

NOT SPANISH, NOT NAHUATL:  
A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE VARIED PERSPECTIVES OF THE  
CONQUEST OF MEXICO AND HISPANIOLA

by

JOSEPH ALAEDDINE

A THESIS

Presented to the Departments of  
Romance Languages and Latin American Studies  
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
Bachelor of Arts

June 2006

Copyright 2006 Joseph Alaeddine

An Abstract of the Thesis of  
Joseph Alaeddine for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts  
in the department of Romance Languages and Latin American Studies  
to be taken August 2006  
Title: NOT SPANISH, NOT NAHUATL: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF  
THE VARIED PERSPECTIVES OF THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO  
AND HISPANIOLA

---

Primary Thesis Advisor: Prof. Leonardo Garcia-Pabon

In essence, the problem with history is that it is often told by those who win battles, win land, gain riches and status, leaving those who are subjugated to dwell in the shadows of history. This study seeks to write a collaborative piece, my work paired with that of many different eyewitnesses, in order to uncover what really happened in the conquest of Mexico and Hispaniola (modern Haiti and Dominican Republic). In providing a plethora of different perspectives of the conquest, the truth will become illuminated. In fact, this study began as a series of questions, and will hopefully leave the readers inquisitive so that they may then search out the truth for themselves rather than having it spoon-fed to them on the golden flatware of kings or through the pens of the wealthy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is no way to write this so that it can convey the genuine appreciation I have for each and every kind word or lesson heretofore. Every surprise cup of coffee, every thought-provoking conversation, every hug from my parents, every time I could see my success in the eyes of the people who care for me, every moment this project transcended literature and became a fight for the collective literary representation of all parties included, has made this entire process worth it. Specifically, this piece is for Luis Verano, a mentor for me who has managed to put passion back into literature, where it belongs. This is for Leonardo García Pabón, whose guidance in representing this delicate subject has opened my eyes to how minute details in representation can cause grave repercussions. This is for Heather Quarles, who was teaching my Spanish class with enthusiasm and care for each student when I decided for the first time that I wanted to be a professor. This is for Hank Alley and Joe Fracchia who have consistently shown as much concern for their students' progress as individuals as they have for their progress as students. This is for my grandparents for the amazing home-cooking I got when I really needed it, and for the company that warmed me up as much as the food did. This is for anyone who has or will ever fear a thesis, so that they know definitively that it can be done and enjoyed. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Lastly, this is for me. Thanks for being there to support me when I really needed you. You'd better not leave when I get to graduate school.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. PROLOGUE, by DIAZ DEL CASTILLO.....	1
II. INTRODUCTION.....	2
III. A MESSAGE FROM MIGUEL LEON-PORTILLA.....	5
IV. UNDERSTANDING HISTORY.....	6
V. INITIAL ISSUES.....	11
VI. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.....	12
VII. HERNAN CORTES.....	18
VIII. LA MALINCHE.....	24
IX. BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO.....	32
X. BARTOLOME DE LAS CASAS.....	39
XI. CONCLUSION.....	45
XII. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	49

## PROLOGUE

I have observed that the most celebrated chroniclers, before they begin to write their histories, first set forth a Prologue and Preface with the argument expressed in lofty rhetoric in order to give luster and repute to their statements, so that the studious readers who peruse them may partake of their melody and flavour. But I, being no Latin scholar, dare not venture on such a preamble or prologue, for in order properly to extol the adventures which we met with and the heroic deeds we accomplished during the Conquest of New Spain and its provinces in the company of the valiant and doughty Captain, Don Hernando Cortés (who later on, on account of his heroic deeds, was made Marqués del Valle) there would be needed an eloquence and rhetoric far beyond my powers. That which I have myself seen and the fighting I have gone through, with the help of God, I will describe quite simply, as a fair eye witness without twisting events one way or another. I am now an old man, over eighty-four years of age, and I have lost my sight and hearing, and, as luck would have it, I have gained nothing of value to leave to my children and descendants but this my true story, and they will presently find out what a wonderful story it is. (“Discovery” xxxiii)

-Bernal Díaz del Castillo-

## INTRODUCTION

Every child in the United States has probably walked into a classroom at some point in his life and listened to what was told to him without questioning it. My earliest academic memory is going over how Columbus *discovered America* while we outlined our hands with white crayons on brown construction paper. Piecing together the yarn and various paper cutouts, assembling our Thanksgiving turkeys, I always had a warm, fuzzy feeling around Columbus. Sadly, at my school the teachers blended Columbus with the pilgrims, and left us students ignorant of the idea that there are many ways to tell the story. I didn't take time to question that version of the story, Columbus being the hero, until late in my high school career. Even then, I had no idea what the *real* story was. I just knew something was shady about it. Throughout the last four years of college, I have continuously clung to any piece of information I hear about what actually happened when Columbus accidentally bumped into Hispaniola and Cuba. This search for the truth has been my own. I never would have reached this point in my education if I hadn't strayed from what was taught in order to broaden what I could learn. For this, I blame the individuals who don't take the time to cultivate themselves in deeper understanding of history, and applaud those students who do.

I have enough opinions about this particular topic, the age of the conquest, to fill volumes of texts that no one would want to read, or to fill classrooms of apathetic students rolling their eyes at anything I have to say. At this point, my opinion is of little consequence. I have been trained to be skeptical through being forced to create my own filter for so much horribly biased nonsense. If I chose to believe everything that was told to me, I would never get anywhere in my education. I am writing this for an equally skeptical reader. I expect you to have questions. If you did not have any, there would not be any reason for you to pick up my work. My goal in this study is to provide the reader with a comprehensive range of perspectives of the Spanish conquest of Mexico and

surrounding territories. This is not Columbus's story, nor does it belong to Cortés or any other individual. This story is a long and involved process, a complicated labyrinth of eyewitness testimony and critical analysis.

Facts can be bent to favor one side or the other. Numbers can be exaggerated to make an obvious victory into a brave and perilous long-shot. However, it is much harder to bend primary sources, or manipulate Cortés's own words when I see them written in front of me and am providing them to the reader. In using these primary sources I hope to eliminate as many of the middlemen as possible, so that my readers may get as honest a view as possible. However, we can never forget the motives of those writing these letters or studies. Therefore, I will contrast their own versions of the story of the conquest with other studies, such as Broken Spears, a well-known compilation of indigenous texts describing the conquest, which will add another dimension to their story. There will have to be some gray area when I deal with Nahua texts due to the need for translation (as explained further later). I want to know what it felt like to watch their society fall apart at the hands of another civilization, especially when Tenochtitlán was far and away the largest and most powerful society in Mexico at the time. I want to know what it felt like for some to watch their fellow soldiers treat natives so poorly that they devoted the rest of their lives to fighting for the rights of the indigenous peoples of cities conquered by their king. There is much more to this topic than facts and figures. The people, both victors and vanquished, deserve a chance to be aligned with the other and be understood.

Furthermore, I want to erase this polarized construction of Nahua (Aztec or indigenous) vs. Spanish, because above all else, they are both human and will have individual perspectives. This is not a question of "either/or" being affected. I seek to divide the groups that have been made. Assuming that there was a single common Spanish perspective and a single Nahua perspective is as much a fallacy as saying that in any conflict there are only two sides, and not any gray area in between. Our answers lay in examining the "both/and" perspectives e.g. not only do some of the Spanish

conquerors have a change of heart during the conquest, they seek to undo the pain that they have caused to the natives by devoting their life to their service. In addition, the collaborative nature of the efforts in the conquest is not to be underestimated. For example, the tribes threatened by early Mexico superpowers were in many ways as instrumental in the fall of the Western Hemisphere to the newcomers from the east. Simplifying this piece of history takes away all of its power and turns it into a cliché rhyme for 3rd graders. (*In the year 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.*) There are many subdivisions of either society, in religion, motivation, purpose, outcome, etc. and all of them deserve to be put on a level playing field. The responsibility for the conquest belongs to the individuals, their individual decisions and actions.

## A MESSAGE FROM MIGUEL LEON-PORTILLA

(Mexican editor and chronicler of The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico)

As is well known but quickly forgotten, the victors ordinarily write history. The losers are usually silenced or, if that is impossible, they are dismissed as liars, censored for being traitors, or left to circulate harmlessly in the confined spaces of the defeated. Bringing marginalized perspectives to light is therefore a revolutionary act of some importance: it can subvert dominant understandings, it might inspire other victims to raise their voice and pen their protests, and it always forces old histories to be rewritten to include or at least respond to the vision of the vanquished. (Leon-Portilla xi)

## UNDERSTANDING HISTORY

Here I provide a list of important dates in Nahua and Spanish history in order to help the reader visualize this story as more than a collection of unrelated dates and anecdotes. Understanding the context of the conquest gives depth to the players:

Indigenous Mexican dates:

Spanish dates:

600-900 CE: This period, known as Classic Era of Mesoamerica, includes the time the Mayan people inhabited much of Mexico. Though powerful themselves, their contemporaries, like those living in the northeast part of the Yucatan Peninsula in Teotihuacán, also maintained vast civilizations.

750 CE: The Toltecs, people coming from the north to seek better land for their agriculture-based society, invaded Teotihuacán.

9th Century CE: The Toltecs move in on the Mayan empire and take over by 900 CE.

711-1492 CE: The Moors control Spain and leave traces of strong Islamic influence in Andalusia (southern Spain) that are still evident today.

