condena de veras." López de Gómara, *Historia*, "A Los Leyentes."

López de Gómara implies that eloquence of style supersedes accuracy in the writing of history, a view reminiscent of Plutarch's preface in his *Life of Alexander*.[62] However, unlike Plutarch, López de Gómara claims to produce history despite his commitment to eloquence and biography.[63]

The chaplain's professed interest in recording curiosities recalls Herodotus, as does his interest in pleasing, indicated not only in this passage, but also in his structural divisions based on short stories.[64] Each of López de Gómara's chapters encapsulates a distinct story, complete with characters, settings, and conflicts. The chaplain gleaned this structure from his classical models, who similarly saw the value in short story narration. However, López de Gómara modified the technique in order to achieve the brevity that humanist eloquence required; of the writers considered here, only Plutarch in his *Life of Alexander* separates his writing in structures as short as the chaplain's. Nonetheless, they all fundamentally advance their narratives through short stories.

As a result, López de Gómara's work is easy to pick up and put down based on the brevity of both his chapters and his writing on the sentence level. He rarely wavers in his focus

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[62] Of his approach, Plutarch writes," …I am writing biography, not history, and the truth is that the most brilliant exploits often tell us nothing of the virtues or vices of the men who performed them, while on the other hand a chance remark or a joke may reveal far more of a man's character than the mere feat of winning battles in which thousands fall, or of marshalling great armies, or laying siege to a cities." Plutarch, *Alexander*, 1.

[63] Momigliano, Arnaldo. *The Development of Greek Biography*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1971). In the classical world, biography—"an account of the life of a man from birth to death"—was not considered to be a form of history. Momigliano nuances the distinction between biography and contributions to the biographical form. Biography, strictly speaking, could not be history, yet contributions to the biographical form could retain biographical components and, at the same time, be history. The reason for the difference is that classical biography implied a merging between fiction and history, a sacrifice of a commitment to facts, in order to most accurately portray "truth." A moralizing tone usually accompanied classical biography and became emblematic of the form. Ibid, 11, 55-57, 63.

[64] Of López de Gómara, Lewis writes that his descriptions "are clearly selected with a view to emphasizing the marvelous, exotic, and at times repulsive and grotesque character of the flora, fauna and human cultures of the Indies. Novelty is the prime quality which Gómara looks for in any situation" (Lewis, *Humanistic*, 180).

on Cortés and conquest, and like Plutarch, he omits some events due to their relative lack of importance to his history. Already, López de Gómara displays the eloquence of his form, his methodology, and his familiarity with classical narrative and stylistic structures.

Like the ancient authors, López de Gómara imagined history as an instructive tool. This concept materializes in the prominent roles of Christianity and conversion in *Historia de la conquista*. López de Gómara writes,

> The Conquest of Mexico and the conversion of the peoples of New Spain can and should be included among the histories of the world, not only because it was well done but because it was very great…It was great, not in time so much as in the fact that many powerful kingdoms were conquered with little bloodshed or harm to the inhabitants, and many millions were baptized who now live, thanks be to God, as Christians.[65]

The conversion of the native peoples, allegedly baptized in the millions, attempts to justify both the conquest and the atrocities that the writings of Las Casas and Fray Minaya revealed. López de Gómara gives purpose to a conquest otherwise driven by Cortés's *pothos*. The Christian cause becomes that of Cortés and motivates war with the Mexicans. In light of the relatively recent Reconquista, framing the conquest of Mexico as a religious war presented the Spanish conquest as a preeminent national and religious struggle.

[65] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 4. "La conquista de México y conversión de los de la Nueva España, justamente se puede y debe poner entre las historias del mundo, así porque fue bien hecha, como porque fue muy grande…Fue grande, no en el tiempo, sino en el hecho, que se conquistaron muchos y grandes reinos con poco daño y sangre de los naturales; y se bautizaron muchos millones de personas, las cuales viven, a Dios gracias, cristianamente." López de Gómara, *Historia*, "Don Martín Cortés, Marqués Del Valle."

When examining López de Gómara's professed moral purposes for writing, one must simultaneously look to Herodotus as a structural guide because of his conceptual nearness in respect to both morality and pleasure in history.

Herodotus begins his *Histories* with the following proem:

> Herodotus of Halicarnassus here presents his research so that human events do not fade with time. May the great and wonderful deeds—some brought forth by the Hellenes, others by the barbarians—not go unsung; as well as the causes that led them to make war on each other.[66]

Herodotus introduces his work as a tool to preserve human memory that would otherwise be forgotten. In other words, he uses his work as a commemorative tool to monumentalize significant events and people. Herodotus makes a gesture towards the oral transmission of history with "unsung." The nod towards the oral medium (or singing) directly relates to the pleasurable transmission of history. An oral performance of a story or history requires dramatization and hyperbole, often in the forms of violence, the exotic, and the supernatural.[67] Pleasure functions as an aid to the preservation of memory (in both the performer and the listener) and, therefore, increases the accessibility of *The Histories*. A related feature is Herodotus's inclusion of "great and wonderful deeds." If they were absent, would this history be worth telling or listening to? He restricts the content of his work only to what he deems "wonderful" and worth remembering, not unlike López de Gómara. Herodotus

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[66] Herodotus, Robert B. Strassler, and Andrea L. Purvis. *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 1.1.1. All quotations from Herodotus come from this translation.

[67] Vance, Eugene, "Roland and the Poetics of Memory," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*. Harari, Josué V. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979). Eugene Vance proposes that violence may have been a mnemonic tool in oral performance, but I take his hypothesis a step further and connect other forms of hyperbole like exoticism and supernaturalism.

(perhaps rightly) assumes that his contemporaries preferred to hear a spectacular history filled with curiosities and remarkable individuals than an ordinary one. The sense of wonder in *The Histories* and the other spectacular, commemorative (and perhaps once mnemonic) devices transfer to the written work (although it is impossible to know how much changed between the two mediums). Herodotus balances his commitment to the meticulous assemblage of information with a structure facilitating the pleasurable relation of history.

Not only do Herodotus's stories please, but they also foreground morality. D. T. Starnes asserts that even the proem implies moral purpose in his "aim to furnish examples that may be profitable to his readers."[68] Moralizing history raises the stakes of writing and implicates the historian in his (or her) own history. Herodotus likely intended many of his anecdotes to serve as lessons for his readers, and one need look no further than the tale of King Cambyses's madness and fall for an apt example. Herodotus writes, "I am convinced by all the evidence that Cambyses was seriously deranged. Otherwise he would not have endeavored to mock what is sacred and customary."[69] One of the climaxes of Cambyses's madness is the story of the Apis calf. Thinking that an Egyptian religious celebration was a personal affront due to a recent military disaster, Cambyses grew angry. He had the priests bring the Apis calf to him, a calf that embodied a god, and stabbed it in the thigh. He then "burst out laughing and said to the priests: 'You are pathetic people! Is this what your gods are like, flesh and blood that can feel the prick of iron?...'"[70] Cambyses allegedly continued at length, mocking Egyptian tradition. He then punished the priests and killed all celebrators.

[68] Starnes, D. T. "Purpose in the Writing of History." *Modern Philology* 20, no. 3 (February 1, 1923): 281–300, 282.
[69] Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.38.1.
[70] Ibid, 3.39.2.

However, he eventually paid the ultimate price for this atrocity and his many others. As Cambyses later attempted to jump onto his horse, "the tip of his sword's scabbard fell off, and the bare blade stabbed his thigh, in the very same spot he had earlier struck Apis the god of the Egyptians."[71] In a dramatic twist, upon realizing that he would soon die, Cambyses "regained his sanity" and delivered a moving oration to a group of noble Persians before succumbing pitifully to gangrene.[72] Despite Cambyses's moment of redemption, Herodotus imposes his judgment on the history with his accusations of madness.[73] He leverages the story, dramatizes it with significance and coincidence, and presents it as a lesson bordering on threat.

Short story structures in both *Histories* and *Historia de la conquista* serve similar purposes. They commemorate, instruct, and please. The short story form necessitates a protagonist (like Cambyses), which further links biography and history. Similarly, López de Gómara consciously places Cortés at the center of his history as a vehicle for both heroic themes and the broader narrative progression. The form gives Cortés agency to forge his destiny. López de Gómara writes,

> Long live, then, the name and memory of him who conquered so vast a land, converted such a multitude of men, cast down so many idols, and put an end to so much sacrifice and the eating of human flesh! Let not oblivion obscure the capture of Moctezuma, a

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[71] Ibid, 3.64.3.

[72] Ibid, 3.64.5-3.66. Also revealed through this passage is the importance of oracular agency as a driving force of history in Herodotus's *Histories*. On this point, López de Gómara differs from Herodotus, as he props up great men as the primary vehicle of historical action, though miraculous religion retains a prominent role in the chaplain's history.

[73] The validity of Herodotus's accusations has been contested in the historiography, since that detail has not been verified independent of Herodotus. If he fudged details of the story, he may have done so to add ideological force to the tragedy of Cambyses.

> most powerful king, or the taking of Mexico, a strong city, or its rebuilding, which was a very great deed![74]

Here, López de Gómara clearly expresses his desire to preserve the feats of great men. Cortés's achievements are most worthy of preservation (defined initially by ending paganism), and as a result, the conquest of Mexico is the only conquest that receives its own volume. Lewis considers this choice to be an odd one, and even comments that the removal of the conquest of Mexico from *Historia general* was López de Gómara's only mistake.[75] The separation parallels Arrian's decision to separate *Indica* from his *Anabasis Alexandrou*.

López de Gómara adopted the classical biographical model as a commemorative tool for Cortés. Contributions to this classical structure appear in the Alexander histories, and these motifs and strategies now immortalize both the Macedonian conqueror and Cortés. Perhaps López de Gómara contemplated the success of Alexander's legacy when considering how to properly commemorate Cortés. Arrian, Curtius Rufus, and Plutarch would have been useful, available models.

Arrian's links to the Herodotean tradition reinforce the necessity of classical grand narrative structures to the creation of a hero. In his brief preface to his *Anabasis Alexandrou*, Arrian's commitment to truth—reflected in the justification of his two main sources, Ptolemy and Aristoboulos—recalls Herodotus's desire to preserve memory. Arrian believed that Ptolemy's account of Alexander's campaigns was a strong source to follow because it was dishonorable for a king to lie. Therefore, to Arrian, privileging Ptolemy's writing accurately

[74] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 4. "Permanezca pues el nombre y memoria de quien conquistó tanta tierra, convirtió tantas personas, derribó tantos dioses, excusó tanto sacrificio y comida de hombres. No encubra el olvido la prisión de Moteczuma, rey poderosísimo; la toma de México, ciudad fortísima, ni su reedificación, que fue grandísima." López de Gómara, *Historia*, "Don Martín Cortés, Marqués Del Valle."

[75] Lewis, *Humanistic*, 312.

preserves Alexander's campaigns and his great deeds. However, Arrian's fairly consistent tone of objectivity, rather than novelty and interpretation, diverges from Herodotus, but it does not completely remove the moral implications of the work.[76]

Alexander's justification of continued conquest at the Hyphasis (in present-day Pakistan) couples ideology with rhetoric in a speech that is most likely in part Arrian's creation. Alexander says,

> What limit should a man of noble nature put to his labors? I, for one, do not think there is any, so long as those labors lead to noble accomplishments…those who labor and face dangers achieve noble deeds, and it is sweet to live bravely and die leaving behind an immortal fame.[77]

This speech not only dramatizes the conflict between Alexander's *pothos* and his men's desire to return home, but it also demonstrates that despite Alexander's eloquence and glorious promises, the veterans' longing for home still moves them more. Thus, Arrian spins the significance of the scene. He sensationalizes it with long, moving speeches, first by Alexander, and then by Koinos, representative of the people.

Like Herodotus, López de Gómara, and Plutarch, Arrian includes long series of anecdotes and stories to build a broader narrative. While he does occasionally dip into and out of chronicling events, at its core, his *Anabasis Alexandrou* is the *story* of Alexander's campaigns. His protagonist is Alexander, and his history serves the dual purpose of detailing Alexander's life and contributing to historical knowledge. Arrian's work skirts an occasionally

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[76] Certain aspects of Arrian's work, like his relative objectivity of language have caused scholars to identify him more closely with the Thucydidean tradition. While true, Momigliano accurately states that Arrian "eclectically imitated Herodotean and Thucydidean features of language." Momigliano, *Foundations*, 46.

[77] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 5.26.1-4.

ambiguous line between history and biography, as do Herodotus's mini-biographies of figures like Cyrus, Cambyses, Croesus, and Darius. These anticipations of the biographical genre are present in many major works of antiquity, and certainly reappear in Renaissance humanist writing, which largely acknowledged biography as a valid form of history.[78]

López de Gómara's rhetorical and organizational structures emerged from a long line of ancient scholarship, largely originating with Herodotus, but also recalling notable works from Arrian, Plutarch, and others. These writers all structured their works to please, instruct, and commemorate. The chaplain's elevated rhetoric reflects the importance he placed on his writing. The tone and content of his opening passages recall Herodotus's proem. They both open into epic histories, and in these preliminary chapters, López de Gómara does little to break form with classical authority.

Emotional Essentialism

López de Gómara and his classical predecessors employ a technique that I term "emotional essentialism" to simplify emotional responses to complex situations into one or two words. They expand the signification of these words, implying the broader meanings of simplified signifiers. These moments allow for swift transitions that both advance the narratives and encourage specific interpretations of characters. At the risk of fragmentary descriptions, Herodotus, Arrian, Curtius Rufus, and the chaplain condense emotions at significant plot points that the quoted selections themselves reveal.

[78] Momigliano, *Biography*, 2.

Herodotus uses emotional essentialism in the following case to summarize Xerxes's reaction to Ephialtes's offer at Thermopylae. He writes, "Xerxes was pleased and exhilarated by what Ephialtes promised to accomplish…"[79] The significance of Xerxes's reaction is far greater than what Herodotus expresses in this scene. Buried in "pleased and exhilarated" are Xerxes's fears, shame, and anger regarding the course of the battle. He eagerly sought to end the engagement as quickly as possible, and Ephialtes betrayal promised to do so. Two other descriptions imply the greater meaning of Xerxes's emotions. Herodotus writes, "It is said that during these assaults [against the Hellenes], the King [Xerxes], who was watching, leapt up from his throne three times in fear for his army."[80] This portrayal undermines the previous grandeur and expectations with which Xerxes had marched from Persia, across the Hellespont, and down into Hellas. Finally, Herodotus notes, "For me this [Xerxes's impalement of Leonidas's head] is the clearest of many proofs that King Xerxes felt greater animosity for Leonidas while he was still alive than he felt for any other man."[81] Leonidas's stand at Thermopylae, though a defeat for the Hellenes, challenged Xerxes's authority and ambition. These two descriptions add greater significance to Xerxes's reaction to Ephialtes, which simultaneously characterizes the eagerness and desperation with which Xerxes accepted the offer. "Pleased and exhilarated," then, essentialize and compress Xerxes's emotional landscape in order to advance a specific interpretation of the Persian king, and furthermore, to transition quickly to the next phase of the battle whereby the Lacedaemonians expressed true heroism in their ultimate sacrifice.

[79] Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.215.
[80] Ibid, 7.212.1.
[81] Ibid, 7.238.2.

Arrian borrows from this same tradition, and when Alexander heard of the loss of his army under Pharnoukes, Arrian relates, "When these events [news of ambush] were reported to Alexander, he was grieved by his soldiers' misfortune and resolved to march in haste against Spitamenes and the barbarians who accompanied him."[82] Arrian gives Alexander little emotional transition, this time from normality, to mourning, to action. The effect refocuses Alexander's grief into retaliation. Alexander, never one to sit around while his troops died, moved through complex emotional states in a single sentence in order to initiate a response against Spitamenes. This device allows Arrian to present Alexander as a quick-thinking hero and an agent of justice.

Similarly, Cutius Rufus uses the technique to depict Alexander after his battle at the Hydaspes River. He writes, "Alexander was delighted to have won so memorable a victory [at the Hydaspes River] which, he believed, opened up to him the limits of the East."[83] Although Curtius Rufus contextualizes Alexander's feeling of delight to an extent, he still simplifies the Macedonian conqueror's emotional landscape by characterizing his response to a monumental endeavor—that was to be remembered as the last great battle of his campaigns—as one of "delight." Curtius Rufus's employment of emotional essentialism parallels Arrian's and Herodotus's. They all use the technique to transition, intrigue, and progress their respective narratives without necessitating the creation of a scene (often to the benefit of a hero or detriment to a foe).

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[82] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 4.6.3.
[83] Quintus Curtius Rufus. *The History of Alexander / Quintus Curtius Rufus ; Translated by John Yardley ; with an Introduction and Notes by Waldemar Heckel.* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England ; New York, NY, USA: Penguin Books, 1984), 9.1.1

López de Gómara employs this classical rhetorical device in many of Cortés's emotional responses. While Lewis refers broadly to López de Gómara's brevity of language, my analysis provides specific examples of this stylistic feature.[84] For example, López de Gómara relates that after Cortés heard that some of his men wanted to abandon the expedition, he felt "deeply hurt by this talk, but, seeing that the time was not propitious, he elected to overlook the matter and address them."[85] López de Gómara writes, "deeply hurt," to signify the sensation Cortés felt when learning of intention to mutiny. Cortés experienced a swift emotional transition, and even displayed a more explicit command over his emotional response than even Alexander. Given Cortés's stake in the expedition—not to mention his ambition—"deeply hurt" operates as both essentialism and understatement. As with Herodotus, Arrian, and Curtius Rufus, the employment allows López de Gómara to characterize and simplify without lengthy explanation. He gives readers his interpretation of Cortés's emotions, and the trusting reader must then accept his interpretation, as he then transitions quickly into action.