1175 CE: The Toltecs eventually fall when subjected to the northern pressure also seeking better agriculture. The fall of Tula (the Toltec capital) leaves middle Mexico without a central authority.

1250 CE: By 1250, the Tenocha, who were 10 thousand strong, follow their former sun god, Huitzilopochtli (later the patron god of Mexico), from Aztlán to the shores of Lake Texcoco.

1325 CE: Living among turbulent and competitive conditions in the city of Texcoco, the Tenocha (also known as the Mexica) are forced into the marshy lands to the south. Upon arrival, they see an eagle perched on a cactus eating a snake. This sign, believed to be sent from the gods, convinces the Tenocha people that they have come home. They settle here and name this city Tenochtitlan.

1426-1440 CE: The ruler of Tenochtitlan is Itzcoatl, and the city who was forced to the south by Texcoco finally becomes its ally. The second strongest civilization in Mexico at this time, the people in Michoacán, become Tenochtitlan's new enemies.

1440-1468 CE: Montezuma I (also known as Moctezuma) rules Tenochtitlan, a city that spans five square miles and is home to 150 thousand inhabitants. There is an increased centralization of power to Montezuma I and an increased division of class. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, upon arriving in Tenochtitlan in 1519, was caught off guard by the Mexican city:

Gazing on such wondrous sights, we did not know what to say, or whether what appeared before us was real, for on one side, on the land there were great cities, and in the lake [Lake Texcoco] ever so many more, and the lake was crowded with canoes, and in the causeway were many

bridges at intervals, and  
in front of us stood the  
great city of Mexico.  
(qtd.in Schwartz 8)

1479 CE: The Spanish Inquisition is established to insure and enforce the orthodoxy of society. The focus is on those practicing or recently converted from Islam or Judaism.

1492 CE: The last Muslim kingdom in Spain, Granada, falls to the Catholic arms. After Spain becomes “reconquered” after hundreds of years of struggle by the Catholics in the *Reconquista*, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella force the remaining Jews and Moors out of Spain in a movement known as the Expulsion of the Jews and Moors.

When worlds collide:

1492 CE: “Columbus sails the ocean blue.” Cristobal Colón (Christopher Columbus) sails toward the Americas in search of East Asia.

1495-97 CE: Half of the 250, 000 Arawak living on Hispaniola were murdered or committed suicide as a means to get away from the Spanish.

1493-1513 CE: The Spanish invade and conquer Hispaniola (1508), Puerto Rico (1508), Jamaica (1509), Cuba (1511), Panama/Castilla de Oro (1509-13)

1514 CE: Spanish soldiers, including Bernal Díaz del Castillo, are employed to Cuba from Panama after the fighting escalates.

1517 CE: Soldiers under Francisco Hernández de Córdoba explore the Yucatan Peninsula. They returned with stories of exotic cultures and great civilizations. Diego Velázquez, Spanish governor of Cuba, organizes a new expedition under his nephew Juan de Grijalvo.

1519 CE: Grijalvo returns with stories of gold and grandeur. Velázquez organizes another expedition and hires Hernán Cortés to lead. This is Bernal Díaz's third trip through Mexico by age 23. At this point, the population of central Mexico is 25 million people.

1522 CE: 3 years later, the ruler of Tenochtitlan has been captured, and the empire has collapsed in part due to its vertical hierarchy. Once the executive has fallen, the rest topples over.

1550 CE: There are 500 Arawak left on Hispaniola at this point, and the last of them will die off by 1650

.

## INITIAL ISSUES

In the process of examining different accounts of the conquest, there are many important concepts to take into consideration. For example, how narrative constructs character. Discussing Cortés as just one of the soldiers changes the perception of his story from being a leader and rebel who sought glory for himself into a mere worker for the greater good of Spain. Usually, he is viewed as the former, and as we see in his portrayal of himself, he wouldn't have wanted it any other way. The role of Francisco de Gómara's narration of the conquest is vital to the understanding of Cortés as a conqueror as well as an egomaniac. He was hired by Cortés to tell his story, showing the leader in a positive light at all costs. The subjectivity of the source and the individual is extremely important to the story. How does Cortés construct himself? Why does he write the story that way? Some say Cortés had to write the history the way he did in order to gain favor with the Spanish crown after rebelling in search his own glory.

Díaz del Castillo fought for hope, for recognition, a sense of localism, or maybe his pride in his lineage, though his story emphasizes how little Cortés did as compared to the rest of the Spanish soldiers. This cross-criticism among the Spanish plays a giant role in my study as well. What did Cortés have going for him? What led to *his* win over the Mexica/Tenocha people? La Malinche (also known as Doña Marina), an interpreter who worked with Cortés and Montezuma, helped immensely with facilitating communication between the two leaders, and probably led to interaction that allowed Montezuma to let down his arms, leading to his ultimate defeat. What role did other indigenous tribes play in the conquest? How does their story differ from that of the people in opposition to the Spanish? These are all questions that one must keep in mind when reading. Why they say what they do, and how they say it, becomes just as important as what they say.

## CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS/ CRISTOBAL COLON (c1451-1506)

The treatment of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawak)-- the quiet acceptance of conquest and murder in the name of progress-- is only one aspect of a certain approach to history, in which the past is told from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders. (Zinn 9)

Of all of the Spanish Conquistadors, few names are as infamous as that of Christopher Columbus (Cristóbal Colón). In the United States, we celebrate him with a day off school or work, which in these trying times is associated with a positive, restful experience rather than studying his accomplishments. He has sparked debate across the world for being revered as the brave and valiant discoverer of America as well as being labeled a horrible navigator and ruthless explorer. Like any other story, his has more than one side. In using Howard Zinn's work, A People's History of the United States, a modern and far left perspective, showing Columbus as a villain, is presented and illuminates the one we know as the valiant discoverer. This work will be compared to Columbus's own diaries, Diario de a Bordo, in order to show how Columbus constructs himself and provide a contrast to the unilateral view of the ruthless explorer. In placing these two texts next to each other, I hope to juxtapose them and open the spectrum so that the gray area may be explored further. John F. Garganigo's Huellas de las Literaturas Hispanoamericanas will act in filling in this gray area with biographical information as well as compiling other critiques that are important to this study.

Christopher Columbus was born in c1451, though his birthplace is unknown. Due to his early studies in Genoa, Italy, he was thought to be Italian. After examining his inability to write fluidly in Italian, it becomes apparent that he was not. In his diaries, he used many expressions of Portuguese descent, though no one can be sure where his native land was. The imprecision of his personal diary to describe his youth have led to further mystery. His Diario de a Bordo constitutes the first descriptions of the Americas by a European, though his imprecision was also evident in his description of the New

World in general. This diary, more importantly, began the Latin American narrative as a whole. It shows the reader that his intent was to find the Orient, and to meet with Emperor Khan, for whom he had carried a letter from Catholic Kings of Spain. Therefore, any descriptions he made of the Americas came in the form of generalities, as he was focused on reaching the Orient and carrying out fantasies he had read about in Marco Polo's Viajes. His colonization spread from land and people to language, as his narrative ensured that the story of the western hemisphere was to be told in a common, unifying language: Spanish (Garganigo 47).

Tzvetan Todorov asserts in his book La Conquista de America. La Cuestión del Otro (The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other) that Columbus was driven by the universal victory of Christianity in the New World. The Conqueror's love of gold and riches has been described as his understanding of the grace of God (Garganigo 49). In essence, he believed that he was coming across the wealth of gold because of his faith. He was chosen by God to find riches, not just to convert the people he encountered. In his diary, he held a record of four categories of gold, but had no reference to the religious experience of the natives until he came across a temple on December 3, 1492 (50).

Columbus begins his diary by setting the religious scene in Spain. "Cristianísimos y muy altos y muy excelentes y muy poderosos príncipes, Rey y Reina de las Españas y de las islas de la mar, Nuestros Señores, este presente año de 1492, después de Vuestras Altezas haber dado fin a la guerra de los moros que reinaban en Europa" (Most Christian and high and excellent and powerful leaders, King and Queen of the Spains and the islands of the sea, our lords, this present year of 1492, after Your Highnesses have finished the war of the Moors who reigned in Europe) and continues to compliment them in regard to their holiness (Colón 52). The year in which Columbus traveled and how it coincided with his strong religious beliefs is not mere coincidence. It is pivotal in understanding the political motivation and social setting in Spain at the time of the conquest. The Moors had occupied Spain for roughly 700 years, practicing Islam rather

than Christianity, and they were expelled from the country, along with the Jews, in 1492. Is it surprising then that Columbus, in his representation of the Spanish crown while traveling was also fiercely Christian?

“Me anoblecieron que dende en adelante yo me llamase *Don* y fuese Almirante Mayor de la mar oceána e Visorrey y Gobernador perpetuo de todas las islas y tierra firme que yo descubriese y ganase... y partí yo de la ciudad de Granada a 12 días del mes de mayo del mesmo año de 1492, en sábado” (I will be made noble in moving forward and they will call me *Don* and Admiral Major of the Oceanic Sea and perpetual Viceroy and Governor of all of the islands and land that I have discovered and earned ... and I left the city of Granada on the twelfth day of the month of May of this same year of 1492, on Saturday) (Colón 53). This particular passage in his diary shows that his motivation may not have been entirely to help the crown. He wants to ensure that he is compensated for his expedition. In order to make sure that he doesn't come across as too selfish, he adds the part about leaving from Granada, the very last city which had been newly Christianized by the Spanish rulers thus signifying the power that this monarchy had that its precedents did not. It is not just flattery at individual level, so much as proving himself to be pious and proud of his religion's victories.