Significantly, López de Gómara also condenses other characters' emotions as well. Of Velázquez's response to Cortés running off from his command, the chaplain writes, "Diego Velázquez was very angry with Cortés, not because he had lost money [in the venture], for he had invested little or none, but because he was losing the profit, as well as his honor."[86] In this case, essentialism makes Velázquez appear somewhat childish in the wake of Cortés's

[84] See Lewis, *Humanistic*, 208-210.
[85] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 112. "Mucho sentía Cortés oír estas cosas…pero viendo que no estaba en tiempo, acordó de llevarlos por bien, y hablóles a todos juntos…" López de Gómara, *Historia*, LI.
[86] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 192. "Estaba Diego Velázquez muy enojado de Fernando Cortés, no tanto por el gasto, que poco o ninguno había hecho, cuando por el interés de lo presente y por la honra…" López de Gómara, *Historia*, XCVI.

ambition. Velázquez was "very angry," yet he personally did not take action against Cortés. Instead, he sent Pánfilo de Narváez against him, a minion against a conqueror. López de Gómara colors the encounter as one favorable to Cortés due to this simplified emotional reaction.

The prevalence of essentialist descriptions in these considered works leads me to assert their ascendance as key components of classical grand narratives. Intentionally or not, López de Gómara maintains a classical authority with his rhetorical interpretations of emotional responses. The function of emotional essentialism in *Historia de la conquista* broadly mimics its employment in the works of Herodotus, Arrian, and Curtius Rufus, among others. Essentialism demonstrates the importance of rhetoric to the narrative construction of, not only heroes and great deeds, but also history and stories.

Ethnography

Like Herodotus, López de Gómara foregrounds curiosities about various peoples and their practices in his writing. The chaplain's ancient Halicarnassian predecessor laid the groundwork for ethnographic studies in subsequent generations, a tradition that the Spanish humanist navigates freely. The incorporation of Herodotean ethnographic interest in the works of Arrian and Curtius Rufus further establishes ethnography as an integral component of classical grand narratives. Their ethnographic discourse reflects a desire to build knowledge of known and unknown worlds and their inhabitants.

As founder of this resilient tradition, Herodotus used ethnography to expand world knowledge and to provide settings for his stories. He knew that historical (or mythical) events

did not happen, and people did not act, in geographic and cultural vacuums. Homelands and their rituals reveal much about individuals and their motivations. Herodotus's interactions with environmental determinism theory from the Hippocratic text, "Airs, Waters, Places" expose his careful attention to the relationships between the body, space, and culture.[87] When discussing Spartan courage, for example, he elevates these factors to causal forces in history.[88]

Coupled with his interest in ethnography is a careful attention to specific kinds of details, particularly the exotic or curious. The account of the diverse forces in Xerxes's massive, international army and navy prominently stands out. The episode is too lengthy to include in its entirety, but the following excerpt adequately indicates the trend and demonstrates an aspect of the ethnographic and detail-oriented components of Herodotus's work. He writes,

> The Assyrians on the expedition wore helmets of bronze on their heads and also plaited helmets made by a certain barbarian method that is not easy to describe. They carried shields, spears, and daggers similar to those of the Egyptians, and in addition, wooden clubs with knobs of iron; they wore breastplates of linen. These people are called Syrians by the Hellenes, but Assyrians by the barbarians. Among them were the Chaldeans. Leading them was Otaspes son of Artachaias.[89]

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[87] Thomas, Rosalind, introduction to Rosalind Thomas's introduction to *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories* by Herodotus, Robert B. Strassler, and Andrea L. Purvis. (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), xxi. Thomas writes, "So when Herodotus stresses the importance of *nomos* [custom] here, as he does also for an explanation of Spartan superior courage in a conversation between King Xerxes and the former Spartan king Demaratos (7.101-104), he is engaging in the same debate [between *physis* and *nomos*], and coming down on the side of *nomos* as the determining factor."

[88] Ibid.

[89] Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.63.

Herodotus's descriptions encourage creative thought; their novelty entertains. The portraiture-like quality of his descriptions of soldiers is the strongest ethnographic element of his account of Xerxes's army, and he sustains it throughout. Herodotus maintains balance in his description between providing too much and too little. He piques the curiosity, in this case, by placing himself as middleman between "the barbarians" and "the Hellenes." He cannot describe the Assyrian method of helmet crafting, but he knows that the difference between a Syrian and an Assyrian is one of perspective. With this detail, he motions towards broader conflict between east (Persia) and west (Hellas).

However, this masterfully crafted passage cannot be completely credited to Herodotus. He owes a structural debt to Homer's description in *The Iliad* of the Hellenic armies at Troy. For example,

> They who held Arkadia under the sheer peak, Kyllene,
> beside the tomb of Aipytos, where men fight at close quarters,
> they who dwelt in Orchomenos of the flocks, and Phenos,
> about Rhipe and Stratia and windy Ensipe;
> they who held Tegea and Mantineia the lovely,
> they who held Stymphalos, and dwelt about Parrhasia,
> their leader was Angkaios' son, powerful Agapenor.
> Sixty was the number of their ships, and in each ship
> went many men of Arkadia, well skilled in battle.[90]

[90] Richmond Lattimore, trans., *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 2.603-611.

Though Homer's passage is poetry, he consonantly pairs ethnographic detail with location. One can easily see the inspiration for Herodotus's account of Xerxes's army in Homer's work. Both passages inspire creativity and curiosity, two necessary components of pleasurable history.

Arrian and Curtius Rufus similarly imitate Herodotean and Homeric structure when describing Darius's army marshalled against Alexander. For both writers, the peoples and places that Alexander encountered were important to the completion of historical work on his conquests. In Arrian, the reminiscent passage appears as much shorter than in Herodotus or Homer, but the basic components remain. Unit composition becomes novelty, and imagining the foot soldiers of various peoples, plodding forward in the ranks, becomes a plausible exercise.

Ethnography also figures prominently in Curtius Rufus's account. His interest in peoples pairs building knowledge of the world with the progression of Alexander's advance. For example when Alexander encountered the Sibis, Curtius Rufus relates, "[The Sibis'] clothes were animal skins, their weapons clubs; and although Greek customs had died out among them, they still exhibited many traces of their ancestry."[91] Curtius Rufus's Darius also counts his grand army "using Xerxes' method," which the Roman historian likely lifted from Herodotus.[92] As the Persian king reviewed his forces, Curtius Rufus takes the opportunity to expand upon the army's composition. Curtius Rufus quantifies to create a sensation of vastness. Like in Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandrou*, his analogous passage is not as long as that of

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[91] Curtius Rufus, *Alexander*, 9.4.3.

[92] Ibid, 3.2.2. The full quote is as follows: "[Darius] encircled with a ditch an area that could hold 10,000 armed soldiers and began a numerical review using Xerxes' method." This passage suggests that Curtius Rufus expected his readers to be familiar with Herodotus and the stories he documents.

Herodotus or Homer, but he includes the same core components. He selectively provides specific details that reveal the internationalism of Darius's army. The ethnographic discourse of Arrian's and Curtius Rufus's histories of Alexander depend upon the Herodotean model.

Early Spanish encounters in the late 15th and early-to-mid 16th century with indigenous American peoples renewed scholarly interest in ethnography. The multitudes of traditions, religious practices, and cultural rituals sparked interest in epistemological approaches to understanding what Spanish travelers and conquistadors saw and experienced. In the midst of fragmentary cultural comprehension, Herodotus emerged as an authority through which scholars tried to understand these new encounters. Steeped in the classical traditions, López de Gómara emulates some of the characteristic Herodotean motifs. The chaplain's ethnographic interest mimics Herodotus's push to inspire creative thought and his careful attention to detail. When Cortés encountered Cozumel very early in the expedition, López de Gómara writes,

> The people are dark and go about naked or, if they wear any clothing, which is of cotton, it is only to cover their private parts. They wear their hair long, neatly braided over their foreheads. They are expert fishermen, and fish is their principal diet, although they also have a great deal of maize for bread, and many and good fruits. They also have much honey, although it is somewhat bitter, and their apiaries contain a thousand and more small hives. They were not acquainted with the use of candles for lighting, and were pleased and astonished when our men taught them. They raise dogs with foxlike faces, which they castrate and fatten for eating. The dogs do not bark…The natives slash themselves; they are idolaters; they sacrifice children, although few, and

> often sacrifice dogs instead. For the rest, the people are poor but kindly, and very devout in that false religion of theirs.[93]

The passage begins ordinarily enough, with a basic description of the indigenous people, what they did, and what they ate. However, López de Gómara soon moves into a report of curiosities with a climactic end that points to religious conflict.[94] He hones in on details that would have been new and interesting to his European audiences. His ethnographies are closely tied to his desire to write an eloquent, pleasurable history. Like Herodotus, he cannot describe a locale without considering the people who lived there. The structure of his ethnography, and the implicit purpose of it, supplements his overall narrative arc in a fundamentally Herodotean way.

López de Gómara's focus on people and custom crescendos twice in *Historia de la conquista*. The first is during the expedition's initial visit to Tenochtitlán. The chaplain exclusively devotes chapters 68 through 82 to a study of the people, customs, and places of that grand city. From the foot-jugglers to the concubines, hunting birds to the gardens, these chapters are filled with oddities and curious details about this land that seemed so foreign to the Spanish conquistadors.

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[93] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 34. "Son morenos, andan desnudos. Si algún vestido traen, es de algodón y para tapar lo vergonzoso. Crían largo cabello, y trézanselo muy bien sobre la frente. Son grandes pescadores; y así el pescado es casi su principal manjar; bien que tienen mucho maíz para pan, y muchas frutas y buenas. Tienen también mucha miel, aunque agra un poco, y colmenares de a mil y más colmenas, algo chicas. No sabían alumbrarse con la cera. Mostráronselo los nuestros, y quedaron espantados y contentos. Hay unos perros, rostro de raposo, que castran y ceban para comer; no ladran…Retájanse, son idólatras, sacrifican niños, mas pocos, y muchas veces perros en su lugar. En lo demás, gente pobre es, pero caritativa y muy religiosa en aquella su falsa creencia." López de Gómara, *Historia*, XIV.

[94] While López de Gómara's allusion to religious conflict is an important diversion from the Herodotean model, both the chaplain and Herodotus comparably use ethnography to gesture at broader conflicts. Furthermore, this ethnographic passage exemplifies López de Gómara's usage of classical structures to advance the rhetoric of Spanish Catholic superiority over paganism and barbarous practices.

The second section occupies chapters 200 through 248. They deal more broadly with indigenous society, custom, and religion than his previous, focused study of Tenochtitlán. Simpson, who ably translated *Historia de la conquista* into English in 1964, omitted these chapters because their inclusion allegedly "not only interrupts the narrative but which is redundant and has long since been rendered obsolete by the researches of modern scholars, such as Spinden, Thompson, and Vaillant, whose works are readily available in popular editions."[95] I disagree with Simpson's censorship. Ethnography plays an essential role in the construction of classical grand narrative. That the chaplain's work has supposedly been "rendered obsolete" is irrelevant. It indicates his interpretation of the peoples and places of America. López de Gómara wrote those pages. Even if they are as misguided as Simpson suggests or if "the author repeats almost verbatim Motolinía´s account,"[96] the blanket omission of ninety pages, forty-nine chapters, of López de Gómara's work is a silencing of history and contradicts Simpson's sensitivity to this central classical structure at play in *Historia de la conquista*.

The intensity of López de Gómara's consistent ethnographic accounts gives the work what Simpson accurately terms "the breathing spaces [of a prose epic], in which he describes the landscape, the people, their customs, dress, and religion, and draws thumbnail sketches of their leaders."[97] The chaplain's descriptions slow the pacing and cut away the temporal gap between his readers and the years of Cortés's expedition, as well as the geographic gap

[95] Simpson's translation into English was the first in roughly four hundred years, since Thomas Nichol's *The pleasant historie of the conquest of the Weast India, now called New Spayne, atchieued by the worthy prince Hernando Cortés Marques of the Valley of Huaxacac, most delectable to read: translated out of the Spanishe tongue, by T.N. anno. 1578*. (Lewis, *Humanistic*, 400).
Simpson, introduction, xxv.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid, xxiii.

between his contemporaries and the space of the encounters, goals which were also central to Herodotus's portrayal of "barbarians" at the edges of the map.

Nothing, perhaps, reveals López de Gómara's close attention to detail better than his account of Juan de Grijalba's trade. While he presents his description in list form, he maintains a number of curious details that link him to the Herodotean tradition. He records (abbreviated and abridged),

> 1 dog's head covered with little stones
>
> 1 head of some other animal, of stone and gold, with a crown and crest and two pendants, all of gold, but thinner…
>
> Many delicate perfumes…
>
> Besides all this, [Grijalba] brought back a woman they gave him, and several men that he captured, for one of them he was offered a ransom of his weight in gold, which Grijalba refused.
>
> He also brought back word of the Amazons who lived on certain islands, and many believed it, for they were astonished at the things they had got at absurd prices, all of them together costing only six shirts of coarse linen.[98]

[98] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 17. "Una cabeza de perro, cubierta de hoja de oro./Otra cabeza de animal de piedra, guarnecida de oro, con su corona y cresta y dos pinjantes, que todo era de oro, más delgado…/Muchos pebetas de suave olor…/Trujo sin esto una mujer que le dieron, y ciertas hombres que tomó; por uno de los cuales le daban lo que perase de oro, y no lo quiso dar./Trujo también nuevas que había amazonas en ciertas islas, y muchos lo creyeron, espantados de las cosas que traía rescatadas por vilísimo precio; que no le habían costado todas ellas sino seis camisas de lienzo basto." López de Gómara, *Historia*, VI. Interestingly, the chaplain mentions Amazons in the list—societies of isolated, warlike women—who also appear in *The Histories* and the Alexander narratives.

This passage is as close as López de Gómara gets to the famous army listings of Homer, Herodotus, Arrian, and Curtius Rufus. While not an exact comparison, they are all variations on the same theme.

López de Gómara's descriptions tend to unfold in a dynamic narrative form rather than in long, synchronic passages. However, his ethnographic accounts perpetuate the Herodotean tradition. They raise questions and evoke imaginative thought. He uses these techniques to construct a world that would have appeared exotic, new, and novel to his European readers. He links Cortés's glorious conquest to building knowledge of the world. In this way, conquest is not just about killing, subjugation, and conversion, but it also becomes an expansion of thought and stretches the arbitrary borders of human possibility.

The Supernatural

Prophesies, ration-eating sharks, telekinetic weapons, collapsing horses, and magical cannons are just a few of the supernatural events that stand out so conspicuously in all these accounts, Herodotus's *Histories* to the Alexander narratives to *Historia de la conquista*. Supernatural events materialize differently in each of these works, but they all create extraordinary realities, apart from mundane, everyday lives.

The significance of *Historia de la conquista*'s marvelous reality derives from the Herodotean tradition. For Herodotus, the supernatural presents itself through oracular readings and improbable (or nearly impossible) coincidence. The death of Cambyses, discussed above, exemplifies a combination of both the realization of an oracular prophecy and a highly unlikely happenstance (the location of death). Herodotus speckles his *Histories*

with reality-defying events. Giant, gold-hoarding ants emerge as among the most historically notorious of these inclusions. He writes,

> Now in this [uninhabitable] desert of sand live huge ants, smaller than dogs but larger than foxes. Some of the ants were captured and brought to the Persian court. The ants in India make their dwellings underground by mounding up the sand, just as ants do in Hellas, and they also look very much the same. But here the mounded sand contains gold, so the Indians set out to collect this sand.[99]

Many critics likely have this passage (among others) in mind when arguing that Herodotus frequently presents folk tales as reality. However, the bizarre has a very real effect on the work. Not only does Herodotus exoticize the obscure corners of the map, but he also elevates his work from the droll of everyday life to the fantastic. His reports of the supernatural become reality and the trusting reader must accept his claims. This passage and similar others seem to transcend the logical repulsion one expects to feel when reading historical untruths.

On this point, Arrian has more in common with Herodotus than Curtius Rufus does and will provide a more fitting point of comparison. Even so, it is important to note that while Curtius Rufus expresses less overt acknowledgement of the supernatural in his authorial voice, the world in which his Alexander operates is still one where supernatural, oracular, and godlike forces exist in tandem with the desires and wills of humanity.

While realism is important to Arrian, there remain moments when the lines of reality blur. Arrian reports,

[99] Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.102.2-3.102.3.

> Word now came that the statue in Pieria of Orpheus son of Oiagros the Thracian was sweating continuously. The prophets interpreted this in a variety of ways, but Aristandros, a Telmessian seer, urged Alexander to take heart, as it had been made clear that the epic and lyric poets and all who concerned themselves with song would have plenty of work composing verses celebrating Alexander and his exploits.[100]

Through Aristandros's interpretation, Arrian illuminates the role of the supernatural in his history. Importantly, he does not exclude the possibility of the existence of a sweating statue. His use of wonders works in tandem with the ideals of moralizing and pleasurable history. More significantly, supernatural occurrences interpret the world and its events, and records of these happenings are themselves interpretations. The bizarre and unexplainable provide insight into the conceptualizations of ancient reality. Similarly, Arrian writes,

> When [Alexander] had made camp at the River Oxus, a spring of water emerged not far from his tent, and near it a spring of oil. When the marvel was reported to Ptolemy son of Lagos, the Bodyguard, he informed Alexander, who performed all the sacrifices the seers prescribed in response to the omen. Aristandros said that the spring of oil was a sign of future hardships, but that it also foreshadowed victory after the hardships.[101]

The subdued tone relates the "marvel" in a matter of fact manner, encouraging acceptance of its profound impact on Alexander's world. Indeed, the Macedonian conqueror "performed all the sacrifices the seers prescribed." While neither Arrian nor Curtius Rufus come close to

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[100] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1.11.2
[101] Ibid, 4.15.7-4.15.8.

depicting an encounter between Alexander and gold-hoarding ants, they do not exclude the role of the supernatural in the world their histories describe.[102]

Historia de la conquista contains many strange happenings, some on the order of Herodotus, others subdued, but all challenging the borders of reality. The significance of the supernatural in the "New World" has analogous importance to its role in exoticizing the edges of the western classical-era map. The fantastic elevates the world of Cortés's conquests from the standard account of a European war to an appropriately strange, risky, and altogether wonderful endeavor, challenging the imaginations of European readers.

In addition to the "tiburón" and a number of other oddities, one account stands out above the rest. Cortés had just neutralized Pánfilo de Narváez, a minion of Velázquez, and returned to Tenochtitlán. Upon arriving, he discovered from Pedro de Alvarado that the Mexicans had risen against them and that a number of strange occurrences accompanied the rebellion. At length, López de Gómara writes,

> The Spaniards also told of many miracles: that when their water supply failed they dug a hole knee-deep in the courtyard, or a little deeper, and fresh water flowed from it, although the ground was saline; that the Indians had made many attempts to remove the image of our Most Glorious Lady from the alter where Cortés had placed it, but that, whenever they touched it their hands stuck to it and could not be freed for a considerable time, and that when they did get their hands loose the mark remained

[102] I do not include a discussion of the Romance tradition, the most fantastic of all Alexander narratives, because of the lack of prominence these stories had during the 16th century in Spain. The Romance tradition that Spanish scholars inherited had derived from Curtius Rufus (see Chapter One), though even this work, *Libro de Alexandre*, had fallen out of the spotlight during the Renaissance humanism movement due to the revitalization of Arrian, Curtius Rufus, Plutarch, etc. The likelihood that López de Gómara imitates the Romance tradition (or even read *The Greek Alexander Romance*) is smaller than for the other sources.

upon them, so they let the image stand; that on one of the days of the fiercest fighting they loaded their biggest gun, and when they touched a match to it to frighten off the enemy, it would not fire, seeing which, the Indians attacked boldly, yelling horribly, shooting so many darts, arrows, lances, and stones that the house and [*sic*] street were covered with them, while the Indians yelled: "Now we shall redeem our king, free our house, and have our revenge!" But in the thickest of the fight the gun went off with a frightful roar, although it had not been newly primed or fired, and, since it was loaded with grape as well as ball, it spat fiercely, killed many, and frightened all. [It was believed] that St. Mary and St. James (he on a white horse) fought for the Spaniards, and the Indians said that the horse wounded and killed as many with its teeth and hooves as the knight [St. James] killed with his sword; that the woman on the altar cast dust in their faces and blinded them, and they, believing themselves blind and not being able to fight, went home, and there were healed; so when they again attacked they said: "If we had not been frightened by the woman and the man on the white horse, your house by this time would be destroyed and you yourselves would be cooked, but not eaten, for you are not fit to eat; we tried your flesh the other day and it tasted bitter, so we shall throw you to the eagles, lions, tigers, and snakes, which will eat you for us…"[103]

[103] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 209-210. "Contaron asimismo muchos milagros: que como les faltase agua de beber, cavaron en el patio de su aposento hasta la rodilla o poco más, y salió agua dulce, siendo el suel salobral; que muchas veces se ensayaron los indios a quitar la imagen de Nuestra Señora gloriosísima del altar donde Cortés la puso, y en tocándola se les pegaba la mano a lo que tocaban, y en buen rato no se les despegaba, y despegada, quedaba con señal; y así, la dejaron estar; que cargaron un día de recio combate con el mayor tiro, y cuando le pusieron fuego para arredrar los enemigos no quiso salir; los cuales, como vieron esto, arremetieron muy denodadamente con terrible grita, con palos, flechas, lanzas, y piedras, que cubrían la casa y calle, diciendo: ahora redimiremos nuestro rey, libertaremos nuestras casas y nos vengaremos; mas al mejor hervor del combate

These stories are remarkable for their strangeness. Importantly, in Cortés's absence, a series of miracles were required to keep the Spaniards—even under Alvarado—from being annihilated. They also allude to forces of greater importance at stake, the religious war between Mexican idolatrous paganism and Spanish Catholicism. The absurdities stack from the beginning, perhaps culminating with St. James's horse mauling the Mexican warriors with its teeth. The anonymous Mexicans retorted with a threat to throw the Spanish soldiers' bodies to the animals, a grave insult since they claimed that their meat did not taste good enough for humans to eat. With consumption of human flesh tied to religious practice, the Mexican rhetorical jab has broader religious connotations. However, the ultimate outcome of the war (aided by the terrible wrath of St. James and his man-eating horse) settled López de Gómara's claim of Christian religious authority over Mexican practices.

Like in Herodotus, Arrian, and Curtius Rufus, López de Gómara elevates the stakes of his narrative by including the supernatural. These were not mundane occurrences. López de Gómara's incorporation of the unexplainable truly creates a "New World" in his *Historia de la conquista*. The Spanish fought against an unknown other, and every force available (including the religious and cultural) engaged in combat against the common foreign foe.[104] One may persuasively link these inclusions to the Christian miraculous tradition or the romances of the

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soltó el tiro, sin lo cebar más ni ponerle de nuevo fuego, con espantoso sonido; y como era grande y tenía perdigones con la pelota, escupió muy recio, mató muchos asombrólos a todos; y así, atónitos se retiraron; que andaban peleando por los españoles Santa María y Santiago en un cabello blanco, y decían los indios que el cabello hería y mataba tantos con la boca y con los pies y manos como el caballero con la espada, y que la mujer del altar les echaba polvo por las caras y los cegaba; y así, no viendo a pelear, se iban a sus casas pensando estar ciegos, y allá se hallaron buenos; y cuando volvían a combatir la casa, decían: "Si no tuviésemos miedo a una mujer y al del caballo blanco, ya estaría derribada vuestra casa, vosotros cocidos, aunque no comidos, porque no sois buenos de comer; que el otro día lo probamos y amargáis; mas echaros hemos a las águilas, leones, tigres, y culebras, que os traguen por nosotros…" López de Gómara, *Historia*, CV.

[104] See Lewis, *Humanistic*, 152-156 for his interpretation on Cortés's spiritual fight against the devil in *Historia de la conquista*. Lewis also notes that López de Gómara did not endorse the popular belief in mythical kingdoms. His insightful analysis better contextualizes the present interpretation.

Reconquista, and that investigation would rest on solid ground. However, these supernatural events simultaneously invoke classical storytelling structures, which are elements so crucial to the chaplain's approach to creating historical narrative. They are methods through which López de Gómara and writers of antiquity attempted to explain the unexplainable and envision the unimaginable.[105]

These identified structures of classical grand narrative are merely a few among many in *Historia de la conquista*. Furthermore, these four mechanisms do not operate as independently as the structure of this chapter may suggest. Reading of St. James's man-eating horse entertains—in its own way—and operates in harmony with López de Gómara's commitment to writing pleasurable history, as does his usage of emotional essentialism and ethnography. Altogether, López de Gómara constructs a grand narrative in the classical style that entertains, informs, and inspires creativity, but most of all, it lays the groundwork for the central piece of classical grand narratives, the hero.

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[105] This argument implies the fundamental nearness of the motifs and tropes of the classical, Reconquista, and Christian traditions, and another project will be required to fully explore the interactions of these historical interpretations in *Historia de la conquista*.

Chapter 3: Evolution of the Classical Hero and the Alexander-Cortés Parallel

Cortés as classical hero completes López de Gómara's grand narrative of the conquest. The Spanish conqueror embodies many traits of similarly commemorated heroes of antiquity. He builds knowledge of the world, manipulates fear, triumphs in single combat, colonizes, and leads few to defeat many.

Studying the creation of classical heroic archetypes inevitably leads to Alexander, whose legacy simultaneously synthesized older heroic models and established new standards of human capability. After recognizing Alexander as Cortés's heroic predecessor, I analyze significant passages in *Historia de la conquista* where Cortés displays the identified traits. In many ways, López de Gómara's Cortés is a New World Alexander, a preemptive refutation of Montaigne's claim that the conquest would have been a morally sound endeavor in the hands of the Macedonian conqueror.[106] Through Cortés, López de Gómara makes clearest his closeness to the classical authorities that defined his educational experiences.

Furthermore, the Alexandrian Cortés reveals the inner workings of López de Gómara's interpretation of history. The rhetorical and storytelling structures of the classical world grant the chaplain linguistic and epistemological tools allowing for a perceived accurate

[106] See Montaigne quoted in Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 11. In *Historia de la conquista,* the conquest is an Alexandrian endeavor in its conduct and purported significance to the world, yet Montaigne laments, "Why did such a noble conquest not fall upon Alexander, or upon these ancient Greeks and Romans, and such a great mutation and alteration of so many empires and peoples upon hands that would have gently polished and cleared away what was savage, and reinforced and promoted good seeds that nature had produced there: not only combining the arts here with the culture of the lands and the adornments of towns, as had been necessary there, but also combining Greek and Roman virtues with the original ones of the country?" Montaigne, like López de Gómara, romanticizes the heroes of antiquity, but he evidently disagrees that Cortés was a classical hero, capable of extraordinary deeds comparable to the conquerors of antiquity. Montaigne only knew of the conduct of Alexander's conquests through literature, and he makes a mistake by not identifying the rhetorical similarities of these conquests, that sympathizers will always justify conquest and that the winners will always write the histories.

reconstruction of the past. These ancient literary strategies allow him to depict the unfamiliarity and altogether incomprehensibility of the so-called New World and the Spanish conquests in a recognizable way to both himself and his audiences. *Historia de la conquista* exposes as much about the 16th century Spanish intellectual world as it does about Cortés and the conquest.

Alexander as Archetype of the Classical Hero

Homer's Achilles and Odysseus were the first literary classical heroes. *The Iliad*'s Achilles established many of the classical heroic motifs that surfaced again in histories of Alexander. Achilles's beautiful and climactic fight with the noble Hector romanticized single combat—a practical form of conflict resolution at the time. The following passage exemplifies Homer's stylization of single combat between Hector and Achilles:

> So [Hektor] spoke, and pulling out the sharp sword that was slung
> at the hollow of his side, huge and heavy, and gathering
> himself together, he made his swoop, like a high-flown eagle
> who launches himself out of the murk of the clouds on the flat land
> to catch away a tender lamb or a shivering hare; so
> Hektor made his swoop, swinging his sharp sword, and Achilleus
> Charged, the heart within him loaded with savage fury.
> In front of his chest the beautiful elaborate great shield
> covered him, and with the glittering helm with four horns
> he nodded; the lovely golden fringes were shaken about it

> which Hephaistos had driven close along the horn of the helmet…
>
> [Achilleus] was eyeing Hektor's splendid body, to see where it might best
>
> give way, but all the rest of the skin was held in the armour,
>
> brazen and splendid, he stripped when he cut down the strength of
>
> Patroklos;
>
> yet showed where the collar-bones hold the neck from the shoulders,
>
> the throat, where death of the soul comes most swiftly; in this place
>
> brilliant Achilleus drove the spear as he came on in fury,
>
> and clean through the soft part of the neck the spearpoint was driven.
>
> Yet the ash spear heavy with bronze did not sever the windpipe,
>
> so that Hektor could still make exchange of words spoken.[107]

The masterful pacing of the scene, achieved through descriptions of objects, like Hector's sword and armor, elevate the wonder, suspense, and dramatic tension of the fight. Significantly, in the aftermath of the duel, Achilles's spoiling and mutilation of Hector's body is dishonorable and shows a lack of respect for his worthy opponent, an act that caused the intervention by the gods and affected conventions for treating honorable foes.

While this kind of high rhetoric does not appear in the Alexander narratives (with the exception of the Romance tradition), there is a similar importance given to Alexander's individual actions during combat. In Arrian's account of the Granicus, he describes "a fierce battle [that] was joined around Alexander…"[108] He continues,

[107] Lattimore, *Iliad*, 22.306-329.
[108] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1.15.3.

> At a certain point in the fighting Alexander's spear was shattered. He asked Aretis, a royal groom, for another, but as Aretis' spear had also been shattered—he was fighting valiantly with the remaining half of his broken spear—he showed it to Alexander and urged him to ask someone else. Demaratos the Corinthian, one of the Companions, gave Alexander his spear. Taking it up and catching sight of Mithridates, Darius' son-in-law, riding far out in front and leading a wedge formation of cavalry, Alexander also rode out ahead of the line, struck Mithridates in the face with his spear, and hurled him down. At the moment, Rhoisakes rode at Alexander and struck him in the head with a scimitar; Alexander's helmet, though partially broken, checked the blow. Alexander hurled this man to the ground too, striking with his spear through the man's breastplate and into his chest. Spithridates then raised his scimitar against Alexander from behind, but before he could use it Kleitos son of Dropides struck him on the shoulder, cutting his arm off with the scimitar still in its grasp.[109]

This scene does not portray Alexander in combat as romantically as Achilles's duel with Hector, but the careful descriptions add a layer of dramatic tension. Indeed, J.F.C. Fuller asserts that "the Homeric struggle around Alexander was [the battle's] central incident."[110] The breaking of the spear and the search for a new one conspicuously resembles Hector's lament that Deiphobus could not bring him a new spear. Regardless, individual combat reveals a commander's true exploits, as if a great leader could not be so without proving his worth on the battlefield. López de Gómara carefully adheres to this heroic precedent.

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[109] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1.15.6-1.15.8.
[110] Fuller, J.F.C. *The Generalship Of Alexander The Great*. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Da Capo Press, 1960), 153.

Alexander also used Achilles's legacy to legitimize himself as a heroic figure. Arrian writes, "Some say that Alexander placed a wreath on the tomb of Achilles and Hephaistion is said to have placed one on Patroklos' tomb."[111] James Romm accurately notes the symbolism that both demonstrates the closeness of Alexander and Hephaistion and shows that "each paid obeisance to their heroic models."[112] That Alexander had proclaimed himself a descendant of Achilles, a warrior of legend, added further significance to the moment. According to Arrian, Herakles and Perseus were also both said to be members of Alexander's family tree. These legacies were mirrors against which Alexander compared his own accomplishments and means through which Alexander traced his lineage to Zeus. The connection to Zeus later allowed Alexander to identify himself as a god and to justify his megalomaniac approach to securing himself as Great King of the Persian Empire. In short, Alexander's alleged genealogy linked him to a heroic tradition reaching back to the gods and further established the Macedonian conqueror as an embodiment of previous heroes, a perpetuator of a Hellenic legacy.[113]

The passage quoted above of Alexander at the Granicus reveals another crucial component of the classical heroic model, survival against the odds. From the lung-piercing Mallian arrow, to the breast-battering catapult shot during the siege of Gaza, to an arrow through the leg at the Tanais river—among many other injuries—Alexander experienced his fair share of physical grievances. These wounds inspire awe. Alexander, whose body received so much punishment, continued to lead his men into battle. His seemingly uncanny knack for

[111] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1.12.1.
[112] Romm, *Anabasis*, 24n1.12.1d.
[113] See Momigliano, *Biography*, 24-25, for his argument connecting Hecateus and early genealogical interests to the aristocratic transition from epic poetic to prose biography.

survival recalls Odysseus's journey and his survival against storms, sirens, witches, the Cyclopes, and more. The classical hero is a survivor against the odds, a figure who resists death until his last breath.

Even in defeat, Leonidas's stand at Thermopylae canonizes the convention of glory in few versus many that Alexander's battles (and Cortés's) later echoed. Building up to the battle, Herodotus writes, "the greatest men encountered the greatest adversities."[114] Leonidas, like Alexander, "traced his lineage to Herakles," signifying a destiny of glory.[115] According to Herodotus, the small Greek army, led by Leonidas and his 300 Spartans, fought off relentless Persian attacks for days. Ultimately, treachery undid the Hellenes. While many fled at the news of advancing Persians from two sides, Leonidas "felt that for himself and the Spartans with him, it would not be decent to leave the post that they had originally come to guard."[116] Herodotus's account of the great Persian leaders and warriors who died in this final battle testifies to the Spartans' and Thespians' bravery, men who purportedly fought with "no regard for their own lives" and until all of their weapons had broken.[117] Their final end at Thermopylae became a glorious last stand, not a massacre of doomed men. Significantly, Herodotus consistently focuses on how these heroes were later commemorated, through inscriptions at the site and a stone lion honoring Leonidas. To Herodotus (as to Homer), heroes not remembered are not heroes at all.

[114] Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.203.2.
[115] Ibid, 7.208.1.
[116] Ibid, 7.220.1.
[117] Ibid, 7.223.4.

Alexander fought climactic battles against the Persian King Darius, like Leonidas, vastly outnumbered.[118] At Issus, Arrian attributes many of the battles' successes to Alexander and his leadership. He relates,

> Alexander rode all along the line, exhorting his troops to be brave…Alexander and those with him, who were stationed on the right, were the first to charge on the double to the river…Alexander dashed zealously into the river…Alexander pursued [Darius] with all his strength while it was still light…[119]

While Arrian mentions the heroic death of Seleucus's son, Ptolemy, and the exploits of various units, his descriptions centering Alexander in the battle's decisive moments credit the Macedonian conqueror (more so than his men) for his first victory over Darius's army. Herodotus's account of Thermopylae and Arrian's of Issus suggest that against unfavorable odds, only a great leader can be victorious. They both recount the renowned Persian generals and warriors who died in combat and describe acts of monumentalizing in the wake of heroism and destruction.[120] The geography of the Battle of Issus also conspicuously recalls Leonidas's fight against Xerxes's army. Alexander engaged Darius in a narrow pass where the Persian king had to form up his men in depth, reducing the usefulness of his superior numbers.

Arrian, in building up to Issus, connects the Macedonian conqueror to another famous warrior, Xenophon. He writes,

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[118] The number of soldiers in Darius's army at Issus and Gaugamela has been contested in the historiography due to estimates in the sources totaling between 250,000 and 600,000 men at Issus and a million plus at Gaugamela. Plutarch even claims that, at Issus, Alexander's "men killed one hundred and ten thousand of the enemy…" (Plutarch, *Alexander*, 20). The numbers discrepancy, then, may be honest attempts at accurate portrayals, but they function more convincingly as rhetorical tools.

[119] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 2.10.2-3, 2.10.5, 2.11.6.

[120] Arrian depicts Alexander's funeral ceremony for the fallen and is careful to maintain that Alexander knew by name all of his distinguished soldiers. Arrian, *Anabasis*, 2.12.1-2.