As the voyagers embarked on their journey, there were several more examples that Columbus was trying to protect his name, and get the credit from the Spanish royalty, though he was eventually proven to not have ever known where he had landed. It was Amerigo Vaspucci in 1503 who discovered America for what it actually was, a New World (as far as Europe was concerned) and wrote about it in his book, Mundus Novus. Columbus, had he realized that he was on a different continent, may not have identified the birds he heard as nightingales, or have likened the trees to Spain in May. José Antonio Maravall, author of Los Factores de la idea del progreso en el Renacimiento Español (The Factors of the Idea of Progress in the Spanish Renaissance), asserts that mistaking tropical birds for nightingales and the tropical Caribbean for arid Spain in May

is impossible, and that Columbus was therefore unaware of what he saw before him (Garganigo 50-51). Columbus tells the King and Queen quite blatantly that Rodrigo de Triana, from the quicker ship *Pinta*, signaled to the *Santa Maria* that he had spotted land. He continues to say that from the flagship, on the bow, Columbus was the first to see land, and that it would have been impossible to get the right positioning from the smaller ship to actually see the mainland (54). The captain of the *Pinta* and Columbus had a rivalry that probably led to this disparity in accounts, but in the end Columbus stripped Triana of the credit of the first sighting, as there was an award beyond the glory and pride of the accomplishment (Garganigo 54).

When first describing the natives he encountered, he mentions that they are very peaceful, of strong stature, and could make excellent slaves. It is as if these three observations were his mental tests to see how the indigenous peoples could be of use to the Spanish crown. “Ellos no traen armas ni las conocen, porque les amostré espadas y las tomaban por el filo y se cortaban con ignorancia... Ellos todos a una mano son de buena estatura de grandeza y buenos gestos... Y yo creí e creo que aquí vienen de tierra firme a tomarlos por captivos. Ellos deben ser buenos servidores... Llevaré de aquí al tiempo de mi partida seis” (They do not carry arms nor do they know them, because upon showing them swords, they grabbed them by the blade and cut themselves out of ignorance... They are all of a sort of good and large stature and have handsome features... And I thought and think that here they come from firm land for us to take them captive. They should be good servants... In time I will bring six of my company from here) (Colón 56). Columbus was writing the narrative on Hispanic America and in this very clause transformed the indigenous from being another society with a culture to be treasured into an opportunity, a source of slaves for explorers and settlers to come.

Howard Zinn, representing the other side of this complex story, posits that Columbus was really after one particular answer: “Where is the gold” (qtd. in Zinn 2). According to Zinn, the Spanish crown had offered Columbus 10% of whatever gold he

brought back to them, so he continued searching, and demanding higher quantities from each native, known as the Arawak Indians. “Y yo estaba atento y trabajaba de saber si había oro” (And I was attentive and worked to know if there was gold) he says in his journal (Colón 57). He sailed to Cuba and Hispaniola, which is now comprised of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Upon reaching Hispaniola, he sent accounts back to Spain to share what he had found. “Hispaniola is a miracle... The harbors are unbelievably good and there are many wide rivers of which the majority contain gold... There are many spices, and great mines of gold and other metals” (qtd. in Zinn 3). From compiling Zinn’s findings, the image of Columbus as the celebrated hero is blurred a bit, and we begin to see the potential for duality in the construction of the individual.

Due in large part to his lavish promises to his King and Queen with the regard to the number of potential slaves and amount of collectable gold, his second voyage received seventeen ships instead of the three he was given in his first trip. When gold was becoming scarce, Columbus filled the void with slaves. “In the year 1495, they went on a great slave raid, rounded up fifteen hundred Arawak men, women, and children, put them in pens guarded by Spaniards and dogs, then picked five hundred” to send (Zinn 4). Nearly half of those died in captivity on route to Spain. In the following two years, half of the two hundred and fifty thousand Indians on Hispaniola were dead due to murder or suicide under Columbus’s regime. By 1550, there were five hundred Arawak left. By 1650, none remained on the island.

Bartolomé de las Casas transcribed Columbus’s journal, and when telling of the Admiral’s treatment of the indigenous, he was very critical. “The admiral, it is true, was blind to those who came after him, and he was so anxious to please the King that he committed irreparable crimes against the Indians” (qtd. in Zinn 6). This inundation of perspectives forces the reader to question what actually was. You have to deal with this question of sorting through reality and finding the truth in reading this as I did in reading these texts.

Todorov says that in our own right we are all descendants of Columbus, that is, if we are not indigenous. Columbus saw reaching the new world as being an obstacle on his way to meeting Emperor Khan and opening commerce between Spain and the far East. This continent is now home to many millions of people of European descent, not to mention immigrants from around the world. What would it be like had he never arrived? Would we be better off? Despite his violence, should he be considered a hero? Is he a villain? These are all questions that many students have been answering for some time without having access to varied sources. Meanwhile, there are some students who do have this access and choose to not use it. With more proof than a holiday off school and a biased text book, now you can decide what you think is the real story. The tools of history, such as can be found through further exploration and this comprehensive collection of texts, are to be used responsibly.

## HERNAN CORTES (1485-1547)

He was a traitor to his king. He was a god. He was a greedy imperialist. He was a noble captain. He was an egomaniacal leader. He was a visionary. This man expanded one empire by crushing another. He married an indigenous woman, and fathered a child in the western world that he sought to control. At various times in his life, Hernán Cortés held all of the aforementioned roles, and has become widely-known as a pivotal character in the conquest of the Americas.

Hernán Cortés was born in 1485 in Medellín, Spain, in a region known as the land of the conquerors, Extremadura. After attending the renowned University of Salamanca, he left for America. He arrived in Cuba in 1504, and after he received word that the island was well-defended, he was ordered by his superior, Diego Velázquez, to the mainland. In 1518, he landed on the Yucatan peninsula. Despite orders to stay put and report back, Cortés journeyed into the mainland of Mexico, an action that led to the panegyric construction of the five letters he wrote to King Carlos V.

The five letters of Cortés to King Carlos V, dated 1519 through 1526, are considered to be pieces of very elaborate literature in which he narrated his conquest and deeds in Mexico. Cortés, after leaving Velázquez behind, had two missions. The first was conquering Mexico for his glory and that of Spain. The second was making sure that, despite his mutiny, he was viewed as a considerate explorer by the Spanish crown rather than as a rebel. For this reason, it makes sense that his story is, in many ways, incomplete as a historical text. He sought the favor of the crown, and would not mention anything offensive that would lead to his termination. Beatriz Pastor, author of the Discursos Narrativos de la Conquista: Mitificación y Emergencia (Narrative Discourse of the

Conquest: Mythification and Emergency), refers to Cortés's storytelling as the *fictionalization of reality*. His omissions were calculated, such as his reference to Montezuma. His efforts to not pay respect to Montezuma (or Moctezuma) are contrasted by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, also a Spanish soldier and author, who always refers to Montezuma as “el gran Moctezuma” (the Great Moctezuma) (qtd. in Garganigo 61) rather than the man “que los tenía por fuerza y tiranía, y que les tomaba sus hijos para los matar y sacrificar a sus ídolos” (who has them out of force and tyranny, and who takes their children to kill and sacrifice to their idols) (Cortés 63). The difference between the two is enormous. While Cortés had to answer to Carlos V, Díaz completed his version of the story in 1567, when he was 72 years old, and was answering only to himself (Schwartz 18). (He sent his work to Spain in 1575, which makes his reference to his age in his prologue superfluous). Therefore, while Cortés was trying desperately to defend himself, Díaz had the liberty of just telling the story as he saw it.

Unfortunately, the first of the five letters to the King was lost before it could be copied or recorded. The second letter, sent the 30th of October, 1520, is the description of Cortés's calculated destruction of the ships he arrived in, his arrival in Tenochtitlán, and the *Noche Triste* (*Sad Night*) when the Spaniards were expelled from Tenochtitlán. The destruction of the ships was the way in which Cortés made sure that none of the mutinous soldiers left the shores without him, thus proving that he was not always followed wholeheartedly. The third letter, dated 1522, describes how Tenochtitlán was situated, and the ferocity of the conquest. The fourth, 1524, is Cortés's vision for the future. It pieces together the future organization of what he calls the Kingdom of New Spain. The last of the letters, written in 1526, describes the events that stood out to him, like his expedition

to Honduras, the assassination of the Aztec's last king in 1525 (Cuauhtemoc), and his subsequent loss of power.

In his efforts to make a good impression on the King, Cortés made many indigenous enemies through his violent action, greed, and iron fist. They did not see him as being the worthy gentleman that he tried so desperately to make himself out to be in his letters. When Montezuma sent messengers with gifts for the Spanish visitors, Cortés was not impressed. As told by Miguel Leon-Portilla, the editor of the indigenous account of the conquest, The Broken Spears, Cortés would always ask for more. ““And is this all? Is this your gift of welcome? Is this how you greet people?”” he said (Leon-Portilla 26). He had traveled halfway around the world, reached a new land in which he was a guest, was gifted gold and servants, and was still satisfied by his gifts. His greed, according to the indigenous people, was insatiable. He chained them by the neck and feet, and fired a cannon to frighten them. ““I have heard that the Mexicans are very great warriors, very brave and terrible... But my heart is not convinced... I want to find out if you are truly strong and brave.’ Then he gave them swords... ‘We are going to fight each other in pairs, and in this way learn the truth. We will see who falls to the ground!’” (Leon-Portilla 27-8). This demonstrates that he never had any intention of acting in diplomacy and trying to start a discourse in which the two worlds could be brought together peacefully.