> Alexander is also said to have recalled Xenophon and the Ten Thousand, whose force, he declared, was not to be compared with his own either in numbers or in any other quality, having had no cavalry…nor archers or slingers… Yet those Ten Thousand had routed the King [Artaxerxes II] with all his forces at Babylon itself and had defeated all the tribes they encountered on their march to the Black Sea.[121]

Alexander purportedly took inspiration from Xenophon, and asserting the superiority of his army over the Ten Thousand, reasoned that he must be victorious in the coming battle. Arrian, perhaps seeing resemblances between Alexander and Xenophon, recalls the title of Xenophon's work, *Anabasis*, by titling his account, *Anabasis Alexandrou*.[122] The comparison was not lost on Arrian, who knew well the works of Xenophon and similarly took inspiration from his fellow warrior-writer.[123]

Unlike Xenophon, Arrian notes that previous writing on Alexander had never properly memorialized the Macedonian king. Arrian writes, "…here there was a void, since his exploits were not published to mankind in a worthy manner either in prose or in verse."[124] For Arrian, like Herodotus, the hero is not a hero unless he is remembered as one.

Xenophon's journey through the Persian Empire to Cunaxa and up to the Black Sea before returning to the Western world via the Hellespont, resembles Odysseus's long struggle to return home. Alexander's own conquests follow in the same tradition, a long foray to the

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[121] Ibid, 2.7.8-9.
[122] Romm, *Anabasis*, 69n2.7.8a.
[123] Cartledge, Paul, introduction to *The Landmark Arrian: the campaigns of Alexander ; Anabasis Alexandrou : a new translation* by Arrian, Pamela Mensch, and James S. Romm. (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 1.1-3
[124] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1.12.2.

blurry edges of the map and a return to the known world.[125] The classical hero built a world of knowledge as he conquered, as reflected in the strong ethnographic and geographic components of these histories.

Discovery defined the heroic journey, and Alexander had conquered further than any hero. The early Alexander literary tradition crafted the hero as embodying heroic traits, traceable to prior figures, but it also provided him with uniqueness. He differs from figures of earlier tradition and history in that he was an agent of cultural exchange between the Macedonians and Greeks and the many peoples they encountered, not least of which were the Persians. While Alexander, his armies, and his entourage brought aspects of Hellenic civilization to new horizons, the peoples he encountered influenced him as well. Alexander's megalomania has been the best-documented effect of this exchange. He attempted to institute the Persian tradition of *proskynesis* (ritualized obeisance, a method of paying homage to kings) at his court, a decision that alienated him from his veteran Macedonians. To them, one should only offer *proskynesis* to a god. The subsequent tensions led to the deaths of Philotas, Parmenion, and Kallisthenes, among others. Kallisthenes asserted that freedom, not cultish despotism, triumphed in the face of adversity.[126] He expressed an individualist view that Díaz would later echo in his criticism of *Historia de la conquista*.

Every classical hero since Achilles and Odysseus embodies traits from these two pillars of the tradition. However, each additional hero complicates the paradigm with special features of his experience and era that challenge the homogeneity of the heroic figure. The

[125] Alexander either fell ill or was poisoned, and thus his journey west ended in Babylon. He never returned to Macedonia; it is unclear whether or not he desired to go back.
[126] Romm, *Anabasis*, 169n4.11.9a.

sources on Alexander portray him as possessing the heroic traits of the most prominent figures that came before, Achilles, Odysseus, Leonidas, Xenophon, but nobody had gone as far as Alexander, who facilitated the blending of culture, built knowledge of the known world, and reflected greatness with his every footstep.

This profound legacy, unlike any other, attracted López de Gómara to commemorations of the Macedonian conqueror. The histories of Alexander provided models that the chaplain found aptly suited his purposes. López de Gómara's careful heroization of his Cortés reveals an adherence to archetypical classical heroic motifs and a 16th century envisioning of an Alexandrian figure encountering a strange, New World.

The Spaniards and Their Enemies

López de Gómara's Cortés is a timeless figure. The intended or unintended allusions to Alexander broaden the symbolic importance of the Spanish conqueror and his expedition. They establish him as the architect of his many victories; they immortalize his legacy. The chaplain's Cortés is also a nationalist hero who places Spanish history on the world stage. These claims are only possible through invocations of classical authority in *Historia de la conquista*. The Alexander-Cortés parallel romanticizes the conquest and adds retrospective significance to Cortés's cunning and actions on the battlefield. Through hyperbole, understatement, and irony, the chaplain creates a New World conqueror, a champion of Spain, who brings to the field a persona who is the epitome of military prowess.

From the start, López de Gómara establishes Cortés's force as numerically inferior, which makes later victories all the more stunning. The chaplain, as historian, is master over

the history he composes; he places retrospective emphasis on the unstable beginnings of the expedition. He records that Cortés began with roughly 600 men and only 16 horses and mares, a paltry force when compared with the powerful armies of Culhúa. López de Gómara writes, "Never did a captain with such a small army do such deeds, win so many victories, and win so vast an empire. Nor did he even have money with which to pay his men; rather, he was heavily in debt."[127] The chaplain not only highlights the contradiction between Cortés's minor force versus what he accomplished with it, but he also recalls the beginning of Alexander's invasion of the Persian Empire, initiated on similarly precarious terms.

Plutarch notes, "According to Aristobulus the money available for the army's supplies amounted to no more than seventy talents, Douris says that there were supplies for only thirty days, and Onesicritus that Alexander was already two hundred talents in debt."[128] Under these unstable conditions, Cortés's and Alexander's men had no choice but to proceed in lockstep with their commanders. These desperate circumstances forged a camaraderie structured around dependency on leadership and ambition; the conquerors manipulated what I term "positive fear."[129] Events later in these histories further exemplify this calculated control, such as Cortés's burning of the ships and Alexander's destruction of his bridge across the Euphrates. These leaders were ostensibly conscious that complete loyalty and devotion could only be secured through the total destruction of any escape route. Their commitments to defy the odds and to engage superior forces, then, not only encourage gleaming portraitures of these

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[127] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 23. "Nunca jamás hizo capitán con tan chico ejército tales hazañas, ni alcanzó tantas victorias ni sujetó tamaño imperio. Ningún dinero llevó para pagar aquella gente, antes fue muy adeudado." López de Gómara, *Historia*, VIII.

[128] Plutarch, *Alexander*, 15. The talent was an ancient unit of money or weight depending on the context.

[129] Cf. the Introduction for my definitions of "positive" and "negative" fears.

figures, but in the literature, they also function as examples of cunning leadership and calculated risks.

López de Gómara establishes many of the classical heroic motifs that he continually employs during the first battle at Potonchán. The encounter began with Cortés asking for supplies and passage through the country (in subsequent encounters, gold would figure into the initial proposal). The natives refused and told the Spaniards to leave, whereby Cortés refused in turn. López de Gómara writes that "Each side thought to deceive the other…"[130] Cortés turned out to be cleverer than his adversaries and advanced his tactical position during the night. The attack began the next day, and López de Gómara writes, "Toward sunset, when the Indians failed to appear, Cortés alerted the Spaniards who were in ambush, embraced his shield, and, calling upon God, St. James, and his advocate St. Peter, attacked the town with about two hundred men."[131] Like Homer and Arrian, the chaplain romanticizes the actions of the battlefield commander, particularly when he has Cortés embrace his shield. He does not insinuate that the conqueror was afraid in clasping his shield; rather, this description derives from the classical tradition of documenting the actions of heroes during combat. Furthermore, the invocation of God and the saints before battle symbolizes the realization of a religious destiny and alludes to Cortés's supposed motivations for waging war in the New World. From the outset of the first engagement, López de Gómara saturates Cortés in glory.

Crucial to the success of the motif is López de Gómara's portrayal of indigenous warriors as worthy enemies who "fought bravely" and "did not abandon the wall for the

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[130] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 39. "Cado uno de ellos pensó de engañar al otro…" López de Gómara, *Historia*, XVIII.

[131] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 41. "…como declinaba ya el sol y no venían, avisó Cortés a los españoles, que estaban puestos en celada, y él embrazó su rodela; y llamando a Dios y a Santiago y a San Pedro, su abogado, arremetió al lugar con los españoles que allí estaban, que serían obra de doscientos…" López de Gómara, *Historia*, XVIII.

defense, even though they died; rather, they bravely faced the blows of their enemies."[132] Cortés's adversaries needed to offer a challenge in order both to depict the conquest as a glorious endeavor and to allow Cortés to conquer death through battle. The encounter would not have had the same rhetorical importance if the native warriors either did not fight courageously or ran without offering much resistance.

For example, López de Gómara records the effect of using firearms on the Spaniards' native enemies, "The smoke, fire, and reports of the guns confused them and knocked them to the ground (such was their fright at hearing such a fearful noise, something they had never before experienced)…"[133] The account signifies little if these warriors were not worthy enemies. Since they were, Cortés's usage of gunpowder against the indigenous peoples becomes a strong negative fear, one that he frequently played in his favor. At Potonchán, López de Gómara also highlights the effect of Cortés's tactical deception, the wild success when he attacked two sides of the defenses at once. As expected, the flank Cortés personally led was the most successful.

During the engagement, López de Gómara refers to Cortés's men as "the three hundred." While subtle, this naming recalls Leonidas and his Spartan warriors, the champions of Greek freedom, fighting heroically against a domineering foreign empire. The allusion suits López de Gómara's purposes well.

At the battle's end, the chaplain notes only that nearly twenty Spaniards received wounds. He does not record any Spanish deaths, though the indigenous dead were

[132] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 41. "…peleaban reciamente…" and "…no desampararon la cerca ni la defensa sino los muertos; antes resistían gentilmente la fuerza y golpes de sus contrarios…" López de Gómara *Historia*, XVIII.
[133] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 41. "…el humo y fuego y trueno de los tiros los espantó, embarazó y derribó en el suelo, de temor en oír y ver cosa tan temerosa y por ellos jamás vista…" López de Gómara, *Historia*, XVIII.

“uncounted.” His characteristically conservative accounts of Spanish wounded and deaths could be plausible, but they deserve to be questioned like the analogous numbers problems in the Alexander histories. The first battle with a large numbers discrepancy is at the Granicus. Arrian records 25 Companion deaths, 60 non-Companion horsemen, and 30 infantry on the Macedonian side, and nearly a thousand horsemen killed on the Persian side (with an implied large number of infantry and mercenary dead as well). These estimates are more moderate than those of Plutarch, who citing Aristoboulus, claims that only 34 Macedonians lost their lives, while 20,000 Persian infantry and 2,500 horsemen were cut down. Even Arrian’s count seems unreasonable, whereas Plutarch’s is downright absurd.

López de Gómara similarly implicitly places great value on a Spanish life. Each loss is felt, though in most battles, the wounded far outnumber the dead (if any). While one could attempt to attribute this discrepancy to Spanish armor and indigenous fighting tactics (or for Alexander, the Macedonian *sarissa* and veteran troops), the minimal losses show that these military leaders maximized their soldiers’ potentials.[134] They did not waste lives like their un-clever adversaries who sought to overwhelm with superior numbers. Like the ancient Greek and Roman sources’ treatments of numbers, López de Gómara’s accounts of dead and wounded privilege Spanish lives.

Cortés’s second engagement, the Battle of Cintla, both maintains these classical allusions and presents a couple additional themes. At Cintla, the chaplain introduces the mysterious horseman, who the Spaniards initially confused with Cortés. The horseman

[134] Inga Clendinnen notices that “At the outset of battle Indian arrows and darts flew thickly, but to weaken and draw blood, not to pierce fatally. The obsidian-studded war club signaled warrior combat aims: the subduing of prestigious individual captives in single combat for presentation before the home diety” Clendinnen, Inga. *The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society: Essays on Mesoamerican Society and Culture*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 69.

purportedly rallied the Spaniards and led several devastating charges against the enemy. Cortés claimed it was St. James and used this religious stimulus in a war cry before leading a glorious charge against the natives. The confusion between Cortés and a saint adds further significance to the conqueror's conduct in battle. His leadership, cunning, and prowess were near-divine. This scene also indicates the effect of horsemen on indigenous warriors, who allegedly thought that the mounted man was a centaur-like creature. This mythical being inspired fear, even after the natives discovered their mortality.

Alexander's charges had a similar shock-effect on the Persians as Cortés's gunpowder and horses on the Culhúans. Of Alexander's decisive charge at Gaugamela, Arrian writes,

> …Alexander wheeled about opposite the gap, arrayed the Companion cavalry and the nearby portion of the phalanx in a wedge formation, and led them at full speed and with a war cry toward Darius himself. For a brief period the fighting was hand to hand, but when Alexander and his horsemen pressed the enemy hard, shoving the Persians and striking their faces with spears, and the Macedonian phalanx, tightly arrayed and bristling with pikes, was already upon them, Darius, who had long been in a state of dread, now saw terrors all around him; he wheeled about—the first to do so—and fled.[135]

The destruction and shock of Alexander's charge created a horrific scene before Darius. The Macedonian conqueror's near-perfect strategic timing becomes a causative tool for Arrian, who explains Alexander's victory as a leveraging of fear over Darius.

[135] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 3.14.2-3.

Plutarch similarly acknowledges Alexander's manipulation of fear at Gaugamela. The night before the battle, "Alexander allowed his Macedonians to sleep, but himself spent the night in front of his tent in the company of his diviner Aristander, with whom he performed certain mysterious and sacred ceremonies and offered sacrifice to the god Fear."[136] This passage suggests that Alexander understood he had his enemies' fear to thank for his victories and invokes religious ritual as a precursor to battle (like Cortés's war cries). Alexander knew that his army, elite though it was, could not defeat Darius's in battle based on sheer numbers. The sources attribute his cunning, daring, and brilliance as causal links to victory that continually bested the odds.

In *Historia de la conquista*, nowhere else is this very theme more present than at the Battle of Otumba. After Cortés, his Spaniards, and their allies were driven out of Tenochtitlán at the end of a heroic defense and desperate escape from the city, the Culhúan warriors pursued them and managed to surround them at Otumba. The Spaniards and their allies were sleep-deprived, starving, and wounded. A much larger, angry force (López de Gómara puts the number at no less than 200,000) confronted them and "dared fight the Spaniards breast to breast and drag them away…"[137] This battle was probably the closest Cortés and his force came to complete annihilation. One must also remember that Cortés entered the battle severely wounded by a stone projectile "so badly that he fainted."[138] The injury completes the depiction of Cortés against the odds. Despite the malady, López de Gómara writes of Cortés's remarkable exploits during the battle,

[136] Plutarch, *Alexander*, 31.
[137] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 224. "…muchos indios hubo que osaron tomarse con los españoles brazo a brazo y pie con pie; y aunque gentilmente se los llevaban arrastrando…" López de Gómara, *Historia*, CXI.
[138] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 224. "Hirieron a Cortés con honda tan mal, que se le pasmó la cabeza…" López de Gómara, *Historia*, CXI.

> Cortés was riding from one spot to another cheering his men. He plainly saw the strait they were in, so he commended himself to God and to his advocate, St. Peter, and charged into the thick of the enemy's ranks. He broke through to the man who was bearing the royal standard of Mexico, struck him twice with his lance, and felled and killed him. When the Indians saw their standard and its bearer fall, they dropped their banners to the ground and fled, for such is their custom in war when their general is killed and their standard knocked down…Never had there been a more notable feat of arms in the Indies since their discovery, and all the Spaniards who that day saw Hernán Cortés in action swear that never did man fight as he did, or lead his troops, and that he alone in his own person saved them all.[139]

This moment marks a notable closeness in positive and negative fears weighing in favor of Cortés. According to López de Gómara, Cortés recognized that he and his company stood on the brink of destruction. The Spaniards and their allies had no hope of winning the fight conventionally. Defeat signified certain death, and the mode of death terrified them even more. Many had seen their comrades sacrificed or eaten, and this desecration was intolerable to any good Christian. In the face of that dishonorable end, Cortés decided to make one final charge at his foe, in favor of going down in the glory of battle than in a sacrificial ritual atop a Mexican pyramid. Like Alexander, he made for (what appeared to be) the commander of the

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[139] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 224-225. "Cortés, que andaba a una y otra parte confortando los suyos, y que muy bien veía lo que pasaba, encomendóse a Dios, llamó a san Pedro, su abogado, arremetió con su cabello por medio los enemigos, rompiólos, llegó al que traía el estandarte real de México, que era capitán general, y dióle dos lanzadas, de que cayó y murió. En cayendo el hombre y pendón, abatieron las banderas en tierra, y no quedó indio con indio, sino que luego se derramaron cada uno por do mejor pudo, y huyerson, que tal constumbre en guerra tienen, muerto su general y abatido el pendón…No ha habido más notable hazaña ni victoria en Indias después que se descubrieron; y cuantos españoles vieron pelear este día a Fernando Cortés afirman que nunca hombre peleó como él, ni los suyos así acaudilló, y que él solo por su persona los libró a todos." López de Gómara, *Historia*, CXI.

army, who held a battle standard. In a brief single combat, Cortés defeated his adversary and thus won the day for himself and his army. López de Gómara gives Cortés total credit for the victory at Otumba, which retrospectively glorifies that moment of single combat with the Mexican commander. What began as a suicidal charge resulted in survival, an astonishing victory, and, via *Historia de la conquista*, an immortalized claim to glory rivaling Alexander.

López de Gómara's methods of commemorating Cortés's greatness are structured with fundamental similarities to models of antiquity like Homer, Herodotus, and the sources on Alexander. He constructs a heroic legacy recalling Alexander. Through accomplishments in battle and a masterful manipulation of fear, López de Gómara's Cortés becomes a leader capable of achieving Alexandrian triumphs. The chaplain calls upon a venerable symbol of intellectual and militaristic identity to defend Cortés and his controversial conquests. An Alexander parallel provides ingenious and remarkable means to justify glorious and unprecedented ends.