Cortés could ravage the society, and take it over. Since he could, he did. Alva Ixtlilxochitl, in his XII Relación, describes his perception of Cortés.

On the day Tenochtitlán was taken, the Spaniards committed some of the most brutal acts ever inflicted upon the unfortunate people of this land. The cries of the helpless women and children were heart-rending. The Tlaxcaltecas and other enemies of the Aztecs revenged themselves pitilessly for old offenses and robbed them of everything they could find. Only Prince Ixtlilxochitl of Tezcoco, ally of Cortés, felt compassion for

the Aztecs, because they were of his own homeland. He kept his followers from maltreating the women and children as cruelly as did Cortés and the Spaniards. (qtd. in Leon-Portilla 122)

This passage is particularly significant, not only for providing a native perspective of Cortés, but also in proving something that Cortés himself would not mention to the King, the alliance between Cortés and various native cities. The role of the Tlaxcaltecas in the conquest is vital to the dissolving of the image of the conquistadors as valiant heroes. The stories lose their myth when we picture an alliance of natives and Spanish against the Tenocha civilization at Tenochtitlan, for sheer numbers if for no other reason. With less study, it would appear that Cortés prevailed in war against a city the size of its contemporary Paris or Sevilla with little more than four hundred soldiers on horseback, against a slough of trained Mexica warriors. As we have learned through further study, this was not the case.

Howard Zinn views the captain much like the Tenocha did. “Cortés then began his march of death from town to town, turning Aztec against Aztec, killing with the deliberateness that accompanies strategy-- to paralyze the will of the population by a sudden frightful deed” (11). Zinn, notoriously unforgiving of anyone he views as imperialist, speaks with a particular candor that, when cutting through the layers of Cortés’s motivations and schemes, can provide necessary insight into a historical figure whose victims have long since perished. That said, it is important to remember that he is still just a modern historian, and not an eyewitness like so many of the other sources provided here.

Many have drawn the greatest distinction between Cortés and Columbus in what they sought. Allegedly, Columbus sought good will with God and Cortés sought glory while he tried to stay in favor with the Spanish monarchy. Evidence suggests that these two men were not so different in what they desired. Once he arrived on Hispaniola, Columbus discovered the robust gold supply and nearly exhausted it by forcing the natives to collect it so that he might send it back to Spain. His faith came in the form of

the riches he found, as though they were given by God to demonstrate approval of his life's work, a reward for his troubles. This is a far cry from the religion that the clergymen employed in their encounters in the new world. Cortés too had his heart set on wealth, as proven by the previous passage of his distaste at what was brought to him by the messengers. His impatience grew along with his greed. ““Where is the gold you were hiding in the city?”” he demanded of the chiefs later in his imperial efforts. They began unloading it for him from canoes, and he gladly took it from them. ““Is this all of the gold in the city? You must bring me all of it”” he asserted (qtd. in Leon-Portilla 120-121). With these fateful words, he destroyed the city when they could no longer provide the gold he required. With this action, he entered the company of Columbus and those who had come to new shores with their self-interest above all else.

Did he genuinely think that he was liberating these people from what their pagan ways? Was he trying to? According to Chimalpain from the VII Relación, Cortés replied with fury when natives made positive mention of their rulers. “[Your king] came here with arrows and shields to seize your hands. He forced you to be his servants. But now that I have come, I set you free” (qtd. in Leon-Portilla 125-6). Even in trying to protect himself from Carlos V, his radical actions are in his best interest before anyone else's. For instance, in his second letter when he is describing the destruction of the boats that he came in, he does so eloquently, so as to seem driven toward a goal that serves God as well as the King. Without destroying them, he was afraid others would leave him there, and would have “prevented the great service which has been done to God and to [his] Majesty in this land” (qtd. in Schwartz 78).

Cortés acted in God's name as often as he acted in representing the King. One of the ways by which he ensures his income, maintains his purpose, and proves his Christianity and loyalty to the crown, is by contrasting it with that of the natives. He calls them rebels, as they do not follow the teachings of the European church. He sends his advice to Carlos V that perhaps converting them would be a good idea since they are such

“evil and rebellious people...Bringing them to a knowledge or truth, and rescuing them from such great evils as are those which they work in the service of the devil” (qtd. in Schwartz 84). He continues to explain the criteria for evil: human sacrifice and sodomy. (In his debate with Sepulveda, Bartolomé de las Casas tells of how the Spanish souldiers acted more barbarous than the natives they had condemned.) In gaining further support from the King, he labels the Aztec churches “mezquitas,” or Spanish mosques, thus using particular allusions to the Spanish conquest of the Moors to turn Carlos V against the Aztecs.

Cortés, in the first paragraph of the second letter makes his intentions very clear with one simple word: “pacification.” The difference between this and the possibility mentioned earlier of his attempt to liberate the people of America is vital to the understanding of his actions. He sought to control them, pacify them as if they were animals rather than people. “[Estoy] yo ocupado en la conquista y pacificación de esta tierra... de que Dios sabe la pena que he tenido” (I am occupied with the conquest and pacification of this land... and God only knows the pain I have had) (Cortés 62). Who can tell what the truth actually is? Cortés was motivated by his greed, his desire to sit well with the crown, and to continue gaining glory. He was trying to conquer the indigenous Mexicans, and that is exactly what he did. When the smoke cleared and the dust settled, “when their cavalcade of murder was over, they were in Mexico City, Montezuma was dead, and the Aztec civilization, shattered, was in the hands of the Spaniards” (Zinn 12).

## LA MALINCHE

“Before telling about the great Montezuma and his famous City of Mexico and the Mexicans, I wish to give some account of Doña Marina” (“Discovery” 66).

La Malinche, also known as Doña Marina or Malintzin, is a character who stands out in writing about the conquest of Mexico. Her name appears whenever Cortés and Montezuma wish to speak to one another. It appears repeatedly in the works of Bernal Díaz del Castillo as a key element to the conquest. Though she is the most-cited female in the beginning of modern Spanish Mexico, her thoughts and opinions are kept to herself. In taking on the passive role of translator, it seems that she lost her voice regardless of the effect she has had on the history of Mexico. For this reason, it is much easier to provide different perspectives of her than it is to provide different accounts that she has of the conquest, as I have provided for the others in this thesis. The nature of this study is such that it aims toward her as the victim, the vehicle, the victor of the conquest.

She was born into a wealthy family in which both parents were chiefs in Paynala. While she was still young, her father died, which left her to her single mother. Her mother eventually was remarried to another nobleman and they had a son. When the son came, La Malinche’s mother and stepfather chose him as their successor, and abandoned their daughter in the night to people in Xicalango. Their servant had died, so they used her body in the place of their daughter’s to quell suspicion. The Indians of Xicalango gave her to those of Tabasco, who in turn gave her to Cortés. When recalling the gifts that the conquerors received, Bernal Díaz del Castillo remembers one in particular. All else they received “was worth nothing in comparison with the twenty women that were given us, among them one very excellent woman called Doña Marina, for so she was named when she became a Christian” (Schwartz 64). She converted to Christianity and had a child with Cortés out of wedlock. This child is considered to be the most notorious Mestizo child (a child of one Spanish parent and one Indigenous American) born on

American soil, and possibly the first. In parting ways with Cortés, she was gifted to Juan Jaramillo, also a Christian conqueror. This mirrored the dual role she had held all her life since her parents treated her as the burden and the gift.

Why was she such a significant figure in the conquest of New Spain? In fact, Díaz del Castillo said that she “was a person of” (and please pay careful attention to the diction in this following clause) “the *greatest* importance and was obeyed without question by the Indians throughout New Spain” (“Discovery” 67). Well, what can that mean? Was she important because she was obeyed? Was she able to facilitate change for the Spanish? Was she simply a useful translator, or was Cortés looking to benefit his personal good as well? Matthew Restall, author of the Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest, opines that her role as interpreter, since she spoke only for others, clouded her into enigma. Since she is the voice for others, her own is absent. “This has allowed her to become many things to many people: a symbol of betrayal; an opportunistic sexual siren; a feminist icon; an Aztec goddess in disguise; the mother of the first mestizo, and thus of the Mexican nation; the ultimate rape victim of the Conquest” (Restall 86). For the purposes of this study, I will focus on her role as the interpreter, and thus as Cortés’ voice and accomplice to the Spanish conquest.

La Malinche was not only an interpreter, nor was she the only interpreter working with Cortés. Jerónimo de Aguilar was a Spanish soldier who had been shipwrecked on the Yucatan Peninsula in 1511, and had learned Mayan fluently by the time Cortés arrived. According to Miguel Leon-Portilla, “La Malinche translated the Nahuatl of the messengers into Mayan for Aguilar, who then translated it into Spanish for the conquistadors” (Leon-Portilla 31). This lasted only until reaching Montezuma, by which time La Malinche had learned Spanish as well and Aguilar was no longer needed. For Cortés, finding these two was a total coincidence which shaped the outcome of the conquest greatly. It was having this perfect formula that would allow leaders from Tenochtitlán and Spain to communicate, as well as allowing Cortés to devise strategy

with the help of his allied indigenous tribes, that changed New Spain from uncharted territory into a well-understood region waiting to be explored. La Malinche helped in the political talks between Montezuma and Cortés, thus making her a diplomat of sorts. Montezuma as royalty would never directly address a servant, and therefore never directly addressed la Malinche. Therefore any reference to her personally in these texts is actually a reference to Cortés. “Malinche: en vuestra casa estáis vos y vuestros hermanos; descansa” (Malinche: you and your brothers are in your home; rest) (“Historia” 79). This passage could just as easily be translated as “Cortés: you and your brothers” etc. As remembered by Díaz del Castillo, there were times when la Malinche advised Montezuma to act calm, or try to show allegiance to Cortés and Velasquez so as to not provoke their wrath. In these cases especially, we come to realize that she was very intelligent and may have had her own agenda. Perhaps in protecting Montezuma, she prolonged Cortés’s need for her, and was able to reap some otherwise inaccessible benefits. For example, as long as in the service of Cortés, she was off-limits to the other soldiers.