Conqueror as Colonizer

In the texts considered here, colonization and city-founding function as methods of establishing control and presence in foreign lands. In *Historia de la conquista*, the founding of Vera Cruz becomes Cortés's recreation of the Old World in new lands.[140] The first building appearing in a list of sites marked for construction, of course, was the church, indicative of the intended preservation of Spanish institutions. López de Gómara writes of Cortés's organization of Vera Cruz as if he were a king. "Cortés pushed the building of the fortress and the houses of

[140] Or, perhaps, it is the chaplain's recreation of Cortés's recreation of the Old World.

Vera Cruz, so that the soldiers and citizens might live in some comfort…He prepared for war as well as for peace."[141] The chaplain has Cortés making decisions to better the community he built, which raises Cortés's ambition beyond that of a simple conqueror. López de Gómara gives Cortés a vision of permanence in the New World, which he then used to leverage hierarchical independence from Velázquez directly to Charles V. Colonization adds lasting influence to Cortés's conquests and extends his legacy beyond his (not insignificant) exploits on the battlefield.

W. W. Tarn deals with Alexander's city-building in some detail. He puts the possible number of cities founded at around 20 despite Plutarch's inflated claim of 70. The most successful of Alexander's cities was Alexandria in Egypt—they all bear his name—which became a major hub of trade and intellectual activity under the Ptolemies. While many of these "cities" were little more than armed outposts during Alexander's life, their existence and well-spaced geographic positioning reveal a vision of empire.

Like Cortés's early colonies in New Spain, Alexander's cities reflect permanent intentions. He did not simply want to conquer land; he wanted to keep it as well. For this purpose, he posted many small armies in conquered territory in order to consolidate his new empire's borders. The controversies over *proskynesis*, Alexander's visions of grandeur, and the maintenance of local customs and societal structures reflect this imagined permanent empire. These details lead one to suspect, as Tarn did, that Alexander's wars were not simply for the purpose of conquest, but to construct a grand, new state as well.

[141] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 84. "Daba priesa Cortés que trabajasen en las casas de la Veracruz y en la fortaleza, para que tuviesen los vecinos y soldados comodidad de vivienda…Comenzó a dar orden y concierto en muchas cosas tocantes así a la guerra como a la paz." López de Gómara, *Historia*, XXXIX.

Tarn viewed Alexander's institutional merging of cultures as a rejection of Aristotelian philosophy on the nature of barbarians.[142] Alexander's decisions that allowed Persians to occupy prominent positions in the administration of the empire are, on this view, a rejection of the authority of contemporary discourse in favor of the wisdom of lived experience. While Tarn uses these details in an attempt to establish Alexander as both a tragic figure and a progressive conqueror, I merely aim to draw attention to Alexander as an agent of change in imperial philosophy. That his empire functioned more as a colonizing power than as a force of total dominance has great relevance to the present work.

The construction of the conqueror as colonizer centralizes the complex process of empire creation on the individual. For Alexander, colonization simultaneously became an act of self-commemoration. For Cortés, the founding of Vera Cruz became a channel for the legitimation of conquest. With Vera Cruz, Cortés could claim to "promote the true interests of the realm."[143] His authority as a colonizer allowed him to bypass the domain of Velázquez's power and appeal to Charles V for the right to govern what would later be known as New Spain. Vera Cruz made competition with Velázquez possible.

Vera Cruz also became a launching point for cultural exchange, or rather, attempts at cultural dominance. López de Gómara portrays this incredibly complex issue as a one-dimensional narrative of Spanish cultural supremacy, whereby Cortés becomes a vehicle for

[142] Tarn, William Woodthorpe. *Alexander the Great*. (Beacon Press, 1956), 54. Full quote: "Aristotle had taught [Alexander] that the barbarians were naturally unfitted to rule; [Alexander] meant to see. Aristotle had said they must be treated as slaves; [Alexander] had already learnt that here Aristotle was wrong. [Alexander] had seen the immemorial civilizations of Egypt and Babylon; he had seen the Persian nobles in battle; he knew that barbarians, like Greeks, must be classified according to merit..." While Tarn's assumption about the role of Aristotle in Alexander's education may be problematic, his point about Alexander's incorporation of "barbarians" into his military and civil administrations still stands.

[143] Pagden, introduction, xviii. Coincidentally, Cortés's most successful settlement, Vera Cruz, became a major trading port for the Spanish Empire, as Alexandria would be for the Ptolemaic Empire.

justifying conquest through his mass conversions and civilizing missions. One must not forget the following passage that appears in López de Gómara's dedication:

> [After the conquest] men gave up their many wives and took one alone; they gave up sodomy, for they were taught how filthy and how unnatural a sin it is; they cast down their infinity of idols and believed in Our Lord God; and they abandoned the sacrifice of living men and learned to abhor the eating of human flesh, for they had been captives of the devil and would sacrifice and devour a thousand men in a single day in Mexico, and a like number in Tlaxcala and every great provincial capital—a piece of cruelty so unheard-of that it staggers the mind.[144]

In this section, López de Gómara aims to connect these purportedly positive cultural alterations to Spanish imperialism and Cortés. To be of good Christian morals, then, was to support Cortés's actions. The establishment of the institution of the church at Vera Cruz (and later in the rebuilt Tenochtitlán) would facilitate this one-dimensional exchange that, López de Gómara carefully documents, had begun during Cortés's conquests.

City-founding indicates the ambitions of these figures. While Cortés and Alexander generally treated encountered cultures differently, the establishment of settlements demonstrates that the Alexandrian hero is also a forward-thinking conqueror, one whose ultimate goal, besides conquest, is the consolidation of control and the (often forced) integration of various peoples into culturally influential imperial institutions. The founded (or

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[144] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 4. "Dejaron los hombres muchas mujeres que tenían, casando con una sola; perdieron la sodomía, enseñados cuán sucio pecado y contra natura era; desecharon sus infinitísimos ídolos, creyendo en nuestro Señor Dios; olvidaron el sacrificio de hombres vivos, aborrecieron la comida de carne humana, soliendo matar y comer hombres cada día, porque estaban tan cautivos del diablo, que sacrificaban y comían mil hombres algún día en sólo México, y otros tantos en Tlaxcallan; y por consiguiente en cada gran ciudad cabeza de provincia, crueldad jamás oída y que desatina el entendimiento." López de Gómara, *Historia*, "Don Martín Cortés, Marqués Del Valle."

rebuilt) city facilitated this exchange and extended the conqueror's responsibilities to beyond merely his soldiers and his influence to the furthest reaches of his new domain.

Portraiture of Legendary Conquerors

Literary portraiture is a tool of commemoration, a monument to a great life for all of posterity to remember. The portraiture of these heroes functions as a summation of legacy. The culminating portraits in *Anabasis Alexandrou* and *Historia de la conquista* appear at the conclusion of the works. While the contents and themes of each portrait differ vastly, they both express authorial admiration and provide models of commemoration. Contrarily, López de Gómara's literary portrait of Cortés has few structural resemblances to Plutarch's of Alexander, but they are much nearer in content.

Arrian crafts his literary portrait as a passionate defense of Alexander and his legacy. He begins in standard fashion with a record of Alexander's death and how the Macedonian conqueror lived.[145] Then, he launches into an apologist defense,

> If any offense was given by Alexander's sharpness or anger, or if he carried to an extreme his taste for barbarian pomp, I do not myself regard it as a serious matter… The fact that Alexander traced his birth to a god does not impress me as a serious fault; it may merely have been a clever means of inspiring awe in his subjects… I suppose there was no race of men, no city at that time, no single person whom Alexander's name did not reach. I therefore assume that a man unlike any other in the world would not have been born without the intervention of the gods. Oracles are said to have

[145] While both Arrian and López de Gómara describe the lives of their heroes, Arrian portrays Alexander as positively as possible. By contrast, Plutarch and the chaplain depict their subjects as human (see n147).

> indicated this at Alexander's death, as did various apparitions that were seen and dreams that were dreamt, the honor in which Alexander has to this day been held by mankind, and the memory of him, which surpasses the merely human… I am not ashamed to admire Alexander himself.[146]

To Arrian, Alexander should be remembered more for his character than for his actions. He dissociates the occasional "fault" from the overall scope of the mighty being whose achievements he has recorded. Arrian is perhaps most conscious of the effect of Alexander's deeds on collective memory. His presentist focus on the recollection of Alexander reveals a purpose of his history, linking his envisioning of his work very closely to López de Gómara's.

Despite the parallel purpose of commemoration, López de Gómara's portrait of Cortés is more conservative than Arrian's of Alexander. Cortés appears more human in this final image than through most of *Historia de la conquista*. The chaplain writes,

> Hernan Cortés was of a good stature, broad-shouldered and deep-chested; his color, pale; his beard, fair; his hair, long. He was very strong, courageous, and skillful at arms. As a youth he was mischievous; as a man, serene; so he was always a leader in war as well as in peace…He was much given to consorting with women and always gave himself to them. The same was true with his gaming, and he played at dice marvelously well and merrily. He loved eating, but was temperate in drink, although he did not stint himself…He was a very stubborn man, as a result of which he had more lawsuits than was proper to his station. He spent liberally on war, women, friends, and fancies, although in other things he was close, which got him the name of new-rich. In his dress

[146] Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.29.1, 7.29.3, 7.30.2-3.

> he was elegant rather than sumptuous and was extremely neat…He bore himself nobly, with such gravity and prudence that he never gave offence or seemed unapproachable. It is said of him that as a boy he was told he would conquer many lands and become a very great lord…He was devout and given to praying; he knew many prayers and psalms by heart. He was a great giver of alms…He ordinarily gave a thousand ducats a year to charity, and sometimes lent money for alms, saying that with the interest he would expiate his sins…
>
> Such just as you have heard, was Cortés, Conqueror of New Spain. Since I began the *Conquest of Mexico* with his birth, I shall end it with his death.[147]

Rather than writing of great deeds, López de Gómara has constructed a modest, yet appropriately flattering, believable, albeit simplistic, portrait of the conqueror and his habits. An unabashedly heroic Cortés at the end of the glorious conquest narrative would seem blatantly repetitive. Instead, López de Gómara's Cortés has become a model Spaniard. Even though Cortés accomplished near-superhuman tasks, he did so as a Spaniard—and somewhat above average human being (and talented gambler)—rising to a remarkable occasion. In this

[147] López de Gómara, *Cortés*, 409-410. "Era Fernando Cortés de buena estatura, rehecho y de gran pecho; el color ceniciento, la barba clara, el cabello largo. Tenía gran fuerza, mucho ánimo, destreza en las armas. Fue travieso cuando muchacho, y cuando hombre fue asentado; y así, tuvo en la guerra buen lugar, y en la paz también…Fue muy dado a mujeres, y dióse siempre. Lo mismo hizo al juego, y jugaba a los dados a maravilla bien y alegremente. Fue muy gran comedor, y templado en el beber, teniendo abundancia…Era recio porfiando, y así tuvo más pleitos que convenía a su estado. Gastaba liberalísimamente en la guerra, en mujeres, por amigos y en antojos, mostrando escasez en algunas cosas, por donde le llamaban rico de avenida. Vestía más pulido que rico, y así era hombre limpísimo…Tratábase como señor, y con tanta gravedad y cordura, que no daba pesadumbre ni parecía nuevo. Cuentan que le dijeron, siendo muchacho, cómo había de ganar muchas tierras y ser grandísimo señor…Era devoto, rezador, y sabía muchas oraciones y salmos de coro; grandísimo limosnero…Daba cada un año mil ducados por Dios de ordinario; y algunas veces tomó a cambio dineros para limosna, diciendo que con aquel interés rescataba sus pecados…Tal fue, como habéis oído, Cortés, conquistador de la Nueva-España; y por haber yo comenzado la conquista de México en su nacimiento, la fenezco en su muerte." López de Gómara, *Historia*, CCLII.

description, all that truly sets him apart is the prophesy of conquest.[148] Aside from this auspicious prediction, López de Gómara ends his biography of Cortés with a motivational description that both inspires and unites readers to commemorate Cortés through the creation of a collective historical remembrance, a furtherance of Spanish glory.

Both Plutarch and López de Gómara assert that their heroes drank moderately and were devout religious practitioners. Plutarch's brief portraiture of Alexander's habits humanizes yet impresses, as does the chaplain's analogous passage. The Greek biographer writes,

> Alexander was also more moderate in his drinking than was generally supposed. The impression that he was a heavy drinker arose because…he liked to linger over each cup…When he was at leisure, his first act after rising was to sacrifice to the gods, after which he took his breakfast sitting down. The rest of the day would be spent in hunting, administering justice, planning military affairs or reading…His custom was to begin supper late…[149]

Perhaps López de Gómara envisioned *Historia de la conquista* as symbolically constructing a modern third "parallel Life" of Alexander.

Lewis uses a brief analysis of portraiture in López de Gómara's works to reinforce that "Gomara clearly moves within the classical-humanist historical tradition of his time."[150] I hope to have demonstrated that he does more than just identify himself with a contemporary intellectual movement. He has created a model of commemoration of Cortés structured in the

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[148] While López de Gómara's prophesy of Cortés does not contain the mysticism of Plutarch's description of events and signs leading up to Alexander's birth, he writes enough to draw a thematic connection between Cortés and other heroes born for greatness. See Plutarch, *Alexander* 2.
[149] Plutarch, *Alexander*, 23.
[150] Lewis, *Humanistic*, 196.

style of classical literary portraiture comparably employed to depict Alexander. Portraiture places emphasis on the individual who acts in history and connects historical work to the biographical tradition. The form gives historical agency to the individual, but more than that, it ultimately places agency in the hands of the writer, in other words, the commemorator. López de Gómara, Arrian, and Plutarch, with the other considered writers, are historical actors as well as narrators. Their writings created immortal legacies of individuals living on in literature, who have now become agents of historical perspective, tools of historical and literary analyses, and have fundamentally shaped European intellectual consciousness of individuals and heroic figures.

The Alexander-Cortés parallel provided the chaplain with a frame through which to understand his employer's deeds. It recreates the space and process of conquest in a linguistically and culturally comprehensible form. Furthermore, the perpetuation of classical heroic constructions demonstrates that heroes of the European world tended to emulate similar character traits, and literature about them utilized similar forms and dramatic moments, to display a set of known heroic qualities. These abilities function as causative tools that elevate the significance of the hero in history.

The identification of Cortés and history with classical authority also attempts to legitimize the conquest. López de Gómara engages all of the epistemological tools available, from religious justification to recognizable heroic commemorations, for that purpose. The chaplain associates positive features of Spanish 16th century intellectual collective memory with the conquest. Champions of native rights like Las Casas and conquistadors like Díaz, were

unhappy with *Historia de la conquista*, for López de Gómara had deconstructed and re-appropriated these positive associations for his own purposes, to justify Spanish dominion over new lands and to immortalize Cortés. The chaplain's confident writing silences (as every history does to greater or lesser degrees) these other narratives. How could his writing be the representative work he claimed it to be when he offered such a partial perspective of conquest, of the relationship between colonizer and colonized, of the common men in Cortés's force, of women and families, of slaves, and of the human and cultural cost of the fall of Tenochtitlán and other massive city spaces that had shaped identities for millions? In the next chapter, I examine the changing receptions of López de Gómara and *Historia de la conquista* over time in order to show that intellectuals have identified and responded to these silences, as well as to his use of the classical tradition.

Chapter 4: Legacy and Reception

Historia de la conquista and its classical reminiscences have had a profound impact on receptions of the chaplain and his Cortés since 1552. His interpretation of history and the space of conquest has generated a polarized historiography. The most common responses address López de Gómara's methodology, his Cortés, and his ethics. In this chapter, I first analyze the immediate reactions, which include the intellectual rebuttals, the royal response, and the discursive authority of *Historia de la conquista*. Next, I examine Andrés González de Barcia's resurrection of López de Gómara's histories in 1749. He established methods of commemoration that resonated with audiences and writers in later centuries. Two 19th century creations similarly expand the legacy of López de Gómara's Cortés. Prescott's canonical *History of the Conquest of Mexico* is a romanticist presentation of the conquest that complements López de Gómara's narrative. I also compare a Spanish engraving of Cortés at the Battle of Otumba with the Alexander Mosaic of antiquity.

My analysis then proceeds to Ramón Iglesia's highly influential mid-20th century writings on Bernal Díaz and López de Gómara. I close my discussion of legacy by examining post-quincentennial reevaluations of canonical conquest narratives and what these histories can tell us about the enduring position of López de Gómara's Cortés in today's world. This chapter does not attempt a complete historiography of López de Gómara and his work. I examine historical snapshots and read closely for textual interactions with López de Gómara, his Córtes, and his use of the classical tradition, in order to document the impact of the world-vision his writing creates.

Immediate Reactions

López de Gómara's retelling of the conquest shook up the scholarly world when he published his histories in Zaragoza in 1552; the very same year, Bartolomé de las Casas published *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. The temporal proximity of these histories reinforced the symbolic contestation of literary space between incompatible theories of conquest. Theirs was a war in print over collective memory of the Spanish conquests. Las Casas's work represented a new wave of ethical reconsideration of the conquest, closely aligned with deconstructing the popular idealization of conquerors, like Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro. Among a growing number of intellectuals, the ethics that justified conquests in the Caribbean, Mesoamerica, and the Andes had fallen out of fashion, the result of which can be observed in the censorship of Oviedo's and Sepúlveda's respective works.[151] For most, López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista* would be too little too late to either effect any meaningful change in Spanish colonial policy or sway the reading public to Sepúlveda's side of the Valladolid debate.

On November 17, 1553, a year after the publication of *Historia de la conquista*, the Council of the Indies in conjunction with Prince Phillip (later to become Phillip II), issued a ban on the printing and sale of López de Gómara's text. The prohibition applied to the Kingdom of Castille in its entirety; Spanish printing of the history formally ceased in 1555. News of the ban spread via public proclamation and word of mouth. However, one may question the initial effectiveness of the ban on the basis of consistent Spanish intellectual interactions with López

[151] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 27, 58.

de Gómara's text in the following centuries and also an order to seize printed copies as late as 1566, a full thirteen years after the ban and seven years after López de Gómara's death.