Whether or not she believed in or supported the Spanish cause is unclear. However, many began referring to her and Cortés together as la Malinche, rather than addressing her personally, which blurs her actions and opinions with those of her master and husband. “The Nahuas soon dubbed Cortés himself with the name of Malinche, as though captain and interpreter were one” (Restall 83). The name “Malinche” literally means “master of Malintzin” in Nahuatl. Even when the Captain is quoted alone, the chronicle of the conversation is always preceded by “Cortés through the mouth of Doña Marina” (Schwartz 135). Maybe she was an accomplice rather than a servant and maybe she was both. When relaying a message from Cortés to some natives, she said to them: “‘You must bring us two hundred gold bars of this size.’ And she held her hands apart to show them the size” (Leon-Portilla 121). She later grew to appreciate gold as Cortés did, and even grew greedy for it. After supplies began to run low, and small amounts were

brought to them “the Captain and la Malinche saw the gold, they grew very angry” (Leon-Portilla 141). While her earlier quotes are in servitude, her later ones take on an air of power. More frequently, we begin to see her overcome by the role she played. In a speech to her native allies against Cuauhtemoc, who ruled Tenochtitlán after Montezuma had died, she listed all of the forces she had working for her. “See, the kings of Tlaxcala, Huexotzinco, Cholula, Chalco, Acolhuacan, Cuauhnahuac, Xochimilco, Mizquic, Cuitlahuac and Culhuacan are all here with me” (Leon-Portilla 135). She became a conquistador herself, hungry for gold and stock-piling allies against a foe.

One thing is for certain, however, and that is that she was of enormous importance to the Spanish conquest of Mexico, and many of her contemporaries recognized that. At one point in his book on the conquest, Díaz del Castillo changes direction from the chronological account to share his appreciation for la Malinche. After the “Noche Triste” when the Spanish were forced to retreat, he comments that “I forgotten to write down how happy we were to see Doña Marina still alive” (“Discovery” 318). In fact, Stuart Schwartz asserts that “the importance of language as a tool of conquest was never lost on Díaz” (Schwartz 41). If we are to look at other accounts of her written by Cortés to the King, where he is trying to give himself as much credit as possible, we quickly see how slanted the stories had become prior to being recorded. Cortés only mentions her twice in his letters, while Díaz is much more complimentary and gives her the title of “Doña” to pay respect to her for her noble origins as well as showing how much she was valued among the troops.

In Xicoténcatl, written in 1826 by an unknown author, La Malinche is compared to the story’s other female protagonist, Teutila. This text is considered to be, according to Antonio Castro Leal, the first Mexican historical novel as well as the first “Indigenist” novel. While Doña Marina is constantly described in terms of her “patricide” (the killing of one’s own homeland) and her acquiescence to all things European, Teutila is revered for her patriotism and her ability to stay true and loyal to her native culture. This novel

shows the literary Mexican backlash against la Malinche, and illustrates a common Mexican perception of her role in the conquest. This is not the only time when she was shown to represent betrayal and evil.

La Malinche is often considered to have a dual negative role, especially when she is viewed in a religious context. Sandra Messinger Cypess finds that she fits the parts of both biblical Eve and the Serpent. The Serpent instigated evil and Eve crumbled at the persuasion of the Serpent and allowed evil to enter paradise (Cypess 49). This comparison of la Malinche to Eve was changed from having negative connotations to have positive ones in El Eterno Femenino (The Eternal Feminine) by Rosalia de Castellano. In this feminist satire of traditional Mexican femininity, tradition figures like Eve are brought together with historical figures such as Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and la Malinche in order to provide social commentary on the patriarchal and authoritarian “structures that have maintained the traditional restrictive paradigms” (Cypess 49). When considering a modern feminist perspective, the possibility of la Malinche holding negative roles become juxtaposed by her role as a vision of the subjugated mother of Mexico. For example, Malinche Show by Willebaldo López, and Aguila o Sol (Eagle or Sun) by Sabina Berman show a new perspective using various literary devices, including parody and satire, to destroy prior images of La Malinche. They, too, criticize what they see as a patriarchal society for blaming la Malinche for the outcome of the conquest. For them, she is the scapegoat.

There are two possibilities of why it is that she never recorded her side of the story, or that her side was lost. First and foremost, she was a woman engulfed in patriarchal societies. Even if she had something to say, who would listen? Though she was born into royalty, she was still female and held an even lower rank as a gift and slave of Cortés. The second reason she was never heard or recorded is that she was viewed quite widely as a traitor. The question that comes to mind here is: a traitor to whom? She wasn't necessarily bound to be loyal to her native group. She was treated as property,

though her lineage would have brought her better fortunes, and as such she was only a traitor to those who commodified her. Therefore, besides being victimized as a woman and a servant who went against the tribe who gave her away as property, she really had little reason to not be listened to, if she was given the opportunity at all.

For this reason, we have to look at what she did contribute. Bernal Díaz del Castillo left his written story- a legacy of text and anecdote. La Malinche, on the other hand, left behind a legacy that transcends text: popular culture. The Mexican people today don't sing songs about Cortés or Montezuma, and certainly not about Jerónimo de Aguilar. They sing about La Malinche and her fundamental betrayal from day one. They would call her by another name. Octavio Paz shows us that in diction we can understand the true identity of la Malinche. She is known as "La Chingada," the bitch. Perhaps she is known this way partly for her involvement with Cortés. However, the definition doesn't stop there. La Chingada also means she who has been screwed. She was a victim of rape, and one of the first servants of the Spanish crown from the Americas. She was controlled and she suffered, and for being treated thus, she receives the passive label. La chingada is she who was screwed, whereas "lo que chinga" is that which screws, or he who screws. According to Paz, these are the only two paths for Mexicans. Since it pervades the culture so completely and since there is allegedly no other option for Mexicans that does not involve the verb "chingar," la chingada becomes a hollow word. Paz enthusiastically supports the use of the term, as it becomes less and less derogatory toward la Malinche with each utterance, as time removes it from its original reference, though other names such as "Malinchista" will retain their original harshness.

In his work, El Laberinto de la Soledad: Los Hijos de la Malinche, Octavio Paz offers an in depth examination of the mestizo race of Mexico, a people who began as victor and vanquished, as Cortés and la Malinche. He describes a country which has remained torn four and a half centuries after its conquest, a country struggling for identification and writhing in ambiguous existential grief. "Las inesperadas violencias

que nos desgarran, el esplendor convulso o solemne de nuestras fiestas, el culto a la muerte, acaban por desconcertar al extranjero” (The unexpected violence that has torn us, the splendor or solemnity of our celebrations, the cult of death, began through a distrust of the foreigner) (Paz 617). On saying this, Paz blames the strife of the Mexican individual on the conquest, and the collaboration of foreigners of Tenochtitlán, namely la Malinche and Cortes. In dealing with this duality of constant celebration and mourning, Paz sees Mexico as being in an ambiguous purgatory of sorts. “Atraemos y repelemos” (We attract and we repel) (Paz 617). Mexico lives in juxtaposition.

In characterizing the role of la Malinche, he starts with the role of the female in general. He says that in almost every culture, the creator and the destroyer are both female, and happen to be the same person/entity. For example, we use the term Mother Earth when referring to the soul the earth might have, though we blame nature for our strife in labeling our misfortunes as natural disasters. The female in poetry provides the enigma. Paz comments further on the concept of fertility versus death, and remarks that these themes are usually reserved for non-Europeans while the role of the hero is almost always European. Therefore, if we are to understand the deepest crevice of this duality, we had better look at it from a non-European woman, like la Malinche. As it turns out, she was also nonnative to Tenochtitlán and other cities she translated in, thus providing an example of exemplary caliber.

There is something fundamentally remarkable about a person who is completely surrounded by mystery and is still the best remembered of conquest figures in Latin America. Granted, in the U.S. we have our Columbus, and in many cases we deify him as the Mexican people often vilify la Malinche, or vilify him as la Malinche is often deified, whether the role is appropriate or not. One thing can be said for them in these respective cultures: the process of transcending from distant past into a cultural collective memory is a significant one, regardless of whether the person is vocal or voiceless.

“This is no love story, no tale of blind ambition and racial betrayal, no morality play. It is a record of a gifted woman in impossible circumstances carving out survival one day at a time” (Haskett 312).

### BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO (1495-1584)

At this point in this study, the focus has remained primarily on the captains. This structure, much like the chronology of the narrative of the conquest, leaves the common soldiers to comment later, after the leaders have had their fill. This portion of the study seeks to turn the spotlight on one such soldier who later became known as one of the most important witnesses to the conquest, and a source of extensive and invaluable information.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo was born in 1495 in Medina del Campo, Spain. At 24 he left for his first expedition under Francisco Hernández Córdoba, two years before his famous mission with Cortés. Later, he was sent on another mission under Juan de Grijalva. Both his first and second missions yielded little fruit and were disbanded due to their captains' inability to conquer. His triumphant time spent with Cortés, in which they facilitated the fall of the greatest civilization in North America, led to his acclaimed narrative of the first encounters between Mexicans and Europeans.

He is considered to be one of the most valuable chroniclers of the conquest to due his work, Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España (The True Story of the Conquest of New Spain). The piece, written at the ripe age of 72 in 1567, is admittedly conversational. "I, being no Latin scholar, dare not venture on such... an eloquence and rhetoric far beyond my powers" ("Discovery" xxxiii). However, he uses elements not yet seen in the Spanish literature of the conquest. For example, he writes in an oral style. This is to say that in his discussion he will make introductions of new topics by saying something to the effect of "“Antes de que más meta la mano en lo del gran Moctezuma y su gran ciudad de México y mexicanos, quiero decir lo de Doña Marina”" (before I tell

more about the great Montezuma and his great city of Mexico and mexicans, I want to tell of Doña Marina) (qtd. in Garganigo 75). As if by interrupting himself from one topic to return to something that he just remembered, Díaz will shift emphasis from one scene to another or one person to the next. This establishes an informality that would be typically unexpected in an anthropological and historical text. Though he titles his work The True History of the Conquest of New Spain, in narrating from 35 year old memories there is an added element of flexibility that only time can bring to the story. His precision is the only rebuttal against what some might claim to be creative storytelling.

That said, there are three main elements of Díaz's writing, besides the oral style and recitation from memory of course, that pervade his work. Firstly, there is his love and talent for characterizing the individual. His descriptions range from how low a general's voice was to the melodic rhythm that Cortés used to persuade his troops. Secondly, his attention to detail allows the conquest to be visualized and understood rather than simply presenting a collection of dates and events. Maybe this is due in part to his conversational style, or maybe as a soldier he was able to observe more than a commander could. The third element is his desire for the new, and his inquiries into what he did not fully know.

His memory, whether in describing an individual or a place, has been invaluable to the understanding of the conquest. "La memoria de Bernal Díaz es tan prodigiosa que le permite recordar no sólo el nombre de cada pueblo conquistado, los nombres de los principales caciques mexicanos y el de sus dioses, sino que también recuerda el número de escalones de cada una de los pirámides, donde tan sangrientas batallas se llevaron a cabo" (The memory of Bernal Díaz is very prodigious in letting him remember not only the name of each conquered town, the names of the main Mexican priests and their gods,

but also remember the number of stairs on each of the pyramids, where the bloody battles where brought) (Garganigo 73). These details, significant in and of themselves, become amplified in their importance when we consider that neither Cortés nor any other captain recorded them. Moreover, no other chroniclers, if writing of similar elements of the newly-encountered societies, could match the artistry of Díaz in painting each picture and each intricacy, especially such a long time after their stint in the conquest. Not only are his descriptions heralded, but his honesty as well. “Bernal Díaz del Castillo y las crónicas indígenas que milagrosamente sobreviven se encargarían de denunciar esa *fictionalización de la realidad*” (Bernal Díaz del Castillo and the indigenous chronicles that miraculously survived could be entrusted to denounce the fictionalization of the reality) (Garganigo 60). This fictionalization of reality, coined by Beatriz Pastor, is an element that pervades the works of Columbus and Cortés, and forces the reader to be conscious of the necessary separation of content from color, thus enforcing Díaz’s version of the story.

After the fall of Tenochtitlán in 1521, Díaz followed Cortés into Honduras only to return in extreme poverty. This may be one of the reasons that he was critical of his captain in his records. When making note of the accomplishments, Cortés was never listed as the facilitator. Another example of Díaz’s disapproval of Cortés’s strategies is when the Captain ordered the men to investigate the second largest civilization in Mexico, Michoacán.

Less than a year after the fall of Tenochtitlán, Cortés sent a large army to Michoacán, ostensibly to establish a Spanish colony in the kingdom. The soldier-chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo suggests that Cortés had other motives. Díaz del Castillo asserts that Cortés hoped to rid himself of the officers in camp who were complaining about the amount of treasure he had personally claimed... This complaint resulted in a series of violent

feuds among the conquerors that brought New Spain to the brink of disintegration by the late 1520s. (Verástique 70-1)

This passage is particularly relevant for several reasons. First, it shows that after Cortés received his riches and territory in Tenochtitlán, he decided that he didn't need to be on the forefront of the conquest. In showing his true motivation, he could sit back and let the soldiers do the work. It also speaks to Díaz's understanding that, to Cortés and the Spanish crown, the soldiers were just pawns to gain wealth for them. Lastly, it offers a vision of Cortés that he himself didn't provide for King Carlos V. His efforts were overwhelmingly selfish in nature, not to serve his God and King as he had suggested.

Díaz was also critical of the version of history that Francisco de Gómara, Cortés's personal scribe, provided. Firstly, he says that Gómara, who had never been to the New Spain, basically has no right to write about it. Díaz saw a different conquest from that which Gómara wrote about. "...que he visto que el cronista no escribe en su historia ni hace mención si nos mataban o estábamos heridos" (I have seen that the chronicler Gómara doesn't write in his history nor does he mention if they killed us or if we were injured) (qtd. in Garganigo 73). This passage makes reference to Gómara's priorities as a representative of Cortés who also had little regard for the common soldiers.

Díaz refused to treat his story the same as that of the other conquerors, and therefore included individual credit of soldiers. "Del 'yo' colombino y cortesiano hemos pasado al 'nosotros' de Bernal Díaz" (From the Columbian and Cortesian 'me' we have passed into the 'we' of Bernal Díaz) (Garganigo 74). This was the essence of the soldier's writing. The focus on the collective, by which he created the new form of conquest literature: the plural narrative. This means that no captain, nor king, nor God himself deserved the credit individually. It belonged to the cause, and those who implemented it. Again in criticism of Gómara, he states that "Pudiera ser que dice Gómara fueran los gloriosos apóstoles señor Santiago o señor San Pedro y yo, como pecador, no fuese digno de verlo. Lo que yo entonces vi fue Francisco de Morla en un caballo" (It could be that

Gómara says that the glorious apostles Saint James or Saint Peter were there and I, as a sinner, didn't see them. What I did see was Francisco de Morla on a horse) (qtd. in Garganigo 74). He, as a religious man, doesn't really label himself as a sinner so much as a human. The idea behind this is that all humans are sinners and tainted by our humanity. However, those who fought and died were neither saints nor any work of divine intervention, and Díaz wanted them to receive the credit that they justly deserved. He implies that Gómara was a liar for seeing things, or describing events, that not even those who were there were able to see.

Moreover, Díaz did not seek to deify his own soldiers, as he felt that the credit for the battles was to be spread around equally among their participants. “Nuestros amigos Chichimecatecle y los dos Xicotengas, hijos de Xicotenga el Viejo, guerrearon muy valientemente contra el gran poder de México y nos ayudaron muy bien y así mismo... otros muchos capitanes de pueblos de los que nos ayudaban, todos guerrearon muy poderosamente y Cortés... les dio muchas gracias” (Our friends Chichimecatecle and the two... sons of Xicotenga the elder, fought very bravely against the great power of Mexico and helped us and themselves very well... as did a lot of other captains of towns that helped us, all fought very powerfully and Cortés... thanked them) (qtd. in Garganigo 73). In recognizing the power of his allies, he is able to show that the victories that they won had little to do with one captain, Cortés, and much more to do with the collaborative effort between the indigenous and the Spanish for however long. This passage represents something much greater than the conquest. It is representative of a new perspective, a third set of eyes with which to view the conquest. Now there can be no one Spanish hate of the indigenous, nor can there only be Aztec bloodshed from the swords of Spanish conquerors. The fall of Tenochtitlán no longer belongs to the Spanish, so much as the enemies of the great city. We have entered a realm now where labels have lost their power.

Something that Díaz showed in his writing that Cortés and Columbus did not show was an element of respect for what he saw. He was in awe; as well he should have been, by Tenochtitlán. “Castillo thought that the wonders he beheld must be a dream”(Leon-Portilla xxxiii). Coming across the ocean for weeks, traveling across a piece of uncharted land, and arriving at a city that could rival its contemporary Paris or Seville was an eye-opening experience. His home town, Medina del Campo, had been well known for its expansive marketplace. Historian Hugh Thomas remarks on how Díaz can only describe the markets in the New World as being similar to the fantastic markets of his home. In general awe of the Mexico he traveled, Díaz recalls that:

Gazing on such wondrous sights, we did not know what to say, or whether what appeared before us was real, for on one side, on the land there were great cities, and in the lake ever so many more, and the lake was crowded with canoes, and in the causeway were many bridges at intervals, and in front of us stood the great city of Mexico. (qtd. in Schwartz 8).

The same man who wrote this, once staring at an astonishing city that had been in power for ages, later reflected on what he saw after the conquest was complete. In the 1560s, he seemed pained by what had happened. “Today all is overthrown and lost, nothing is left standing” (qtd. in Schwartz 8). All is lost? Had this not been the same man who marched into this city on orders to overtake it? Again, we are forced to grapple with the duality of man.