For hundreds of years and into the present, historians have sparred over the cause of the ban on López de Gómara's work without reaching consensus. Potential causes include technical infractions during the publication process, an intervention by Las Casas, and ethical affiliation with Sepúlveda's already banned *Democrates Secundus*.[152] Regardless, the Council's intent to round up copies of the text as late as 1566 suggests not only that some council members still viewed López de Gómara's history as a threat, but also that the text had resonated with some audiences, more, at any rate, than some contemporary historians are willing to admit.

Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias* (1559) significantly challenges and threatens López de Gómara's eloquent narrative. It is important to remember that the chaplain died in 1559. Las Casas, in typical fashion, had the last word. His awareness and inclusion of classical motifs, stories, ideas, and characters in his history—for purposes that contrast directly with López de Gómara's usage of the same tradition—are of particular significance. His depiction of Alexander of Macedon exemplifies the contrast.

Alexander appears in an anecdote at the end of Las Casas's Book Two. The friar's analysis of the Macedonian conqueror is the final lesson before beginning the powerful Book Three on conquest and exploitation. Alexander's emergence at this narrative transition signifies Las Casas's symbolic parallels between Alexander and the Spanish conquerors. "It is fitting to recall Alexander the Great, who dealt with the world in much the same criminal way

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[152] Ibid, 55-56, 60. For an in-depth historiography of opinions on the ban, see Ibid, 56-60 and Lewis, *Humanistic*, 317-329.

as Spaniards deal with the Indies, killing and mistreating people who were in no way indebted to him and usurping their kingdoms."[153] Las Casas viewed the ethics of Alexander's conquests as parallel to the Spanish subjugation of the Americas (Cortés's expedition included). However, unlike López de Gómara, Las Casas does not draw upon the Macedonian conqueror to flatter.

Additionally, Las Casas invokes religion in his accusations. He writes that while God may have granted the conquerors military victories, these triumphant Spaniards should not assume that they were "recipients of divine favor for their devotion and holiness."[154] Las Casas declares Alexander an "idolatrous pagan and infernal enemy of the human race." A few sentences later, he makes the following remarkable aside: "Alexander—that infidel and bloody victimizer of the human race." This strong language serves two primary purposes. First, he sets up Alexander's conquests as un-Christian. By extension, Las Casas accuses the Spanish conquerors of not adhering to Christian law, a hefty allegation. Secondly, he reinforces the possibility of simultaneously achieving conquest and not receiving divine favor, which deconstructs López de Gómara's narrative of a glorious, Christian conquest.[155]

Las Casas restores balance by confining Alexander's soul to Hell. He threatens an even worse fate for the Spanish conquerors, since "the sins of Christians are much graver than the sins of infidels. And everyone who misbehaves in the Indies would do well to have the same fear for himself."[156] Las Casas implies that good Christians should know better and that Cortés

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[153] de Las Casas, Bartolomé. *History of the Indies*, trans. Andreé Collard. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 177. It is important to notice the similarities in historiographical debates on the ethics of Cortés and Alexander. See Allen, Brooke. "Alexander the Great: Or the Terrible?" *The Hudson Review* 58, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 220–230. doi:10.2307/30044758, for an example on the Alexander side.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid, 177-178. Las Casas's inclusions of Alexander are further examples of the symbolic porousness of the classics and Christianity and the use of the classical tradition to advance religiously charged rhetoric.
[156] Ibid, 178.

and his comrades-in-arms occupy a depth of Hell spatially near Alexander's. He turns the Alexander story into a moralizing lesson (a classical storytelling tradition) that serves as a warning for would-be Christian conquerors. Las Casas, in just a few sentences, has fired a debilitating shot at conquest ethics that exposes the inner contradictions of Spanish imperialism. He wonders how it is possible to claim to conquer in the name of God, when the Spanish brutal methods of conquest clashed so directly with good Christian morals.

Unsurprisingly, as soon as Las Casas brings Cortés into the text, he quickly aligns himself with Velázquez against Cortés. He even positions himself as having once advised Velázquez against Amador de Lares, the man who recommended Cortés for the expedition.[157] However, some of the most striking details of his narrative are his attacks on López de Gómara. While I document and analyze these powerful rhetorical accusations in the next few paragraphs, it is important to realize that Las Casas's consistent and frequent criticisms place López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista* as *the* dominant conquest narrative. Even though Las Casas published *Historia de las Indias* a full six years after the Council's ban on López de Gómara's history, the strength and vigor of his attacks necessarily reflect *Historia de la conquista*'s persuasive power. Las Casas writes,

> In his *History*, Gómara falsifies the story of Cortés's assignment and speaks as a man who did not witness events but rather heard them from Cortés himself, orally and in writing, when, back in Spain, he served the present Marquis Cortés as chaplain…Gómara adds that Velázquez changed his mind after Grijalva's return, and that he tried to stop the expedition which Cortés was preparing because he [Velázquez]

[157] Ibid, 213.

> wanted everything for himself. This and other obvious falsifications of the truth are inventions of Gómara's patron, that is, Cortés himself.[158]

Las Casas supports his point with assertions derived from logical and psychological reasoning. He concludes this paragraph by stating that "no one can believe [López de Gómara's narration] who knew both Velázquez and Cortés."[159] In these passages, Las Casas expresses two common criticisms of López de Gómara, that he was not a witness to the history about which he wrote and that his reliance on oral history led him astray, in particular Cortés's influence.[160]

The degree to which Cortés influenced or (as Las Casas might say) dictated *Historia de la conquista* has remained debated in the historiography. An intertextual analysis of *Cartas de relacion* and the *Historia de la conquista* (which lies outside the scope of this analysis) is the closest contemporary scholars can get to reconstructing Cortés's influence.[161] It is no secret that Cortés employed López de Gómara as a private chaplain and secretary or that after Hernán Cortés's death, his son Martín Cortés commissioned the text as a record of service.[162] These details reasonably lead scholars to believe that the Cortés estate was a major investor in López de Gómara's history.

While influence and motivation have been demonstrated, I find this suggestion exceedingly simplistic. It limits to an unreasonable degree the agency of the writer who, as this thesis demonstrates, has inserted a rich tradition from his intellectual milieu into his conquest

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[158] Ibid, 226.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Interestingly, Herodotus, who relied extensively upon oral history and folk traditions, receives similar criticisms for both not being a witness and for his general acceptance of oral history. This commonality in historiographical trends between Herodotus and López de Gómara serves to strengthen the structural connection between their two histories.
[161] See Carman, Glen. *Rhetorical Conquests: Cortés, Gómara, and Renaissance Imperialism.* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006), for an attempt at navigating these two sources.
[162] Roa-de-la Carrera, *Histories*, 48.

narrative. Furthermore, Cortés's influence on *Historia de la conquista* is necessarily limited (though not excluded) due to the discrepancy between his death in 1547 and López de Gómara's publication in 1552.

Nonetheless, these passages typify Las Casas's deconstruction of López de Gómara's text and, by extension, Cortés as a classical hero. He writes that "Cortés invents and Gómara lies to flatter Cortés, to sell his tyranny to the King as a great service and to deceive the world further." He later labels Cortés an "egregious tyrant."[163] He rejects López de Gómara's construction because the idea of a heroic Cortés was an ideologically dangerous one to Las Casas. López de Gómara's Cortés represented increasingly unfashionable beliefs on conquest. In his narrative, the Spaniards assumed their right to conquer, the post-conquest setting represented the most effective method of conversion, and the conquerors were shameless treasure hunters. Furthermore, attaching this conquest ideology to the attractive character of the classical Cortés made even these antiquated beliefs more palatable to his contemporaries. The persuasive power of López de Gómara's narrative hinged on the ease of acceptance that a classical grand narrative and hero afforded him. Las Casas attempted to turn this technique on its head by invoking instead the classical milieu in favor of the native peoples, and as discussed above, by providing a Christian-humanistic counter-narrative to Alexander. He recognized the persuasive power of the tradition and utilized it to reject the idea of the noble conqueror in favor of the Noble Savage.[164]

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[163] Las Casas, *Indias*, 238-239.

[164] Collard, Andrée, introduction to *History of the Indies* by de Las Casas, Bartolomé, trans. Collard, Andrée. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), xiv.

Las Casas's story of Ciguayo contains a number of the classical heroic motifs, not to mention an explicit reference. "Ciguayo retreated to a ravine, fighting a Spaniard who sank half his lance into him but even then he went on fighting like a heroic Hector."[165] While Ciguayo was ultimately killed, his death is honorable since he continued the fight despite serious injury. Furthermore, Las Casas centers the scene as a single combat, which further glorifies Ciguayo's final moments as a Homeric struggle. Through this passage and others, Las Casas reconstructs a layer of classical reminiscences—diverting attention from López de Gómara's hero construction—and re-appropriates the motif in an attempt to elevate natives to a higher and "classically" heroic status.

Las Casas complicates López de Gómara's classical hero motif, symbolically removes the "Great" from Alexander, and questions the methodological integrity of *Historia de la conquista*. He shakes up the previous conquest narrative paradigm of justifying the conquerors' actions and establishes a new precedent of challenging the established narratives. His persuasive accusations of both the conquest and of López de Gómara threatened to dethrone *Historia de la conquista* from its implied authority over conquest literature.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo, although he tells readers that he finished writing his *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (*Historia verdadera*) the "26th day of February, 1568," did not arrive on the historiographical scene until 1632, when his descendants finally published the manuscript. His writing, like Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias*, reacts to *Historia de la conquista* as a counter-narrative and captures the hearts and minds of his audiences in ways that López de Gómara could not.

[165] Ibid, 253.

If readers are to believe Díaz, they must envision him writing his memoirs when he suddenly came upon López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista*. He began reading and felt that there would be no point in finishing his own work, since he found the chaplain's writing style to be superior to his own. However, he began to find errors, multitudes of them, and he came to see his history of the conquest, the true history, to be his moral obligation to posterity.[166]

Before analyzing Díaz's criticisms, I note that he further reinforces the dominance of *Historia de la conquista* over other conquest narratives. As stated, Díaz finished his *Historia verdadera* in 1568, sixteen years after the publication of *Historia de la conquista*, fifteen years after the Council's ban, and nine years after López de Gómara's death. Even so, like Las Casas, Díaz's consistent attacks on López de Gómara establish *Historia de la conquista* as the most influential conquest narrative available, despite the ban and negative reactions. He even devotes an entire chapter to discrediting López de Gómara. Furthermore, Ramón Iglesia, writing in the 1940s, notes the similar structural composition of chapters in the two histories and suggests that Díaz copied the idea from López de Gómara.[167] Finally and perhaps most directly, Díaz claims that López de Gómara "has also been the means of leading those two famous historians astray who followed his account, namely, Dr. Illescas and the bishop Paulo Jovio."[168] In order to criticize López de Gómara, Díaz has first positioned the chaplain as the leading historian on the conquest and documented his history's persuasive power upon two

[166] Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. *The Conquest of New Spain*. trans. (Lexington: Stellar Classics, 2013), Preface, XVIII.
[167] Iglesia, *Cortés*, 63.
[168] Díaz, *Conquest*, Preface.

other “famous historians.” Debunking López de Gómara’s authority motivated Díaz to write his *Historia verdadera*.

As a foot soldier in Cortés’s company, Díaz was unhappy that López de Gómara awarded Cortés the glory and success of the conquest, when the expedition would have been impossible without the rank and file man. Therefore, in order to elevate himself and the role of the foot soldier, Díaz needed to diminish Cortés’s hierarchical authority. In so doing, he challenges López de Gómara’s narrative. He writes, “with [López de Gómara], every circumstance is made to turn to the glory and honour of Cortés, while no mention is made of the other brave officers and soldiers.”[169] There can be little doubt that Díaz found himself an unhappy man when he realized that López de Gómara either omitted his alleged exploits from *Historia de la conquista* or sincerely did not know of them.[170] However, Díaz’s problematic desire to appear as a contributor to the conquest does not obscure the fact that López de Gómara occasionally gives Cortés praise for actions not entirely his own. “[López de Gómara] boldly asserts that we should have been defeated [at the battle of Otumpan (Otumba)] if Cortés had not been present…”[171] Díaz counters López de Gómara’s claims that Cortés won the battle when he slayed the Mexican standard-bearer by relating that, yes, Cortés did ride down the commander, but in reality, Juan Salamanca de Ontiveras “killed that chief with a thrust of his lance, tore away the splendid crest of plumes which adorned his head, and

[169] Ibid, XVIII.
[170] There is also the more radical claim that Bernal Díaz del Castillo was never even a member of Cortés’s company, since his name does not come up in any of the previous chronicles of the conquest before his own. In *Crónica de la eternidad* (2012), Christian Duverger proposes an even more ambitious hypothesis that Díaz did not write *Historia verdadera*, Cortés did. The claim is controversial and, as of this writing, remains on the fringes of historiography.
[171] Ibid, CXXIX.

presented it to Cortés."[172] Díaz effectively challenges a pivotal moment in López de Gómara's classical hero motif and robs his illustrious commander of the glory of single combat.

Díaz justifies his assertions by claiming that he has written only what is "strictly true" and that "I myself was present at every battle and hostile encounter."[173] He establishes himself as an eyewitness to history. With this authority, he argues that his account contains more truth than López de Gómara's. However, the function of memory in the writing of history undermines Díaz's claim of creating "true" history. He endeavors to write off this chink in his rhetorical armor by alleging, "…it happened but yesterday what is contained in my history."[174] This line, whether intentionally or unintentionally, reads as comedic when considering that he finished his *Historia verdadera* a staggering forty-seven years after the fall of Tenochtitlán. While the emotions associated with triumphs and trauma from 1519-1521 certainly made lasting—even permanent—impressions upon Díaz, *Historia verdadera*, must be approached as skeptically as any other historical writing. Furthermore, at forty-seven years after the conquest, who else from Cortés's company was still alive to challenge Díaz's memory?

Even though Díaz blasts López de Gómara for his heroization of Cortés, he very carefully dilutes his occasionally severe criticism. He still enjoys the chronicler's "elegance of style" and contrasts it with "the rudeness of my own." He lessens Cortés's importance to the history, but he still lavishes his superior with praise. For this purpose, he, like López de Gómara, invokes the classical tradition. He does so to assure his readers that while Cortés was not the hero of López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista*, he was still quite extraordinary, at least in

[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid, Preface.
[174] Ibid.

comparison to other remarkable historical figures. Following Díaz's account of the Battle of Otumba, he writes,

> I do not mention these things to diminish Cortés' glory, for the praise and merit of all the victories we gained, and of the battles we fought, down to the total conquest of New Spain, are due to him, and he has deserved those honours with which the Castillians were wont to crown their generals after some splendid victories, and the triumphs which the Romans decreed to Pompey, Julius Caesar, and the Scipios. Cortés, indeed, has merited greater honours than all these Romans![175]

While Díaz praises Cortés with explicit references to Roman figures, his admiration has an obligatory tone. As soon as he ends this paragraph, he returns to criticizing López de Gómara. His commendation of Cortés falls flat and rings of insincerity. It appears as purely rhetorical and an attempt to balance his criticism.

Las Casas's and Díaz's treatments of the classical tradition reflect each respective author's stance towards *Historia de la conquista*; they also emphasize the presence of classical literature in the intellectual milieu of mid-16th century Spain. Las Casas deconstructs Alexander as a hero—and by extension the canonical heroes of the Spanish conquests (Cortés included)—and re-appropriates the classical hero motif to elevate the indigenous peoples to a higher space in the Spanish colonial social hierarchy. Díaz, like López de Gómara, invokes the classical tradition (specifically the Roman tradition) to glorify Cortés, but he undermines his own delivery with a tone of self-interest that smacks of insincerity. Moreover, these

[175] Ibid, CXXIX. Díaz's inclusion of Roman heroes, as opposed to Greek, reflects their popularity in mid-16th century Spain. Díaz would not have had the access to classical literature that López de Gómara had, so it is fitting that his classical reminiscences rarely move beyond the Roman tradition.

impassioned criticisms of *Historia de la conquista* reinforce its perceived authority as a conquest narrative. That López de Gómara achieved this staying power despite the Council's ban is impressive and reflective of both the chaplain's handling of classical authority (including his adherence to its lessons) and eloquent writing style.

Andrés González de Barcia and the First Resurrection of Francisco López de Gómara (1749)

Andrés González de Barcia initiated the first cycle of resurrection in 1749 with his posthumous *Historiadores primitovs de las Indias occidentales* (*Historiadores primitivos*). While writers continued commenting on *Historia de la conquista* throughout the 17th century, the last Spanish edition of the chaplain's work had appeared in 1555. After his death in 1559, few were willing to step up to defend López de Gómara against impassioned criticism. Many prominent critics like Nicolás Antonio and Antonio de Solís echoed the previous condemnations of Las Casas and Díaz. In many ways, their writings sought to diminish the historical value of the chaplain's work, favoring instead the so-called objective and reliable accounts that did not so obviously favor the conquest and its chief architect.[176]

Lewis documents a historiographical change in the latter half of the 18th century, which saw a reconsideration of *Historia de la conquista* as a historical text by eminent scholars like Francesco Saverio Clavigero, William Robertson, and Juan Bautista Muñoz.[177] However, Lewis's omission of González de Barcia is peculiar due to both the bibliographer's influence throughout the 18th century and his work to breathe life back into López de Gómara.

[176] See Lewis, *Humanistic*, 297-299 for a more careful analysis of 17th century criticism.
[177] For a brief discussion of these writers' contributions, see Ibid, 299-300.

In 1729, the royal ban on *Historia general* and *Historia de la conquista* was lifted, and in 1749, González de Barcia's *Historiadores primitivos* was posthumously published, the second volume of which he dedicated solely to López de Gómara and his work. This final point is of particular significance since none of his other volumes place such value on any single author or body of work.[178]

González de Barcia's revivalist approach to early Spanish colonial literature mirrored López de Gómara's and his contemporaries' views towards the classics. He constructed what John Carlyon terms the "Barcia Library" in order to canonize this early literature and to reassert Spanish intellectual prowess and its national interests in the colonies. Thus, his re-publications served broader purposes. He sought to silence—and, short of that, criticize—Las Casas for the intellectual damage his influential writing did to Spain and the legitimacy of its rule over its American colonies.[179] One can easily imagine the central role López de Gómara's work played in the realization of this mission.

In his bibliography of the chaplain's work, González de Barcia describes the history as "candid," an opinion that immediately sets the scholar at a remove from Las Casas and other opponents of Spanish dominion.[180] Remarkably, he also terms the 1553 ban "Ancient." That González de Barcia saw an able ally in López de Gómara should hardly come as a surprise, given his broader aims. Similarly, González de Barcia's praise for Cortés echoes López de Gómara's. The bibliographer proclaims Cortés a conqueror sent by God and compares him to

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[178] Carlyon, Jonathan Earl. *Andrés González de Barcia and the creation of the colonial Spanish American library*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 216-217.
[179] Ibid, 8-9
[180] The bibliography is conveniently available in Carlyon, *González*, 108-109.

biblical heroes like Moses and King David.[181] He also echoes López de Gómara's portraiture of Cortés, upholding the conqueror as an exemplary Spaniard, evidence of the "enormity of Spain's contribution to the history of mankind."[182]

Given González de Barcia's high rhetoric and position as a renowned scholar, his work did much to reintroduce López de Gómara and his ideology to the 18th century scholarly community. An analysis of *Historia de la conquista* in the 18th century cannot be complete without considering González de Barcia's contribution. His intellectual resurrection of López de Gómara challenged his contemporaries to rethink previously disregarded histories and established models of praise that persisted into the 19th century.

The Romanticists

Like during the Renaissance humanism movement, Western historical study in the early 19th century relied upon a firm foundation in the classics. However, to assume that approaches to the works of antiquity remained consistent across both periods would be a false premise. During the Romanticism movement, the classics occupied a sublime position in intellectual spheres. Simply put, it was a more sentimental age struggling to coexist with the rigidity of rational thought. William Prescott, who canonized the conquest with his monumental *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, wrote, "When I look into a Greek or Latin book…I experience much the same sensation one does who looks on the face of a dead friend,

[181] González de Barcia's comment reveals the polysemic nature of Cortés's character in *Historia de la conquista*. In truth, many of the classical heroic traits are comparable to the Christian or Reconquista heroic traditions. López de Gómara's work allows for either interpretation, but fundamentally, on a structural and methodological level, the chaplain employs classical imitation. However, I believe that the comingling of these traditions in *Historia de la conquista* is fascinating and certainly requires another investigation to properly address.
[182] Ibid, 197-198

and the tears not infrequently steal into my eyes."[183] Historians viewed the past with a sense of grandeur and awe. However, the writing of history provided an opportunity to apply a "scientific" approach to rationally and logically organize content, themes, and ideas.

Historian David Levin relates that many of the century's prominent historians began with other forms of literature before moving into serious historical study. They transplanted rhetorical and storytelling strategies from other fields into the emerging professional discipline of history. Prescott's concerns when writing *History of the Conquest of Mexico* appear more like a novelist's than a historian's, not in the sense of disregarding historical fact, but in that he worried about readability. Indeed, the conquest needed to be a dramatic affair with a clearly-defined setting and a larger-than-life individual to take the reins and guide the reader through history.[184]

Unlike López de Gómara, Prescott did not face immediate political repercussions for his retelling of the conquest. However, his history contains many broad similarities to the chaplain's work and reinforces a comparable ideology of conquest. Prescott situates his narrative within a comprehensible frame in his Book One, entitled, "View of the Aztec Civilization." Laced through his descriptions are allusions to the classical world. Like López de Gómara, he viewed the New World through the frame of antiquity. Prescott attempts to construct a hierarchy of civilizations, whereby the Aztecs (as he calls them) ranked similarly to ancient cultures of the Old World, like the Egyptians, Persians, Romans, and Greeks. For example, Mexican temples "somewhat resembled the pyramidal structures of ancient Egypt,"

[183] Levin, David. *History As Romantic Art*. (Stanford UP, 1959), 7. "[Prescott] was conditioned by the very attitude toward the Past that one can find in almost any literary young American's letters home from Europe during the early years of the nineteenth century—by the inclination to wallow in sentiment at the sight of ruins." Ibid.
[184] Ibid, 12,15,18,20.

and the Mexicans "had, moreover, thrown the veil of allegory over early tradition, and invested their deities with attributes savoring much more grotesque conceptions of the Eastern nations in the Old World, than of the lighter fictions of Greek mythology…"[185] Prescott constantly compares and contrasts the dominant features of these cultures such that any given statement about the Aztecs or Mexicans frequently strings together one or more of these associations. While quite obviously presenting problematic frames of historical reference, Prescott's analyses reveal a Western intellectual recreation of an otherwise unintelligible—or at least, difficult to understand—world. Despite this dilemma, Prescott, significantly, places emphasis on ethnography as a function of constructing setting.

Naturally, he uses Cortés as his primary agent of historical progress and as his protagonist to navigate both himself and his readers through foreign historical domains. Levin describes Prescott's focus in the following way: "The primary source of this unity [of interest] is, of course, Prescott's concentration on his hero's progress toward a single goal."[186] Cortés's physical progression and symbolic representations both indicate his central role as an agent of human progress.

Levin quotes Prescott's conceptualization of his project as "an epic in prose, a romance of chivalry."[187] This vision brings together Prescott and López de Gómara's work as histories modeled roughly as heroic epics. Necessary to this prose epic convention is the theme of movement and progression. Cortés's advance on Tenochtitlán and siege against the city, then,

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[185] Prescott, William H. *History of the Conquest of Mexico*. 1843. Reprint, (Barnes & Noble, 2008), 25,31.
[186] Levin, *Romantic*, 163.
[187] Ibid, 164. Prescott also reveals here his attention to classical *and* medieval forms of assessing character and writing history.

has broader implications pointing towards the ultimate triumph of civilization against "semi-civilization" and barbarity.[188]

Ultimately for Prescott, morality expressed through cultural, religious, and militaristic practices dictate rank of civilization. Low-ranking societies block progress, according to this logic, and therefore must succumb to a growing hegemony of powerful, civilized nations. At the conclusion of his account of Cortés's siege of Tenochtitlán, Prescott writes,

> Its fate may serve as a striking proof that a government which does not rest on the sympathies of its subjects cannot long abide; that human institutions, when not connected with human prosperity and progress, must fall—if not before the increasing light of civilization, by the hand of violence; by violence from within, if not from without. And who shall lament their fall?[189]

To Prescott, civilization and progress determined historical conflict. For Prescott, human sacrifice and other religious rituals necessitated the fall of Tenochtitlán, much in the same way that López de Gómara justified conquest by equating it to the ultimate triumph of Christianity. For Prescott, Cortés's actions represent this broader struggle. Levin notes that, "As Cortés moves methodically around the lake, taking town after town, his 'scientific' strategy stands out clearly against the Mexicans' reliance on inexhaustible numbers."[190] These battles become a clash of the rational mind against the allegedly savage. Sophisticated tactics and methods dominate the simplistic.

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[188] Ibid, 166, 170
[189] Prescott, *Mexico*, 551
[190] Levin, *Romantic*, 168

These moments also highlight Cortés's own genius and heroism. The consistency of Prescott's depiction of Cortés as a heroic leader silences moments that threaten to diminish Cortés's fame, such as the torture of Cuauhtémoc. However, these instances are few and far between, and Cortés's glorious victories frequently overshadow them. Prescott's account of Cortés's critical charge at Otumba exemplifies the New England historian's romanticization of Cortés's heroism and reveals Prescott's estimation of López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista*. Prescott writes,

> The eagle eye of Cortés no sooner fell on this personage [of the "Aztec commander"] than it lighted up with triumph…Then, crying his war-cry, and striking his iron heel into his weary steed, he plunged headlong into the thickest of the press. His enemies fell back, taken by surprise and daunted by the ferocity of the attack. Those who did not were pierced through with his lance or borne down by the weight of his charger. The cavaliers followed close in the rear. On they swept with the fury of a thunderbolt, cleaving the solid ranks asunder, strewing their path with the dying and the dead, and bounding over every obstacle in their way. In a few minutes they were in the presence of the Indian commander, and Cortés, overturning his supporters, sprang forward with the strength of a lion, and, striking him through with his lance, hurled him to the ground.[191]

Prescott glorifies the charge and single combat, both features of the classical hero. His eloquent language romanticizes this climactic moment and casts Cortés's victory over the Mexican standard bearer into a mold of Homeric importance, with a rhythm reminiscent of

[191] Prescott, *Mexico*, 407

Achilles's duel with Hector. Also significant to the description is Prescott's navigation between López de Gómara's and Díaz's conflicting narratives. The chaplain has Cortés single-handedly killing the standard-bearer, thus winning the day for the Spaniards and their allies. Díaz, on the other hand, claims that Juan de Salamanca got to the Mexican commander first and struck him down. While Prescott maintains that Cortés struck through the standard-bearer with his lance and threw him down, he also notes that shortly after, Juan de Salamanca "quickly dismounted and despatched the fallen chief. Then, tearing away his banner, he presented it to Cortés, as a trophy to which he had the best claim."[192] Prescott's incorporation of Juan de Salamanca shows his respect for Díaz's history, but his suggestion that Cortés had the best claim to the banner trophy reveals that Prescott cannot remove himself from *Historia de la conquista* and López de Gómara's heroization of Cortés. The chaplain and the New England historian's goals were remarkably similar, and Prescott's depiction of Cortés at Otumba weighs more heavily on López de Gómara's side than Díaz's.

Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* famously canonized the conquest and reached larger audiences than the Spanish writers ever did. However, his work also expands upon López de Gómara's legacy of Cortés. He justifies conquest and perpetuates the image of a glorious Spanish conqueror. While these historical constructions later received heavy criticism by increasingly progressive historians in the mid-late 20th century, his work became the popular conception of the conquest, a model of Eurocentricity that continued to be influential through the quadricentennial celebrations of Columbus's voyage.

[192] Ibid

My second object of analysis in this subsection is an engraving of Cortés at Otumba from the 19th century that I have set next to the Alexander Mosaic. Thus far, I have examined only literary sources, and now, I will shift very briefly to artistic representations of Cortés and Alexander.

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As with Prescott's romantic literary representation of Cortés, this engraving shares similarities not only to popular conceptions of the Spanish conqueror during the 19th century, but also to classical modes, most particularly the Alexander Mosaic (1st century CE). The visual parallels between the two works are obvious. Cortés and Alexander charge furiously from the left; their

[193] Battle of Otumba, Mexico, 7 July 1520 (engraving), Spanish School, (19th century) / Private Collection / Ken Welsh / The Bridgeman Art Library.
[194] Alexander Mosaic from commons.wikimedia.org. The original was created soon after the battle it depicts, but the Mosaic dates to the 1st century CE and was found in the House of the Faun in Pompeii.

foes retreat to the right. Cortés and Alexander wield spears, and their adversaries extend hands either in a desperate plea or in a futile rebuke. Death features prominently in the foreground of both with waves of pikes forming the background. Both depict the climactic moment of each battle, Otumba and Issus, with the heroic charge deciding the engagement. They are visual immortalizations of unquestionably daring and heroic scenes, stilled just before the outcome that seems either forever out of reach (Issus) or inevitable (Otumba).

The Spanish engraving appears as derived from López de Gómara's account of the battle, certainly not Díaz's. Given the broadly positive reception of *Historia de la conquista* during the 19th century, this hypothesis seems plausible. López de Gómara created the Alexandrian Cortés, and this engraving depicts him at the height of glory, the desperate yet ultimately successful single combat against a worthy foe.

The Romanticists not only accepted López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista*, but also expanded his legacy. Prescott viewed the conquest with a kind of reverential awe for its advancement of civilization and progress. Through Prescott, readers could relive the expedition in all its grandeur and heroism. The New England historian popularized the conquest, and his eloquent and moving tale of its events (for better and for worse) continues to inform readers and histories today. He canonized the heroic Cortés, the technically superior and proud Spaniards, and the brave yet misguided natives. The Spanish engraving proves that Prescott's conceptualization of the conquest transcended the literary sphere. It shows—perhaps more clearly than the literature has—the thematic closeness of the two figures. López de Gómara's history and his Cortés were popular during the 19th century and even briefly rivaled the authority of Díaz's *Historia verdadera*.

Ramón Iglesia and the Second Resurrection of Francisco López de Gómara (1940)

Ramón Iglesia, in his essay, "Two Studies on the Same Subject," pushes back against the privileged position of Díaz's *Historia verdadera*. Díaz's work held and still holds scholars in rapture because he witnessed the history about which he wrote. He swooped in after López de Gómara's death as the voice of reason and truth on the conquest. His supposedly objective account provided a refreshing balance to López de Gómara's more obvious biases.

Iglesia's intervention persuades powerfully because he identifies himself as once favoring Díaz. For Iglesia, the Spanish Civil War facilitated his change of perspective. He writes,

> I saw the part played by commanders who knew how to command, and the part played by soldiers who knew how to obey and die, and I saw the deep need of hierarchy and discipline in an army, something that we had been forgetting, or perhaps scorning in our civilized, liberal, and individualized society. And this is what made me review my whole concept of a number of historical problems, including the work of Bernal Díaz. After the war I re-read his book and studied more carefully than before the text of Gómara….although I do not accept the exclusive importance that Gómara gives Cortés, I recognize now that Cortés' part in the conquest was much more significant than Bernal allows.[195]

Obviously, the Spanish Civil War and the conquest of Mexico were vastly different wars, and one may reasonably question Iglesia's logic in this passage. However, his personal experience cannot be discounted. He uses it in much the same way Arrian does when evaluating

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[195] Iglesia, *Cortés*, 37

Alexander's battle tactics and their plausibility. Furthermore, Iglesia critiques historians at the essay's beginning for their decadence, scientific methods, and lack of humanity. This passage creates Iglesia as a scholar of a new tradition. His lived experience allows him a unique perspective and leverages his authority above other historians. This relation strikes the reader as all the more significant because Iglesia uses it to set up the contrasts between his initial intervention in favor of Díaz, and the later work reevaluating López de Gómara.

In Iglesia's second sub-essay, he argues that Díaz is not the objective commentator that scholars (particularly of the early 20th century) took him to be. He writes,

> In fact, most of Bernal's commentaries are nothing but violent outbursts…In his desire to contradict Gómara, Bernal not only disagrees with him in his relation of fundamentally identical events, but he makes Gómara say things that Gómara did not say anywhere, as when he speaks of the Spaniards' stay in Cempoal.[196]

For Iglesia, the importance of debunking Díaz is not to show that López de Gómara's account is somehow better, but to reveal that both have biases that cannot be ignored. The degree to which Díaz's account contains these biases calls for a reexamination of his "true" history. One cannot simply accept Díaz over López de Gómara out of hand, as many historians before and since have.

Iglesia ends his analysis with a brief comment on López de Gómara's "valuable assistance to Bernal, helping him to give tone to his work, to organize his chapters, and the like."[197] While Iglesia remains conservative in making this claim, I believe it to be an important one. Díaz supposedly finished *Historia verdadera* sixteen years after the publication of *Historia*

[196] Ibid, 57.
[197] Ibid, 63.

de la conquista, nine years after the chaplain's death. Díaz had the benefit, as he mentions in his preface, of reading López de Gómara's work before completing his own. As much as Díaz attempts to stifle the chaplain's account, he emulates many of the same structures. Iglesia's intervention complicates the old binaries of Díaz and truth, López de Gómara and lies. He challenges scholars to reconsider the historical value of *Historia de la conquista* and warns that "Gómara's work, like that of Cortés, can be disputed as much as you like, but it can never be ignored."[198] Iglesia placed López de Gómara back on the Spanish 16th century literary map and has influenced serious scholars of the chaplain, his work, and Cortés, into the present day.

Post-Quincentennial Reevaluation

The 1992 quincentenary of Columbus's voyage provoked scholars to re-analyze known accounts of the conquest. While the reception of Spanish accounts had largely changed since the early 20th century, the quincentenary called for the acknowledgement of a broad paradigmatic shift. It provided a mirror of comparison as scholars recalled the Eurocentric celebrations of the quadricentennial in 1892. The movement away from Eurocentrism raised questions about the enduring heroization of Columbus and the lasting impacts of his voyage, not only to Western scholars, but also to Americans. These questions (and others) resulted in a boom in re-evaluative scholarship, primarily in the Spanish-speaking world, though it also resonated among U.S. audiences. Initially centering on Columbus, early encounters, and lasting effects, the literature soon proliferated to encompass Columbus's contemporaries,

[198] Ibid.

including Cortés. And, looking at Cortés necessitates a consideration of López de Gómara as well.

Here, I briefly analyze three monographs written after the paradigmatic shift of the quincentenary. They are Glen Carmen's *Rhetorical Conquests*, Cristian Roa-De-La-Carrera's *Histories of Infamy*, and Matthew Restall's *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*. I aim to reveal these texts' interactions with broader trends evolving since the quincentenary and to contemplate their analyses of López de Gómara and his Cortés. These authors' interactions with the classical tradition also demonstrate the importance of context to quincentennial scholarship.