Carlos Fuentes insists in his book, Mundo Nuevo (New World), that Bernal Díaz was not your average conquistador. In fact, as Fuentes puts it, he was not that bad of a guy. “Hay una falla en la armadura de este guerrero cristiano... a través de ella brilla un corazón herido, tristemente enamorado de sus enemigos” (There is a flaw in the armor of this christian warrior... across it shines an injured heart, sadly in love with his enemies) (qtd. in Garganigo 74). It is true, by how he describes the cities and how readily he remembers, it appears as though he held a special place for them in his heart.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo lived out the rest of his days in Guatemala on his own plantation. He dedicated the rest of his life to trying to get the Spanish King to compensate him for his efforts during the conquest. He was never repaid what he thought he deserved, and made two trips to argue his rights as well as to debate with Friar Bartolomé de las Casas. His debates with de las Casas are the strongest opposition to Fuentes' argument. Díaz argued that the system of *encomiendas* they had established in New Spain was just, while de las Casas, once living on his own and abandoning it out of conscience, was in fierce opposition to them. (Encomiendas were essentially plantations, first created by the Romans, in which the indigenous slaves would work in exchange for Christian teaching and lessons in assimilation in Spanish society.) Then, did Díaz love the land and the civilization, but not the people in it? It is hard to say exactly. This system of plantations, as well as the general treatment of the indigenous was in hot debate for the rest of his life. Díaz died in 1584 in Santiago de los Caballeros, Guatemala at the age of 89.

## BARTOLOME DE LAS CASAS (1484-1566)

“Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it...” (qtd. in Zinn 7).

Bartolomé de las Casas was born in Sevilla, Spain in 1484. In the early conquest era, Sevilla was of particular significance in that it was home to the “House of Contracting,” an institute with the sole purpose of organizing expeditions to the New World. At the age of nine, his father went to New Spain with Columbus on his third voyage. Upon returning, he brought young Bartolomé a gift, as any father might. His gift was an indigenous child with whom to play; a child who was intended to be in his service for the rest of his life.

At eighteen, it was Bartolomé’s turn to travel. He went to the Indies with Panfilo de Narvaez. This trip would be the first step in his education about the atrocities committed in the New World. While under the command of Narvaez, he watched the massacre at Caona. In this murderous fog, three to four thousand peaceful natives were killed at the hands of the Spanish soldiers. After the battle, the soldiers made their way through the city, chasing down indigenous civilians on horseback, killing at will without any justification. He would later denounce the actions of the soldiers in this incident and countless others.

De las Casas was the first priest ordained in the New World, and in his position of some power became close with the governor of Cuba, Diego Velázquez. The governor, being a friend of de las Casas, gave him his own encomienda, fully supplied with servants. This first encomienda for de las Casas became extremely symbolic. In 1511, he heard a sermon by Father Antonio de Montesinos that would forever change his life. The topic of the sermon was denouncing the actions of the Spanish against the natives, who were, after all, the legitimate owners of the land that they were forced to work. Soon after

this, de las Casas gave his encomienda away to those working it and joined the order of the Dominicans (Garganigo 83).

In joining the Dominicans, Bartolomé de las Casas denounced his life and actions previous to that point, any and all writings that were in opposition to his new perspective, and the life and actions of his father. His dedication to this cause led him into the courthouse where he fought to change laws through the vessel of the Spanish judicial system. His goals at this point were threefold: ending the violence of the conquest, abolishing the current system of encomiendas, and restoring freedom and dignity to the indigenous.

De las Casas was the object of controversy in Spain, and held a valuable and weighty role in the law surrounding the discovery of the New World. One event that was particularly famous was his public debate against Gines de Sepulveda. The topic of debate was, in essence, the future of those inhabiting the conquered lands to the west. He argued in favor of the rights of the indigenous population in an attempt to stop the further subjugation of them by the Spanish conquerors. Sepulveda had never been to the New World despite his condemnation of its people. His premise was that the war they fought was a just one. His key arguments revolved around Aristotelian theory, which was hard for de las Casas to break with relevant precedent though he received support from Father Francisco de Vitoria, who said that all indigenous people had rights as human beings. As Aristotle puts it in his work, Politics, there are natural leaders and those naturally predisposed to serve. Sepulveda ran with this idea in his work, Democrates Secundus, which has been widely regarded as both highly chauvinistic and dogmatic.

Bien puedes comprender... si es que conoce las costumbres y naturaleza de una y otra parte, con qué perfecto derecho los españoles imperan sobre

estos bárbaros del Nuevo Mundo, los cuales en prudencia, ingenio, virtud y humanidad son tan inferiores a los españoles como los niños a los adultos y las mujeres a los varones, habiendo entre ellos tanta diferencia como la que va de gentes fieras y crueles a gentes elementísimas... y estoy por decir que de monos a hombres.

(As you can well understand... if you know the customs and nature of one part and the other, with what perfect right the Spanish moved in on the barbarians of the New World, the ones who in prudence, ingenuity, virtue and humanity are so inferior to the Spanish like children are to adults or women are to men, there is a difference like that which goes between cruel and wild people and the the most elementary... and I mean to say that of monkeys and humans.) (quoted in Garganigo 84)

Sepulveda just took the Aristotelian logic a step further than Aristotle had, and applied it to women's roles in life, comparing them to children, barbarians, and monkeys. This is the train of thought that led to widespread controversy in Europe. Most European disapproval of his side of the debate was a result of his secular arguments.

De las Casas suggested in his rebuttal that African slaves be substituted for the American ones. This error haunted him for years, and he repeatedly tried to remedy it as to him it was a moral issue, not a racial one. The remedy of this error is what separates him from Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Christopher Columbus, and Hernán Cortés. While each of them sought credit for the atrocities committed, Bartolomé de las Casas wanted them to end. His opposition to the present and growing movement of conquest is what separates him so radically from his contemporaries.

All of his works centered on this issue, though each had its own particular focus. The History of the Indies focused on the first thirty years of the conquest including though not limited to Columbus's expeditions. His Apologetic History of the Indies was his literary effort to emphasize his side of the Sepulveda debate. It established that the indigenous are human beings of reason and therefore do not fit into the natural slave group that Aristotle would have placed them in. His Eighth Remedy was his anti-

encomienda piece, centering on the human rights violations that occurred in the encomiendas and their need for abolition. Lastly, The Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies allowed de las Casas to list and briefly describe the horrific events of the conquest. It was a catalogue of war crimes, and served as a geographical and chronological narration of murderous accounts.

De las Casas was convinced that the Spanish military used fear as a weapon, as often as they used their swords. In the massacre at Cholula, for example, the soldiers killed off many people just to prove their dominance and to show that their power stretched to all corners of the country. The way the soldiers took over was simple and formulaic: “Porque siempre fue ésta su determinación en todas las tierras que los españoles han entrado, conviene a saber, hacer una cruel y señalada matanza, porque tiemblan dellos aquellas ovejas mansas” (This was always the determination in all of the lands that the Spanish had entered, it is worth noting, to do cruel and conspicuous killing, so that the indigenous people would tremble at them) (Casas 88). In order to ensure chaos, the conquerors would usually invite the leaders to a council and begin the massacre with them, leaving the people to fend for themselves without their leaders. He often comments on the pain he felt to tell the story knowing that he had been involved.

He discusses some of the horrific scenes he had witnessed after the dust had settled in Cholula.

A cabo de dos o tres días saltan muchos indios vivos llenos de sangre, que se habían escondido y amparado debajo de los muertos (como eran tantos); iban llorando ante los españoles pidiendo misericordia, que no los matasen. De los cuales ninguna misericordia ni compasion hubieron, antes así los hacían pedazos.

[After two or three days a lot of natives who were still alive appeared covered in blood, that had hidden themselves and sought refuge under the dead (as there were so many); they came crying to the Spanish begging in

misery, that they not kill them. For them there wasn't any empathy or compassion, before they were smashed to pieces like the others.] (Casas 88-9)

This is one incident, one example of one city that Bartolomé de las Casas had to watch be destroyed.

His political commentary spread past the liberation of the indigenous population of the Americas. He was very critical of his king, and the actions of government, while he applauded the retaliation of the natives. Of Spanish imperialism he commented that they destroyed city by city, “they destroyed the province of Tututepeque in the same manner, and later the province of Ipilcingo, and later that of Colima, since each one is more land for the kingdoms of Leon and Castilla” (Casas 91). This discussion of the single-mindedness of the Spanish crown was a bold statement to be made in a time when the Spanish crown held such overwhelming power. He had one distinct shield in this matter: the church. As a man of the church, all he had to do was center his arguments around Christianity, and what would make a good Christian, and that way he was protected by the church. He often asked why it was that having slaves would make him a good Christian and a loyal subject, but refusing to have them made him a rebel against the service of the king. He would further ask how he could be a rebellious subject if he wasn't a subject of the Spanish government at all, living in the Americas. This question, like much of Bartolomé's questions, could have sparked debate among Europeans living in the Americas. However, most Spanish Americans wanted to look out for their best interest, namely their slaves, their money, and their property. Why then would they turn against the king at the risk of their life and property?

The indigenous people of Mexico were just in any attempt to counterattack the Spanish, according to de las Casas, since they had been treated so brutally to that point. “Mataron gran cantidad de cristianos en las puentes de la laguna, con justísima y sancta guerra, por las causas justísimas que tuvieron, como dicho es” (The natives killed a great

number of Christians on the bridges of the lagoon, with war of immense justice and sanctity, for they had very just causes, as the saying is) (Casas 91).

For radical views such as these as well as his compassion and sympathy for the indigenous situation, de las Casas was often the subject of letters written to the king. Indigenous people afraid of the terrible force of the Spanish soldiers wrote to ask if the king could order the new Bishop (de las Casas) to their territory, in hopes that he would come to their aid and defense (Leon-Portilla 153). From then on, as often as he could be of service, he was. As long as there was a spot for him in the fight for the indigenous rights, he filled it.

## CONCLUSION

I have had the fortune of sharing centuries of other analysts' work in researching a topic such as this that has long since past. These works, which would not necessarily have been available for more recent events, have played an integral part in my understanding of the material, and led me leaps forward in my task. As tempting as it would have been to just reiterate what has already been said, my work would be meaningless without my own interpretation. In this interpretation, I sought to find my own perspective of the conquest of Mexico, and to help other students develop theirs. The purpose was to compile sources in order to paint a broad picture of the conquest.

I wasn't there, so I will never know definitively what happened. This has played a role in my thesis. However, my thesis is greatly shaped by the certainties, of which there are many. These hold the story together. For example, we can say with complete certainty that Cortés was instrumental in the mass-murder of Aztecs throughout his expedition in western Mexico. Furthermore, thanks to the primary sources, we can know that Cortés and Columbus were both excited by the prospects of gold in the new land, and were motivated by the possibilities of a wealthy future and dreams of grandeur. De las Casas, in his debate with Sepúlveda, demonstrated his loathing for the Spanish ethnocentrism toward the indigenous peoples of the western world. Any and all gray area is where we must interpret, and I encourage this whole-heartedly.

In order to minimize the number of hands that the information passes through before I present it, I have decided to focus mostly on the primary sources written by the witnesses themselves. This is appropriate not only for the purpose of getting as accurate a view of the conquest as possible, but also as a means to gain insight into each individual's perspective. My understanding of the primary sources, since I am literate in both Spanish and English, has left much of the interpretation in my hands in terms of which quotations I have chosen to include or which witnesses I happen to feel

sympathetic for, as well as translating any Spanish quotations I include. This responsibility has not been taken lightly, as my goal, from cover to cover, is to allow the understanding and interpretation of this material to be in the mind of the reader.

I run into complications when it comes to the perspectives of the Nahua, and other indigenous Americans, because I am not literate in Nahuatl (a language based on hieroglyph and pictorials until the Spanish conquest brought the Roman alphabet). Therefore, most of the Nahua perspective I can access has already been interpreted upon its translation to Spanish. This is to say that much of the indigenous works have been censored either politically by Spanish soldiers or religiously by Spanish clergy. Worse yet, if the version I am studying is written in English, it is fair to assume for the most part that it has been translated from a diary of a Spanish missionary or conquistador, which itself was a translated transcription of the Nahuatl original, into English by a different translator with his/her own bias.

I realize that some of my sources are controversial, and some are more-clearly biased than others. In fact, I am counting on it. Since all sources have been interpreted in their transcription, all texts are then biased. However, in using sources that are biased in opposing ways, like Columbus's first impression of the new world as compared to that of Díaz del Castillo, the study may then become balanced in order to allow the reader to make a conscious choice of which interpretation is more believable. Like Cortés's letters filled with self-praise, or Gómara's glorification of his patron, the way the story is told means as much, if not more, than the story itself. This has been a long overlooked element of these texts that led to literal, unquestioning readings, mental apathy, and intellectual atrophy. For this reason, the study I am doing is one that I have wanted to read for years. Since I have not found it written yet, I have done what I could with the texts that I have had as I feel this story needs to be told from all possible perspectives.

Admittedly, la Malinche is my problem area. In every source I have found, she is a passive character rather than an author like the rest of those cited in this piece.

However, I have found this to be a trend among prominent indigenous figures of the conquest. This complication is unfortunate for a variety of reasons. Primarily, she is the only marginalized character I have included in a separate chapter, as a woman, an indigenous person, and as a Mayan in the land of the Aztecs, and therefore takes on the role of “the other”. I have stated endlessly that my purpose was to give voice to the marginalized, and lift all layers and accounts of the conquest together so that they can be viewed equally. Hers is one view, however vital to this study it is, that is impossible to find. The best possible analysis of her role in the conquest is reached by doing exactly what I have done, tracing her importance to different historical figures, looking at how she was viewed and treated by the indigenous (including her treatment after the conquest), and noting her role in a variety of modern avenues including, though not limited to, feminist theater, Spanish conquest literary criticism, Mexican folklore, Latin American popular culture, satire, etc. Her historical survival dwarfs that of the other individuals I have included. She encompasses Mexico to this day, and for this reason a solely historical analysis of her role is not appropriate.

I have chosen to use the indigenous perspective as a response to each of the conquerors’ versions of the story rather than writing individual chapters on indigenous figures. I know what some of you might think, and the answer is no, I do not value their opinion or versions of the conquest less than those of the Spanish. This structure has been chosen solely due to the fact that the opinions of the varied indigenous people are much harder to distinguish than those of the Spanish. In most cases I have found, the stories of the conquest told by the native Mexicans are anonymous. The best possible way I could present this perspective would be to perhaps create indigenous chapters based on themes: a chapter on fear of the new Spanish visitors, a chapter of involvement of other Americans in the battles against Montezuma, a chapter on religious omens alluding to a second coming of Quetzacoatl, etc. For the sake of brevity, I have elected to present these anonymous perspectives in direct criticism or support of the various Spanish

perspectives, rather than show them the disrespect of casting them into a separate and anonymous section.

Intertextual criticism has proven to be a backbone for this study, and has juxtaposed the authors. For example, Bernal Díaz del Castillo's criticism of Gómara's writing has brought both characters to light. While Gómara is trying to protect his patron, we see that Díaz is trying to expose him. The former tells a story of saints and heroes while the latter celebrates the commoner. The efforts of this soldier to show the true occurrences of the conquest also provides a contrast to Cortés himself, who tries at all costs to demonstrate his loyalty to the Spanish crown so as to bypass its punishment. Columbus discusses the lavish wealth that can be reaped from the Americas while de las Casas chastises him for it. De las Casas argues for the freedom of the newly found indigenous Americans while Sepulveda, relying on Aristotelian theory, insists that these beings are not people so much as beasts, and are on this earth in order to serve us. Columbus would agree with Sepulveda, as he feels the gold and slaves were gifts from God demonstrating their approval of his quest. They are his to use simply by existing. Cortés, we can assume, would agree with Sepulveda as well, seeing as how he accepted la Malinche as a gift, a slave, mother to his child, and later as his wife.

As you may well see by now, this story has been written about for years, but the works of the eyewitnesses continue to tell the most vivid version of the story. Maybe that is why I stopped here. Perhaps this is where the answers end and the questions begin. I have expected to learn a lot in this study, as in any involved process. I have indeed learned a lot. I have learned that the role of the historian and interpreter holds more power than I could have ever imagined. If I interpret one word incorrectly, or if I leave out one battle, one perspective, just one element, however small, the story is changed dramatically. With knowledge comes responsibility. I am writing for an intelligent and engaged audience, one who isn't afraid to explore the gray area between the undisputable facts and the colorful recollection. This is for the skeptical. This is for the inquisitive.

This is for people like me, people who aren't satisfied by hollow explanations and fantastic stories of heroes, people who understand that to the victor go the spoils, and to the vanquished go the shadows.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Casas, Bartolomé de las. "Brevísima relación de la destrucción de Indias." Huellas de las Literaturas Hispanoamericanas. 2. Garganigo, John F., et. al. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. 88-93.
- Colón, Cristóbal. "Diario de a bordo: el primer viaje a las Indias." Huellas de las Literaturas Hispanoamericanas. 2. Garganigo, John F., et. al. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. 52-7.
- Cortés, Hernán. "Segunda carta- relación de Hernán Cortés al Emperador Carlos V, 30 de octubre de 1520." Huellas de las Literaturas Hispanoamericanas. 2. Garganigo, John F., et. al. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. 62-70.
- Cypess, Sandra Messinger. La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.
- Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, and A.P. Maudslay, trans. The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico. New York: Da Capo Press, 2003.
- Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. "Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España." Huellas de las Literaturas Hispanoamericanas. 2. Garganigo, John F., et. al. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. 76-82.
- Garganigo, John F. et al.. Huellas de las literaturas hispanoamericanas, second edition. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, Inc., 2002.
- Haskett, Robert et al.. Indian Women of Early Mexico.: Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.
- Leon-Portilla, Miguel. The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990.
- Martinez, José Luis. Hernán Cortés. Mexico: FCE-UNAM, 1990.
- Pastor, Beatriz. Discursos Narrativos de la Conquista: Mitificación y Emergencia. Segunda Edición, corregida. Hanover, N.H.: Ediciones del Norte, 1988.

- Paz, Octavio. "El Laberinto de la Soledad: Los Hijos de la Malinche." Huellas de las Literaturas Hispanoamericanas. 2. Garganigo, John F., et. al. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002. 617-624.
- Restall, Matthew. Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Schwartz, Stuart B.. Victors and Vanquished: Spanish and Nahua Views of the Conquest of Mexico. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. La Conquista de América. La Cuestión del Otro. Trad. Flora Button Burlá. México: Siglo XXI, 1987.
- Verástique, Bernardino. Michoacán and Eden: Vasco de Quiroga and the Evangelization of Western Mexico. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.
- Zinn, Howard. A People's History of the United States. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2003.