Carmen's *Rhetorical Conquests* is easily the most sympathetic to the chaplain of the three. He allows López de Gómara's writing to breathe, instead of crushing the narrative with condemnations of foul moral implications. In his introduction, he acknowledges recent movements in scholarship derived from the quincentennial reevaluation. He addresses the role of the colonized, one that has been pressed into the spotlight since the quincentenary. However, he pushes back against some of these presentist notions, asserting that Cortés's relationship with the indigenous populations is dissimilar from interpretations of imperialism today. He makes a distinction between methods of understanding the colonial period and of understanding the conquest.[199] However, he acknowledges that *Historia de la conquista* silences indigenous voices, and one would do well to remember the diminished role of Doña Marina (La Malinche) in *Historia de la conquista* as opposed to even *Historia verdadera* (not to mention Sahagún's *Florentine Codex* or the work of myriad contemporary historians who

[199] Carman, *Rhetorical*, 5. Carmen nuances his argument against presentism by maintaining that Cortés's "dialogue as conquest" correlates to current issues concerning neo-colonialism and Eurocentrism. Ibid, 6.

attempt to restore the silenced voices). López de Gómara hardly mentions Doña Marina, despite her obvious close relationship to Cortés. However, she plays a more prominent role in *Historia verdadera*, and as a translator, her voice becomes confused with Cortés's, which undercuts the legitimacy of the heroic Cortés. In this manner, Carmen engages with the evolving discussion following the quincentennial celebration by acknowledging historical silences and responding to presentist interpretations of the Spanish conquest. Carmen's subtle critique of the colonial theory that threatens to swallow the rhetoric of the conquest reflects the generally positive tone of his analysis of López de Gómara.

Furthermore, Carmen recognizes López de Gómara's classical heroic Cortés, but compares the conqueror only with Odysseus. He describes the chaplain's Cortés as a "duplicitous protean hero in the tradition of Odysseus."[200] His comparison hinges on the heroic figures' manipulative use of language. He associates Odysseus's encounter with Alcinoos, Phaiacian king, to Cortés's attempts to convert Moctezuma. Odysseus lies for ulterior purposes, and Carmen claims that Cortés's attempts at converting Moctezuma required similar deceptions to succeed in the broader religious war against the devil. Therefore, these manipulations or "adaptations" serve "the 'truth' better…just as Odysseus changes his shape and his story with the help of Minerva."[201] Carmen's integration of the classical tradition in his interpretation of López de Gómara reflects an appreciation for *Historia de la conquista*'s reminiscences. Unfortunately, Carmen's analysis does not advance far beyond this example, and the result is a very rough (and not entirely convincing) parallel between Cortés and a mythical hero. Regardless, this consideration of López de Gómara's creative process

[200] Ibid, 3.
[201] Ibid, 108-112.

differentiates Carmen's writing from other contemporary interpretations. The separation is one of degrees, but it has significant implications for the tone and shape of the work.

Roa-De-La-Carrera displays substantial knowledge on López de Gómara and 16th century Spain in his *Histories of Infamy.* However, his appropriation of a component of the quincentennial paradigm is both a great asset and a hindrance. The quincentenary sparked an interest in providing an Iberian-based context for 16th century biographies—a call for understanding the conquerors on their own terms.[202] Roa-De-La-Carrera has made a significant contribution to the field by situating López de Gómara concretely in the intellectual and literary world of mid-16th century Iberia. His analysis, however, has a limiting effect on language signification in *Historia de la conquista*. In *Histories of Infamy*, the historical context surrounding and enveloping López de Gómara's text suffocates the rhetoric. It dissociates the art (eloquence) from the literature. This textual stifling allows Roa-De-La-Carrera to make evaluative judgments like the following: "In [López de Gómara's] attempt to produce an ethically persuasive argument in favor of Spanish imperialism, however, he failed. The purpose of my book is to examine the main issues that this failure raises in terms of the analysis of Spanish colonial writing."[203] To what extent can historians claim to judge the success or failure of persuasion? Roa-De-La-Carrera later qualifies this initial assertion by defining the genre of conquest narrative as a persuasive tool to effect change in Spanish colonial policy. *Historia de la conquista* did not result in institutional justification of conquest. Nevertheless in order to prove that *Historia de la conquista* "failed" on these grounds, one would need to know López

[202] Block, David. "Quincentennial Publishing: An Ocean of Print." *Latin American Research Review* 29, no. 3 (January 1, 1994): 101–128, 109.
[203] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 2.

de Gómara's intentions, a problematic premise.[204] Furthermore, the binary of "success" and "failure" introduces a simplistic tool with which to express the rhetorical value of a book; even when limited to a specific context, this binary is both harmful to Roa-De-La-Carrera's historical study and challenging to support.

One may also be tempted to term *Historia de la conquista* a "failure" based on the quantity and ferocity of negative intellectual reactions.[205] Aside from again removing the significance of artistic process from literature, I find this claim to be inaccurate despite its logic. I hope to have suggested that the criticisms of Las Casas and Díaz implicitly acknowledge *Historia de la conquista* as one of the most—if not the most—influential conquest narratives available. I also buttress my claim by questioning the effectiveness of the Council of the Indies' ban. This complication proposes that *Historia de la conquista* did have persuasive power. Carmen supports this position by emphasizing the "initial success and lasting influence of…*Historia de la conquista de México*."[206] Furthermore, he notes the history's "ideological force as stories" as a function of claims to truth.[207]

Matthew Restall appears to arrive at the same conclusion by tracing López de Gómara's influence on Prescott and Prescott's subsequent importance for numerous other writers such as C. Falkenhorst (*With Cortés in Mexico: A Historical Romance* [1892],[208] Edison

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[204] Cf. "The Intentional Fallacy" from *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* by Wimsatt, W.K. and Beardsley, Monroe C. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954). "…the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art, and it seems to us that this is a principle which goes deep into some differences in the history of critical attitudes."

[205] See Roa-De-La-Carrera's introduction to *Histories of Infamy* for an analysis of several of these reactions.

[206] Carmen, *Rhetorical*, 6.

[207] Ibid, 10.

[208] This style of romantic history typifies the hegemonic discourse of the quadricentennial.

Marshall (*Cortés and Marina* [1963]), and Hugh Thomas (*Conquest* [1995]).[209] Carmen's and Restall's writings, then, tacitly contest the evaluative judgment of the self-proclaimed purpose of Roa-De-La-Carrera's monograph.

In relation to the analysis of the classical tradition, there is agreement between *Histories of Infamy* and this work. Roa-De-La-Carrera cites López de Gómara's inclusion and analysis of an anecdote on Alexander in *Historia general* that draws comparisons between the Macedonian conqueror's ideas of universal dominion through conquest and the Christian equivalent. Roa-De-La-Carrera writes, "The only practical way of establishing a claim of dominion over the Indies was through a record of territories explored."[210] He highlights the importance of building knowledge of the world as a component of conquest, which parallels Alexander's conquests and López de Gómara's depiction of Cortés's. Alexander's wars expanded Greek and Macedonian knowledge of the known world. His campaigns through present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, redefined the map, ethnographic studies, and natural philosophy. Similarly, Cortés's expedition was one of exploration as well as conquest, and López de Gómara consistently provides an ethnographic report of the towns and cities that Cortés encountered in order to highlight the conqueror's expansion of Spanish knowledge of the world. This inclusion reflects Roa-De-La-Carrera's careful attention to López de Gómara's education and 16th century Spanish interpretations and understandings of the so-called New World. While context tends to eclipse López de Gómara's creative process in

[209] Restall, Matthew. *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17-18, 165n60. Restall suggests that "the great man theory of history" was still prevalent as late as 1982 (Ibid, 165n60).
[210] Roa-De-La-Carrera, *Histories*, 102.

Histories of Infamy, Roa-De-La-Carrera's analysis is not as black-and-white as his interpretation of "failure."

Matthew Restall's *Seven Myths* is the last text I examine in relation to the quincentennial movement. This monograph definitively moves away from Eurocentric histories and presents a counter-narrative to the conquest that challenges López de Gómara's interpretation of Cortés and deconstructs the heroization "myth." It is productive to view *Seven Myths* as foregrounding the quincentennial focus on historically silenced indigenous and Spanish voices.[211] His work dovetails with that of Inga Clendinnen in attempting to understand how the conquest was possible from an un-Eurocentric perspective.[212] Clendinnen's article, "Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty" (1993), also influenced Carmen's understanding of the conquest outside of the limiting historical perspective of chroniclers like López de Gómara.

Restall's reading of López de Gómara is important because he uses *Historia de la conquista* more as a historical source than an object of analysis in its own right. He reads with an intensely critical eye, cross-examining conquest narratives (much in the same way Bosworth does) and attempts to piece together a coherent history. This methodology stands as a dramatic contrast to Clendinnen's analysis. Clendinnen's omission of *Historia de la conquista* as a source forces her to place more emphasis on other accounts like Cortés's *Cartas de Relación* and Díaz's *Historia verdadera*. However, Restall realizes that a narrative of the conquest (even one that challenges the Eurocentric perspective) must include a wide variety of writers, López de Gómara included. He evidences this view by beginning each chapter with

[211] Restall uses Michel Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* as a theoretical model.

[212] Strangely, Clendinnen examines *Historia verdadera*, but inexplicably leaves out *Historia de la conquista*, presumably for its problematic heroic protagonist, justification of conquest, and generally Eurocentric perspective.

a series of quotations offering numerous perspectives on the chapter's contents. López de Gómara appears on page one, praising Cortés for the success of the conquest and the conversion of natives.

Restall centers his initial analysis of López de Gómara on *Historia de la conquista*'s influence on Prescott. Like López de Gómara, Prescott frames the conquest as a biography of Cortés. His history romanticizes the conflict between what he saw as two diametrically opposed forces, the European civilized man and the Mesoamerican savage. Restall describes Prescott as "repackag[ing] the Conquest myths…He presented them to an audience eager to read that a 'handful' of Europeans, because of their inherently superior qualities, could triumph over numerous barbarous natives despite the odds and the hardships."[213] Prescott's history is the triumph of Western civilization. What resulted in negative reactions to *Historia de la conquista* was precisely what made *History of the Conquest of Mexico* so attractive to early 19th century readers. Restall's acknowledgement of López de Gómara's influence and his incorporation of the chaplain as a source on the conquest represents a divergence from popular quincentennial methodology, but his critical reading lands him at a similar conclusion, that Eurocentric conquest narratives (despite their temporal significance) obscure, contradict, lie, and silence.

A brief examination of Restall's interactions with the classical tradition will close my analysis of his text. He writes,

> Spaniards often compared their own heroes who had triumphed against the odds to those of ancient Greece and Rome; in 1631 the great Spanish jurist Juan de Solórzano

[213] Restall, *Myths*, 18.

> argued in his 520-page condemnation of the officers who had surrendered the 1628 silver fleet to Dutch pirates without putting up a fight that "Alexander, Cortés, Pizarro, and others, with a few well-disciplined old soldiers, vanquished innumerable opponents"[214]

This short but colorful story accurately characterizes the popular place of the classical tradition in colonial-era Spain. At least in Solórzano's mind, Cortés occupied an imagined space next to Alexander as one of the greatest military leaders in history. In this example, Cortés has become a national standard for bravery and glory. The superiority of the Spanish conqueror is an implicit assumption. It can hardly be contested that López de Gómara's work both elevated Cortés to this immortalized historical status and provided the means of comparison to Alexander.

That these three landmark texts—emblematic of recent changes in discourse since the quincentenary of Columbus's voyage—acknowledge implicitly and explicitly the importance of the classical tradition, speaks to the importance of a classical education during Renaissance-era Spain. It also illustrates these authors' adherence to the quincentennial call for contextual readings of conquest narratives.

Far from a complete historiography, I hope to have provided a glimpse at the significance of the gears operating the rhetorical machinery of these works, from López de Gómara's contemporaries to the present. This chapter has also mapped out the broad trends in the historiography of the chaplain's work; there were three critical periods (16th century,

[214] Ibid, 172n2.

Romanticism, and post-quincentennial) separated by two cycles of resurrection (González de Barcia and Iglesia).

Scholarly opinions on López de Gómara and the historical function of *Historia de la conquista* differ drastically in the current context of the post-quincentennial era—as they always have since the chaplain's book was published. Even so, I hope to have demonstrated that something has changed. López de Gómara's writing has not been forgotten. His rhetoric is as pleasing today as it was in the 16th century, but like then, intellectuals continue to react negatively to his justification of Spanish imperialism. Furthermore, the heroic Cortés remains alive and well in U.S. middle school and high school classrooms. The overwhelmingly accepted narrative still attributes the success of the conquest to Cortés, despite the recent work of scholars like Clendinnen and Restall. López de Gómara's Cortés walks alongside the counter-narratives, and while battered, he fights on against the critical eye. As of this writing, Restall's interpretation of Spanish conquest myths has yet to take a firm hold. The conventional narrative in the U.S. remains fundamentally Eurocentric. However, I am confident that as time passes, the scholarly narrative of events will continue to filter into popular conceptions of the conquest. The skepticism for conventional histories may eventually wash away popular acceptance of the heroic Cortés, until his next resurrection.

Conclusion: Interpretive Allusion

López de Gómara imagines the world of the Spanish conquests within a fundamentally classical narrative structure. This interpretation of the 16th century world allows Cortés to emerge as a heroic figure modeled in large part after Alexander. The chaplain builds Cortés's legacy with narrative and rhetorical tools that Arrian, Plutarch, and Curtius Rufus employed in their narratives of Alexander.

López de Gómara's allusions situate the work as sympathetic to conquest, to exploitation, and to Catholic conversion. Scholars who implicitly or explicitly dissociate the chaplain's classical rendition of the conquest from these more obvious themes misread *Historia de la conquista*. Writers of both antiquity and the Renaissance humanist movement expected their readers to identify and understand their texts' symbolic, tropological, and structural reminiscences. Unfortunately, the works and culture of antiquity are not as rigorously studied today as they were both during the Renaissance humanist and Romanticist movements. Contemporary pedagogy has caused some historians to ignore the critical role of classical imitation and to focus exclusively on López de Gómara's stance on contemporary themes. With this thesis, I hope to have demonstrated that the classical lens of *Historia de la conquista* deeply influences reader comprehension of the chaplain's political and ethical interventions. Critics like Las Casas and Díaz realized the necessity of deconstructing or re-appropriating classical motifs in order to properly denounce López de Gómara's work. Their reactions indicate the central position of classical literature in the intellectual world of the 16th century.

The chaplain's epic recreates the conquest as a noble and glorious endeavor and, in his mind, as the second most important event in human history. However, many of his contemporaries disagreed with this interpretation. They argued persuasively that López de Gómara was not a witness to the history about which he wrote, and in truth, he never even traveled beyond a few hundred miles of Spain and Italy.[215] His eloquent descriptions of places, people, and events in the Americas, then, must occur in imagined space. They must be either interpretations of sources or his creations, not sensory recollections. However, even if this is true, I do not believe that it devalues his work. *Historia de la conquista* reveals as much about Cortés and his conquests as it does about the 16th century Spanish intellectual sphere.

The Alexander-Cortés parallel demonstrates the importance of the hero in history. The chaplain's account of the conquest follows Cortés's life from birth to death. A single, great man drives the history and dictates its movements and rhythms. How realistic is this portrayal? In his narrative, Díaz elevates the role of the common soldier to undercut Cortés's authority. Even Prescott thought that López de Gómara focused too heavily on the heroic Cortés. Recent works like Clendinnen's "Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty" and Restall's *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* argue persuasively against narratives of heroism and Spanish superiority. These works challenge the historical value of *Historia de la conquista*.

These critiques, however, require a more difficult question to be asked. Did López de Gómara write *Historia de la conquista* to depict the most realistic history possible? His self-proclaimed emphasis on eloquence and pleasurable history (including the supernatural), his moralistic episodes, and the impact of witnessing the final, inglorious years of Cortés's life, all

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[215] Even his presence during Charles V's siege of Algiers has been called into question.

move *Historia de la conquista* away from a strict account of "the truth." López de Gómara's self-conscious style in his first two chapters indicates awareness on some level of his text's historical problems. Eloquence precedes fact in order of importance.

Furthermore, his primary goal was to craft a heroic Cortés, a vehicle for Spanish and Catholic ambition. To effectively do so, he had to leverage or omit facts when necessary. For example, the Cortés fighting at the Battle of Otumba was not merely a man, but a daring, brave, courageous, near-perfect military commander. The conquest provided the medium through which men like Cortés could achieve glory and "convert" millions to Catholicism. The chaplain's literary portraiture of Cortés signifies his desire to portray the conqueror as a symbol of national identity. It humanizes Cortés and claims that he was a brave, lucky, and ambitious individual who rose to the occasion, something any God-fearing Spaniard could do.

These central components of the text further remove it from historical truth, as Cortés's story allegorizes both López de Gómara's nationalist and religious ideals. This claim emphasizes the dual role of historical narrator as historical actor as well. In *Historia de la conquista*, Cortés's ability to shape the world around his desires and ambitions ultimately reflects López de Gómara's to a certain degree. Indeed, many 16th century writers on the conquests somewhat selfishly employed their historical accounts to further their own agendas. The heroic Cortés, whose adventures add meaning and morality to a wild New World, allows the chaplain to interpret reality as he pleases. The narrative comes to life through the window of the classical world, which López de Gómara manipulates for his own ends.

Does López de Gómara depict Cortés's true character? Despite sophisticated cross-referencing techniques, it is impossible to truly know, but I maintain that it does not matter.

The heroic Cortés is the chaplain's interpretation of a world he never saw. Receptions and analyses of *Historia de la conquista* are more significant because the relationship between historical narrator and reader (or listener) decides historical validity and value. López de Gómara realized this and sought to monumentalize Cortés as a hero in every Spaniard's memory. He sought to write an account more powerful than reality to truly produce a figure for the ages. His commitment to the ideology of 16th century Spanish imperialism rather than facts pointing to genocide, pandemic, mass slavery, and the destruction of cultural identity, caused many of his contemporaries to see him as a threat, and the Council of the Indies accordingly banned his work. Impassioned, negative criticism only emphasizes the authority of *Historia de la conquista* at the time of publication. López de Gómara's battle over memory against Las Casas and Díaz reinforces the ideological potency of his text, a product of eloquence and allegory, not fact.

This examination of *Historia de la conquista* within its literary and historical contexts reveals a method of understanding the past. Writing creates its own world of truth, valid by virtue of its existence. López de Gómara's account reflects his recreation of reality through the lens of his classical education. The Alexander-Cortés parallel molds the Spanish conqueror into a heroic figure, a conduit through which López de Gómara immortalizes his interpretation of history.

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